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(Inside front cover)

COVER:

Fraktur letters from an Ephrata Cloister student music book, and the dormitory building at Ephrata, "one of the longest-lived of North America's communal societies."

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The Recovery of the Feminine in an Early American Pietist Community: The Interpretive Challenge of the Theology of Conrad Beissel.

by Wendy Everham



Dormitory and enclosed beehive bake oven at Conrad Beissel's Ephrata Cloister. (Photographs and translations by William T. Parsons.)

In 1737, Conrad Beissel, an immigrant from the Palatinate, founded the monastic community of Ephrata in Pennsylvania, one of the earliest and longest-lived of North America's communal societies. Beissel remained its spiritual leader for over thirty years, until his death in 1768 at the age of seventy-eight.¹

Scholars have offered various assessments of Beissel's spirituality. Donald Durnbaugh and Delburn Carpenter argue that he was a radical Pietist; that is, Beissel was an exponent of those who viewed separating from the

established churches a theological and spiritual necessity. This position was in contradistinction to the so-called inner-churchly Pietists who hoped to transform the organized churches from within in order to restore them to the apostolic community of believers. Many radical Pietists were influenced, furthermore, by the sixteenth century German mystic, Jacob Boehme, who had advocated celibacy as a higher spiritual state. Conrad Beissel, it seems, followed in his footsteps.²

E.G. Alderfer, the author of the most recent study of

Ephrata, believes that Beissel's radical theology reflects, instead, the influence of unorthodox Christian Gnosticism from which Beissel derived his reliance on mystical practices to achieve insights into the nature of ultimate reality.³

Walter Klein, Beissel's biographer, argues that the religiosity of Ephrata's founder reveals, instead, nothing more than Beissel's need to dominate others as he himself had been dominated in his earlier years, first as an orphan and then as an uneducated member of Europe's lower class.⁴

F. Ernest Stoeffler, an authority on German Pietism, characterizes Beissel's spirituality as an amalgam of elements from various Christian heresies, fed primarily by his sexual obsessions.⁵

This essay presents yet another appraisal of Beissel's theology as far as it probes ultimate reality and its enmeshment with salvific history. It argues that previous interpreters have overlooked key elements in his spirituality, and that an analysis of these key elements will lead to a new understanding of Beissel's significance. First a brief outline of his theology will be offered that delineates Beissel's view of ultimate reality. Then alternative interpretive positions as to its meaning will be explored.⁶

Beissel understood God or, as he wrote, the "original being" quite differently from the accepted Judeo-Christian tradition. According to Beissel, God was an androgyne in whom both male and female attributes or "tinctures," such as "fire" and "light," "rough" and "smooth," arrogance and meekness, willfulness and obedience, were in balance. Again in Beissel's words, the "fiery male properties" of "dominion" and "strength" were tempered by the "watery female properties" of gentleness and wisdom. Because these opposites were combined proportionately, forming a balanced whole, neither conflict nor evil existed in creation, only goodness and harmony.⁷

In Beissel's view, the fall of original creation occurred when Lucifer, one of God's angels, destroyed the divine balance within him. Lucifer had, to use Beissel's words, "exalted its fiery male property" in order to rule over creation. In order to defeat Lucifer, God had purposely to upset the balance within her-/himself by also elevating the male attributes, while at the same time forming the female into a separate entity. In this process of separation due to Lucifer's deviance, a separate divine being whom Beissel called Sophia emerged; she found herself as "solitary as a widow" in the "wilderness."⁸

Likewise, the Godhead separated the balance of all creation into its male and female elements, and made women subject to the authority of men so the fallen hierarch, as Beissel explained, would "find no female location empty and unoccupied even in God or any other creatures which he might govern." Thus the crea-

tion was spared from Lucifer's domination, but as a consequence, lost the harmony inherent in its wholeness.⁹

God then created the original image of the Godhead in the form of a man, Adam, to atone for Lucifer's sins, for only a male could atone for what Beissel described as "male sins." Specifically, God intended Adam to crucify those very qualities in him that the fallen Lucifer had emphasized, effectively canceling out Lucifer's original sin. Adam's actions would have cosmological ramifications, in that they would enable Sophia, or as Beissel often described her, the "heavenly God-femalety," to reunite with her divine male counterpart. The reunited godhead would then, in turn, be able to restore creation after its image to its original unity.¹⁰

However, as Beissel explained, Adam "caused the completion of the apostacy" by desiring to continue the separation because he shared with Lucifer the wish to rule over creation as a "despotic lord." God removed Sophia from Adam and preserved her as a virgin until the time when a suitable mate for her could be found. Instead, Adam received a body and, with Eve, a "femalety" whom God created out of Adam's side, began populating the world. God had hoped that Eve might have been able to temper Adam by "absorbing within her the awakened self-will," thus beginning the "restoration of all things." But, as Beissel declared, "self-will had penetrated so far into the government" of Adam that Eve herself was "weakened" by Adam's will.¹¹

In Beissel's theology, therefore, humankind emerged as the result of Adam's fall. Beissel envisioned marriage as the "penitentiary of carnal man" because its fruits only perpetuated Adam's lineage; "holy marriage with Sophia," in contrast, Beissel viewed as the only redemptive life. Sophia was, for Beissel, not only the divine embodiment of virtuous female principles, but the source and mediator of divine wisdom — the "mysterious counsel who directs God's works."¹²

Thus, because Adam rejected union with Sophia, he and his descendants — among whom Beissel included all ecclesiastical and civil magistrates — ruled in ignorance and, out of their ignorance, perpetuated their pursuit of power and the disunity of all creation.¹³

Because Sophia was "everlasting love," the "eternal mother" who longs for the restoration of all of her creation, she was the one who finally "begot her own husband out of the eternal maternity." Beissel described Christ as the "second Adam" because he was the second male to have been born with the divine balance. But because he was born of a virgin, he was not polluted by the "exalted male willfulness." Instead of seeking to dominate and therefore perpetuating the separation of creation, Christ submitted obediently to his crucifixion, thereby atoning for the sins committed by the "arrogant masculine spirit." In this way, he became a "male



Turtel Taube; hand-written hymnal used at Ephrata. Two-thirds of its 300 hymns were written by Conrad Beissel.

virgin,” and, as such, a suitable mate for Sophia. With their union, the foundation for the “true priesthood” was established. Only its members would further the restoration of all things to their original perfection.¹⁴

Beissel viewed the community at Ephrata as the dwelling place for the “remnant” of the “original true priesthood of Israel” — those of the lineage of the original “144,000 virgins who were sealed and elected by God.” Though dispersed, Beissel strove to gather them together into the true church, the “militant church” of Sophia. There they would live according to Christ’s example and show others by precept and example how to court Sophia through the abolition of their “elevated selfishness.” Because of their effort, Sophia would unite with them and enlighten them, causing them to despise all the “perishing things” of this world and to cultivate their apartness. As with Christ, her church would suffer rejection and “much anguish and sorrow under many and diverse tribulations” for their opposition to the ways of the world. But they would share, as well, in the daily delights and hopes that union with Sophia provided as she led them back to their “native country of light.”¹⁵

Beissel explained that the restoration would be a gradual process; that Sophia’s church would have to work unceasingly to increase the numbers of her followers “so in proportion the offices of the male economy (will) decrease,” until the time when her church “will be gathered into her chamber,” which will be their home for all eternity.¹⁶

This outline makes apparent that Beissel’s spirituality is a radical departure from, rather than an expression of, the dominant Christological tradition of the West. Whereas Beissel viewed the nature of ultimate reality in terms of the harmonious union between its complemen-

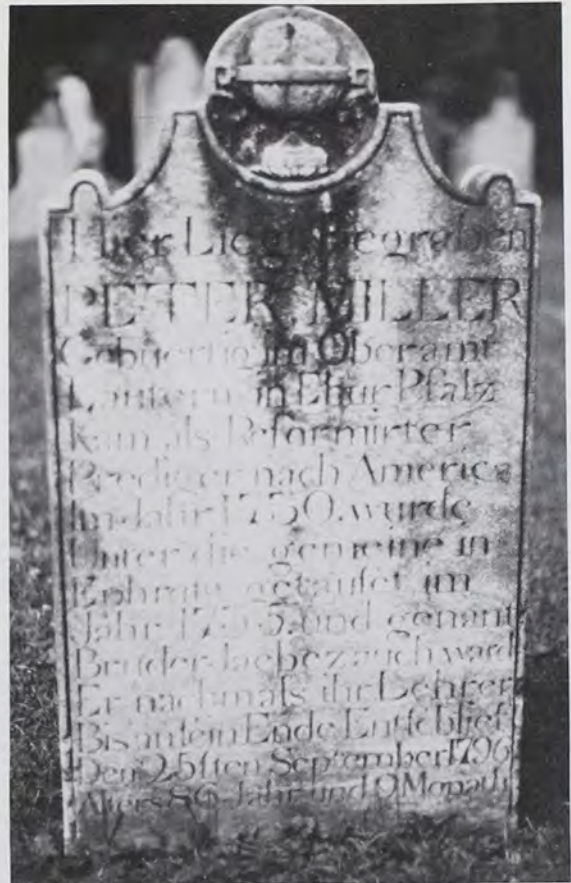


Gravestone at Ephrata Cloister; “Here lies Brother Frederick Keller; he died 10 November 1771, 34 years and ten months old.”

tary male and female principles, orthodoxy defines as ultimate reality the immutable triune patriarch-creator who rules with absolute, if loving, power over his creation. Whereas Beissel described the Fall as the separation of the union into its constituent, opposing parts, orthodoxy views it in terms of the separation of the union between God and his creation — because of the disobedience of the first woman. Whereas redemption for Beissel meant the recovery of the divine feminine, redemption for orthodoxy is the recovery of the original hierarchical relationship between the creator and his creation.



Gravestone at Ephrata Cloister; "Here rests the body of Anna Seifert, died 1772 in her 48th year." Note the triple tulip of faith, hope, and love.



Gravestone at Ephrata Cloister; "Here lies buried Peter Miller, born in Kaiserslautern District of the Palatinate. Came to America as a Reformed Pastor in 1730 and joined the order at Ephrata, where he was baptized in 1735; was called 'Brother Jabez.' He was a teacher all his life . . ."

What does Beissel's heterodoxy signify? Is it the delusion of a mystic — or a madman? I think not; I think rather that if one explores the roots and nature of his theological Sophia-centered cosmic drama, a different view emerges.

Recent scholarship, and particularly that of Rose Horman Arthur, has uncovered the existence of a Sophiological tradition in early Western theology. She traces it back to the Hellenistic era, in the religious movement called Gnosticism which spread throughout Alexander's empire from approximately the first century before the Christian era to the second century of the Christian era. Gnostics placed the highest value on discovering the nature of ultimate reality because they believed that this knowledge, or *gnosis*, was salvific; that it liberated humans from bondage to deception and untruth.¹⁷

In at least three of Gnosticism's various expressions, their guide to attaining this supreme wisdom was embodied in a female deity called Sophia. Gnostics viewed her as an autonomous, preexistent entity before all of creation who was either the original creator or a co-participant in creation. As such, Sophia had perfect in-

sights into the nature of all things. In Gnostic cosmological accounts she was often portrayed as rebuking a challenge from an arrogant, fallen creator-god of the human realm, Ialdabaoth. It was his boast that he was the true god. Then, either Sophia or her daughter Eve, born in a virgin birth, impart to his deceived creation their liberating words of knowledge that will lead it back to union with the true god, Sophia.

In Arthur's view, the suppression of the Gnostic Sophia tradition began in the third century of the Christian era when many Gnostic theological accounts became "Christianized." That is, the Wisdom Goddess was either masculinized and absorbed into the Christ figure or the motifs surrounding her were devalued. Thus, the notion of wisdom becoming a fool in order to make people wise appears; or the image of a fallen or flawed Sophia emerges which is the result of involvement in the world of matter, or because she represents the fallible aspect of God. Along with the rest of creation, Sophia becomes one in need of redemption which is now accomplished by the son of the male god.¹⁸

Other scholars, like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, have discovered a Sophiological tradition within early



Samuel Baumann print logo done at Ephrata c. 1802. Ephrata's print shop was one of the earliest in the colonies.

Christianity. Fiorenza holds that the "Jesus movement" represented a renewal effort within late Hellenistic Judaism that drew upon elements of Jewish Wisdom theology to formulate an alternative to the exclusivist patriarchal structures of first century Judaism.¹⁹

Thus, while other groups within Judaism emphasized God's stern and judgmental nature; while they described God in masculine terms and images; and while they restricted the numbers of God's elect to a "priesthood" of the righteous and pious — the Jesus movement spoke of Israel's God as the gracious and loving Sophia (Wisdom) who recognized all of Israel as her children. They taught that Jesus was one of her prophets who came to reveal to Israel her immediate knowledge of the wholeness of original creation in which there was neither rich nor poor, neither sickness nor death, Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, but a harmonious unity reflecting the image of the divine — and Sophia's intention that it be restored. This was the renewal for which God's people should be working, not the salvation of a select few. Accordingly, Jesus and his followers established communities reflecting the inclusiveness and egalitarianism of the first creation.²⁰



Fraktur letters (D,O,F; N, p. 55) from an Ephrata Cloister student music book now at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa.

Even with the later development of the Christian missionary movement in which Christ was perceived as the incarnation of Sophia — an androgynous unity of wisdom and spirit, but in male form — Christian theology remained Sophiology. However, the Sophia tradition of early Christianity suffered a fate similar to the fate of the Sophiology of Gnosticism. Fiorenza traces its decline, beginning with the Pauline modifications of one of its key tenets, the discipleship of equals. Paul insisted that unmarried persons were more suitable for missionary work than married ones, and that married men more able than married women, implicitly limiting their activities to the home. With this, Paul began a process that culminated in the theological defamation and marginalization of women within Christianity, and the concomitant conceptualization of the divine as male in the second and third centuries of the Christian era.²¹

Thus far, this analysis has suggested that perhaps Beissel represents a recovery of an earlier theological

Sophia tradition. However, Beissel's Sophiology also shares features of the Pietist movement. Unlike previous interpreters who view Pietism as a resurgence of trends of the "Radical Reformation," another view argues that Pietism was closely linked to the rise of the Enlightenment. In the years between 1550 and 1660, the established post-Reformation churches represented a synthesis between faith and reason, between obedience to rules and experiential immediacy, between community and individual, and between doctrine and mysticism. This synthesis gradually dissolved in the last decades of the seventeenth century due to a challenge from within. The Enlightenment elevated reason as the sole guide to truth, while Pietism declared inner experience as decisive. Radical Pietism, furthermore, rejected the churches with their creeds, doctrines, and rules as "encasements" of divine *sophia* or wisdom. They argued that the true church was supradenominational, separated from the established churches, and founded communities where they would court the "Woman in the Wilderness," as one seventeenth century radical Pietist community in Pennsylvania was called. She would edify them so they could edify others as to the restoration of all things to their original perfection.²²

The origins of the Sophiology of radical Pietism can be traced to a mystical tradition that includes the sixteenth century Swiss physician, Theophrastus Paracelsus. Paracelsus explained that he was led by the "light" of his inner "divine magia" to discover that all of creation shared in divine nature, the cultivation of which, with her guidance, would allow for the reestablishment of the original harmony that had existed between the creator and creation.²³

This tradition included, as well, the experiences of the sixteenth century German mystic, Jacob Boehme, who described his "divine magia," or Sophia, as the "Queen of Heaven," the "revelation of God," and the bearer of divine wisdom who would unite with those who "courted" her and lead them on the way to Christ and their salvation.²⁴

The works of the seventeenth century author, Gottfried Arnold, formed another element of this German mystical tradition. Arnold experienced Sophia as his "spiritual mother-bride" because he was her child who also desired spiritual union with her. Sophia was the "Holy Spirit of God" who first led those united with her to discover their need for redemption and then encouraged them and nourished them daily with her divine wisdom that enabled them to travel the path to reunion with the father-God.²⁵

Yet Beissel's Sophiology may have recovered for Christian theology not only suppressed elements of Gnosticism, early pre-patriarchal Christianity, and German post-medieval mysticism, but also one form of the female archetype, to use Carl Jung's terminology. Humans can become whole, Jung asserted, only if what

he called the animus and anima are in balance in a given individual — if they have become complementary in consciously contemplated symbols as well as in the deep recesses of semi-conscious and unconscious life. Erich Neumann has charted the multiple forms of the feminine archetype in whose schema Sophia represents its most sublime expression. Conral Beissel's theology, then, may signify the reemergence of the female archetype to central importance in the life of a Christian community. Beissel recovered the feminine from, in Jung's words, the "collective unconscious" — from the "immense reservoir, whence mankind draws the images, the forces which it [then] translates into very different languages."²⁶

This essay did not intend to argue where the significance of Beissel's Sophiology lies. What it did intend was to identify his spirituality as Sophiology and then to explore some possibilities of its meaning. Not only theological traditions have their canons, but also secular disciplines, both of which are established by a process of marginalization and exclusion. From this process results a perspective that limits the scope of analytical possibilities. Applied to Beissel's feminine-centered spirituality, the process of marginalization and exclusion makes him at best a strange mystic; at worst a madman.²⁷ When the fetters of established canons of scholarship are overcome, however, Beissel's Sophiology may be viewed as either the recovery of ancient but suppressed spiritual traditions in Western culture, or as a reintroduction of the most sublime aspect of the female archetype into Christian theology.²⁸



ENDNOTES

¹Beissel's only biographer to date is Walter Klein, *Johann Conrad Beissel: Mystic and Martinet* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1972). The most comprehensive history of Ephrata is E.G. Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counterculture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985). For an idiosyncratic yet valuable account of Ephrata, see Julius F. Sachse, *The German Secretarians of Pennsylvania*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: By the Author, 1899-1900; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press, 1971). See Delburn

Carpenter, *The Radical Pietists: Celibate Communal Societies Established in the United States Before 1820* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Northern Iowa, 1972; New York: AMS Press, 1975), for an overview of seven early North American communal societies; besides Ephrata, Carpenter examines Bohemia Manor, the "Woman in the Wilderness," the Shaker Society, the Society of Universal Friends, the Harmony Society, and the Separatist Society of Zoar.

³Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Work and Hope: The Spirituality of the Radical Pietist Communitarians," *Church History*, vol. 39 (March 1970), pp. 72-90. Carpenter, pp. 61-114. For a concise introduction to Pietism in German-speaking regions, see Martin Schmidt, "Pietismus," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 5 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1961), pp. 373-381. See also F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973); and Dale Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1978). For a collection of translated Pietist writings, see Peter C. Erb, ed., *Pietists: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); there are selections from Spener, Francke, Arnold, Tersteegen, Bengel, Oetinger, and Zinzendorf. On Boehme, see Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Macmillan, 1914; reprint ed., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1971), pp. 151-234; and Jacob Boehme, *The Way to Christ*, introd. and trans. Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

⁴Alderfer, pp. 5-8, 12.

⁵Klein, pp. 3, 6, 91, 94.

⁶F. Ernest Stoeffler, "Mysticism in the German Devotional Literature of Colonial Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania German Society Publications*, vol. 14 (Allentown, PA: Schlechter's, 1949), pp. 34, 45, 63-65.

⁷This outline is a distillation of the corpus of Beissel's translated religious treatises published between 1730-1773. I have focused in particular on *A Dissertation on Man's Fall*, published at Ephrata in 1765, because I believe that it is the most complete expression of his spirituality as it evolved into its final form at Ephrata.

⁸Conrad Beissel, *A Dissertation on Man's Fall* (Ephrata, PA: 1765), pp. 5-6.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 6, 11-12; idem, "Deliciae Ephratenses I," in *Johann Conrad Beissel and the Ephrata Community: Mystical and Historical Texts*, ed. Peter C. Erb (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), pp. 116-117.

¹⁰*Dissertation*, p. 7; "Deliciae Ephratenses I," pp. 117, 125.

¹¹*Dissertation*, pp. 2, 4, 25-26.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 3, 10, 12; "Deliciae Ephratenses I," pp. 119-120; idem, "Deliciae Ephratenses II," in Erb, ed. (1985), p. 163.

¹³Conrad Beissel, "Ninety-Nine Mystical Proverbs," trans. Peter Miller, reprinted in *Pennsylvania German Society Publications*, vol. 21 (Allentown: PA: Schlechter's, 1910), p. 23.

¹⁴*Dissertation*, p. 15.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 3, 15, 18, 22, 25-26; "Deliciae Ephratenses I," pp. 114-155, 120-124; "Deliciae Ephratenses II," pp. 169-170. See John Layard, "The Incest Taboo and the Virgin Archetype," in *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, vol. 12 (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1946), pp. 254-307, for an analysis of the meaning of virginity (and celibacy) from the perspective of Jungian depth psychology. Layard used individual case studies and the myths of both Western and non-Western societies to illustrate that virginity often signified completeness, an androgynous wholeness; this state was the result of union with a divine other, the goal of many celibates. In Jungian terminology, this denotes psycho-spiritual union with a given individual's anima and animus.

¹⁶*Dissertation*, pp. 16, 29, 32-33; "Deliciae Ephratenses II," pp. 170-171.

¹⁷*Dissertation*, pp. 23, 35; "Deliciae Ephratenses II," p. 157.

¹⁸Rose Horman Arthur, "The Wisdom Goddess and the Masculinization of Western Religion," in *Women in the World's Religions, Past and Present*, ed. Ursula King (New York: Paragon House, 1987), pp. 24-37; idem, *The Wisdom Goddess: Feminine Motifs in Eight Nag Hammadi Documents* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984). For an introduction to Gnosticism that views it as a religion in its own right and not merely a Christian heresy, see Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963). Also, Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. ed. R. McL. Wilson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983). See *Gnosis*, ed. R.

McL. Wilson, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 6-9, regarding the classification of Gnostic texts according to their religious content as Christian or non-Christian. Of related interest is Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 17 (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 464-526, for a history of the concept of sophia (wisdom).

¹⁹"The Wisdom Goddess," pp. 25-27, 29, 31, 33-35; *The Wisdom Goddess*, pp. ix, 3-6, 8-9, 11, 15-16, 28-35, 47-48, 53, 55, 57, 64-65, 71, 73, 74-75, 81, 83-84, 99, 110, 112, 115, 117, 123-124, 133-134, 154, 176, 186.

²⁰Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), pp. 107, 132-133.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 110, 112, 119, 132-134, 196, 206-211.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 170, 177, 189, 235.

²³This argument follows Leo Schelbert, "From Reformed Preacher in the Palatinate to Pietist Monk in Pennsylvania: The Spiritual Path of Johann Peter Müller (1709-1796)," in Hans Trefousse, ed., *Germany and America: Essays on Problems of International Relations and Immigration* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1980), pp. 139-140; idem, "On the Power of Pietism: A Documentary on the Thommens of Schaefferstown," *Historic Schaefferstown Record*, vol. 17 (July-Oct 1983), pp. 44-46.

²⁴Walter Pagel, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance*, 2nd. rev. ed. (Basel: S. Karger, 1982), pp. 50-51, 55-58, 208, 226-227; idem, *Religion and Neoplatonism in Renaissance Medicine*, ed. Marianne Winder (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), pp. 135-136.

²⁵Boehme, pp. 9-10, 17, 24, 60-62, 154-155, 249.

²⁶Erb, *Pietists*, pp. 219-226.

²⁷For a comprehensive introduction to Jung's psychoanalytical theory, see Jolande Jacobi, *The Psychology of C.G. Jung* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973). For a more extensive discussion of Jung's concept of the archetypes of the unconscious as well as how Jung's theory of the unconscious contrasts with that of Freud's, see C.G. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Ser. XX, vol. 7 2nd. rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 64-79, 90-113, 127-155; also, idem, *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2nd. ed. (1968), pp. 3-53. On the integration of the anima and animus, *ibid.*, pp. 54-72, 275-289; see pp. 290-354, for a detailed description of this process from a case study by Jung. Regarding some key symbolic expressions of the syzygy of the anima and animus, see idem, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2nd. rev. ed. (1968), pp. 11-22.

Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Ser. XLVII (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

²⁸This essay was inspired, in part, by the challenge of Michel Foucault's analysis of the assumptions that inform post-Enlightenment academic canons. See his *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourses on Language*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1972); and Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (London: Tavistock, 1980).

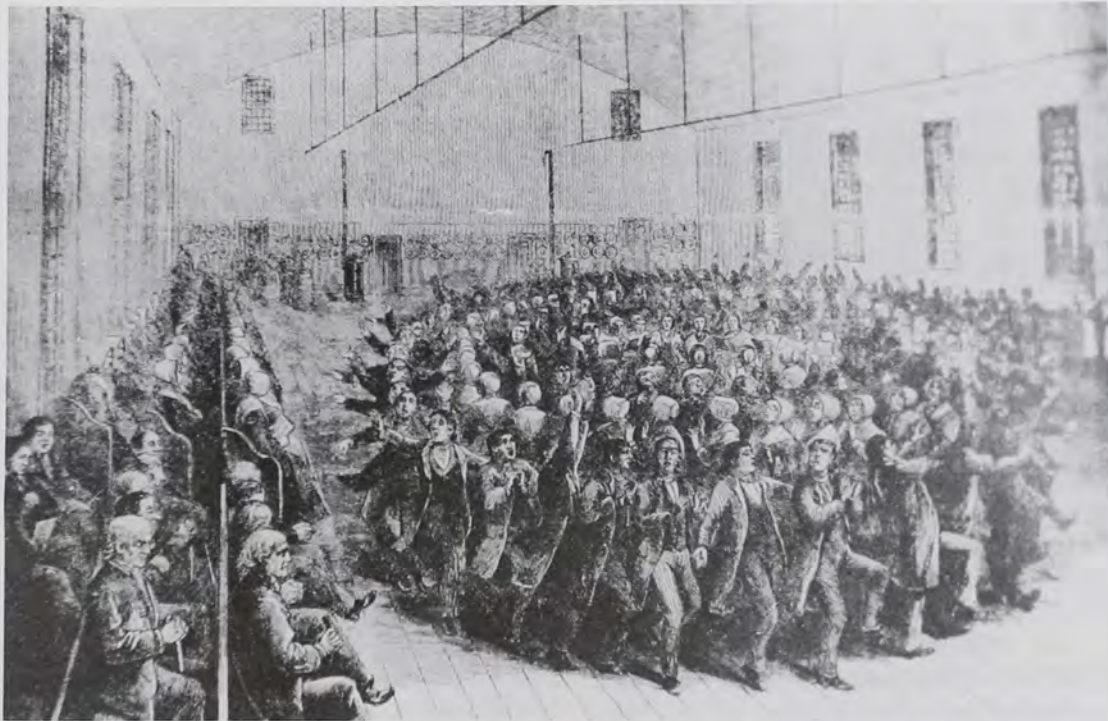
²⁹Joan Chamberlain Engelsman, *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine* (Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications, 1987), traces the repression of the feminine aspect of the divine in Western theology from the Hellenistic era. She analyzes, as well, the return of the feminine in Christian theology, but in disguised and distorted forms, such as the Virgin Mary and the Church as the bride of Christ, which results in psychologically and spiritually inadequate symbols of ultimate reality. (My thanks to Peter Erb for his criticism of an earlier version of this paper in which I neglected to clarify what I meant by the return of the "feminine" in Christian theology.)

Pamela Berger, *The Goddess Obscured: Transformation of the Grain Protectress from Goddess to Saint* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), follows the decline of the goddess tradition in Western theology and yet its preservation in folk cultures — a phenomenon also noted by Chamberlain.

For a sourcebook of the goddess tradition in Eastern and Western religious traditions (including Native American religions), see *The Book of the Goddess, Past and Present*, ed. Carl Olson (New York: Crossroad, 1988).

A Religious and Geographical History of the Shakers, 1747-1988

by Lee C. Hopple



*The interior of the second meetinghouse at Watervliet, with believers performing a "wheel" dance. Aged and infirm members watch. (Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple*, p. 101.)*

Although the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing — better known as Shakers — traces its religious-spatial origins from France to England to America, the movement was not well organized when the first adherents embarked for the New World. It was not until after the group arrived in New York that the precepts of the faith were systematically articulated and formally organized. Shakerism thus developed on American soil and, with its communal society, its peculiar religious beliefs and practices, and its status as a separatist sect, emerged as a strictly American subculture.¹

The Shakers were religious heirs of such Old World heretical sects as the Montanists, Manicheans, Albigenians, Waldensians and most particularly, the Camisards (also called the French Prophets). A radical splinter group convinced that Christ's second coming was close at hand, these French Prophets "were also the parent of the Inspirationist Movement in Germany which produced the Amana Society and influenced Conrad Beissel and the Ephrata Society."²

Persecuted in their own country, many Camisards sought religious and civil liberty in England, and in 1747 James and Jane Wardley, both Quakers, came under their influence in Manchester. Leaving the Quakers, the Wardleys conducted a "new Quaker" revival espousing many Camisard-like preachings. Since their meetings, which began with silent meditation, soon erupted into loud singing and all manner of other noises, and included floor walking, arm waving, shaking, and dancing, members were first known as "Shaking Quakers."³

The parents of one Ann Lee⁴ (1736-1784) were among the first to convert, and in 1758 Ann herself joined the small band of religious dissidents led by the Wardleys. This new-found relationship marked a turning point in Ann Lee's life, although she does not appear to have become an active member for some time after joining the Society.⁵ Ann's marriage to Abraham Stanley in 1762 resulted in the birth of four children, all of whom died in infancy.

In July, 1772, Ann Lee, along with her father, John, and several other men, was arrested in Manchester for

conducting a rowdy religious meeting which authorities said constituted a breach of the Sabbath. Ann and her father were sentenced to a month in prison, but the Shaker meetings continued as before. Ann was arrested again in the spring of 1773 and, unable to pay the fine, was imprisoned. Incarceration heralded her ascendancy to unrivaled authority in the slowly organizing sect, and while in confinement she "beheld the grand vision of the transgression of Adam and Eve, the cause wherein man was lost and separated from God." In prison Christ appeared to her and commissioned her to "preach the Gospel of the Stainless life."⁶

A central tenet in Shaker thought, that the Spirit of Christ so suffused her being that she regarded herself as His special instrument, apparently was formulated during this internment. To her associates she became a martyr and a saint, an inspired leader on whom had fallen the mantle of Christ. Thus leadership of the group passed from the Wardleys to Ann Lee, who subsequently assumed the title of "Mother Ann," or "Mother of the New Creation." Such titles are understandable when one considers that

The Cardinal concept of Shakerism as a system of ideas is that of the duality of the Godhead in male and female forms, and the second coming of Christ in Mother Ann. Calvin Green and Seth Wells in their *Summary View of the Millennial Church* (1823) spend much time defending what they term "the Manifestation of Christ in the Female." They cite a long chain of evidence which takes us to the Deborahs and Esthers of the Old Testament through whom God "did condescend to reveal his mind and will to females, who were then commissioned, by Divine Authority, to bear testimony thereof to man." But their authentication of Mother Ann is based in the end on the doctrine of creation. In God's dealings with the world, Adam and the "Second Adam" (Christ), Eve and the "Second Woman" (Ann) are paired and balanced. Adam and Christ had miraculous births, Eve and Ann had natural births. Eve led mankind into the work of generation, Ann was "empowered to break the charm which binds mankind under that loss, and to take the lead in coming out of it." She "took up a final cross against that nature, and against all those propensities which lead to the gratification of it." Thus an entire theological superstructure is constructed to defend the new creation of Shakerism.⁸

Ann Lee herself said: "I converse with Christ, I feel Him present with me, I have been walking in Fine Vallies with Christ, He is my head and my husband, I have no other." Her claim to be the female Christ was not unprecedented; indeed:

We need not seek beyond the 17th and 18th centuries for precedents for the Shaker doctrine of

Christ revealed in the female. On the continent of Europe radical Pietists, following Jakob Boehme and cabbalistic theosophy, had developed the concept of the Virgin Sophia, the female counterpart of Christ in the spiritual universe, the mirror of God in whom God sees himself reflected. These ideas filtered into England by way of the Behmenists . . . The concept of the Virgin Sophia has come down to American contexts through the German wing of the inspirationist movement, through such groups as the Ephrata Society and the Harmonites, while in the English wing of inspirationism the figure of Ann Lee becomes Christ in female form.¹⁰

EMIGRATION TO AMERICA

Despite the continuation of their uproarious worship services, the Shakers were unmolested after Ann Lee's second release from prison. Nevertheless, public resentment and official hostility coupled with stagnant membership resulted in her decision to emigrate to America. At this time, the general framework of Shaker doctrine had been formulated, but a systematic theology had yet to be articulated. Nor had the emigrating members an organized plan for survival in the New World. Still, arrangements were made to leave England, and on board the ship *Mariah* departing Liverpool 10 May 1774, were Ann Lee, her husband, her brother, a niece, and five other followers.

The *Mariah* docked in New York harbor on August 6, 1774, and at first the new immigrants floundered aimlessly there. But a mutual desire to establish a community where they could reside together prevailed, and when they heard of an available tract of cheap land near Albany, three of the group — John Hocknell, William Lee, and James Whittaker — proceeded to investigate. Following the course of the Hudson River they found the land, called Niskeyuna, about eight miles northwest of Albany. It proved to be a desolate and swampy wilderness, totally unsuited for settlement.

Being resilient men, the three found employment in Albany and continued the search for land. Soon they were able to lease a more desirable tract around Niskeyuna, and traveling between their places of employment in Albany and Niskeyuna, began to diligently prepare the ground for planting. They began farming in the spring of 1775, when the remaining members (with the exception of Mother Ann who remained in New York earning a living by washing and ironing) joined them on the new property. Mother Ann procured a divorce from her husband (who had left her) in 1775, and joined the others in Niskeyuna in 1776. Enduring all the privations of frontier life, the tiny Shaker settlement achieved a modest measure of prosperity by 1779. And, although there is no evidence they had at-



The Shaker Community at Watervliet (originally Niskeyuna) New York; the North Family stand in front of their living quarters. (Courtesy of the Shaker Museum, Old Chatham, N. Y.)

tracted any converts up until this time, a period of religious growth and development was about to begin.¹¹

* * *

The religious revival known as the Great Awakening, popular in New England between 1730 and 1750, was suddenly resurrected in the late 1770s. At that time a millennial revival within the Congregational Church resulted in an irreconcilable rift between traditional members, called Old Lights, and a separatist millennial body named the New Lights.

New Light millennial revival meetings were soon held in many towns across Connecticut and Massachusetts. These revival services were proclaimed a necessary prerequisite to the millennium — that time of Christ's Second Coming and subsequent one thousand year reign. The emotions generated by these beliefs led to tumultuous worship services characterized by shouting, screaming, loud preaching, the uttering of prophecies, and claims to having seen signs and visions.

Such meetings soon incited violent riots, and many New Lighters were arrested and driven from their homes. In desperation, prominent New Light preachers Talmadge Bishop and Reuben Wright set out for New York and, by happenstance, arrived in Niskeyuna where they met Ann Lee. Favorably impressed by the Shakers,

and particularly impressed by the strength of Ann Lee's convictions, they informed their New Light associates. They were soon joined by Joseph Meacham, Calvin Harrow, and Aaron Kibbee, all prominent New Light leaders.¹²

These six interviewed Ann Lee several times, questioning her intensively about her beliefs. During these conferences she methodically and articulately propounded Shaker doctrine; verbalizing, in fact, a systematic theology. Her most impressive point — for it rendered the New Light movement meaningless — was that the millennium occurred with the Resurrection.¹³

The clarity and cohesiveness of Ann Lee's responses to questions, the almost hypnotizing power of Shaker proselytizing techniques, and the mystical attraction of Shaker religious meetings overwhelmed the New Light leaders. They, and other revivalists arriving in Niskeyuna, were easily converted. The Shaker population began to increase slowly but steadily, and a second settlement was founded at New Lebanon, New York. Growth continued during the next two years as additional New Light revivalists arrived from New England, and some local residents adopted the faith as well. At the same time, the theological tenets of the faith were further clarified.

The cardinal doctrine of Ann Lee's faith as conceived in prison and emanating directly from her "Grand Vi-

sion," revolves around the belief that all the evils of the world — war, slavery, famine, poverty, disease, corruption, vice, the inequality of the sexes, and all forms of human depravity — were the result of concupiscence caused by the work and deceit of the devil. Thus, the mission of the church is to free individuals from human bondage. Confession is the door to freedom from bondage and the door to a regenerate life; celibacy is its rule and cross.¹⁴

Hence, a strange form of dualism, another basic Shaker principle, emanated directly from the doctrine of celibacy. Ann Lee taught that since Adam and Eve are male and female and essentially made in the image of God, it necessarily follows that God must exist as eternal Father and Mother. Since they are the parents of all human and angelic beings, it also logically follows that they must be male and female. The ideal human society, therefore, is a kind of celibate socialism isolated from the world — a spiritual family patterned after the natural family. (The fundamental Shaker social group was, in fact, called a family.) Although Ann Lee advocated and strongly emphasized sexual equality, she considered celibacy the keystone of a virtuous life. As noted, she believed uncontrolled sexual passion, which originated with Adam and Eve, to be the root of human sin. Consequently, marriage is in direct variance with the spiritual life, and Shakers insisted that only the corrupted children of a profane world will marry. Indeed, they believed that the natural inclinations are so vile that if they are not overcome in this world, they will intensify in hell and constitute the torments of the damned.¹⁵

The Shakers also subscribed to an especially peculiar perception of the religious history of the world. They perceived it as being comprised of four major cycles, (each divided into countless sub-cycles), with each cycle with its own heaven and hell and its own progressive revelation of the Deity. According to Shaker teaching, the first cycle culminated under Noah when the Deity revealed himself as the Spirit; the second ended with Moses when God became known as Jehovah; and the third reached its climax under Jesus, through whom Christ was revealed. But since Jesus was a man he could reveal only the Father, and the fourth cycle reached its apex when Ann Lee, whose parents were male and female in Christ, revealed the Mother Spirit, or the love of Christ. Thus Ann Lee — Mother Ann — the female counterpart of Jesus, the bride of Jesus, and the mother of all spiritual things, is worthy of the same honor as Jesus.¹⁶

Shaker worship, which reflected these mystical doctrines, was highly ecstatic and spellbinding to the casual observer, a fact attested to by many. One observer, for example, described it thus: "Their worship seemed highly disorganized and began with brief periods of silent, seemingly reverent meditation. Then there were sudden individual outbursts of totally disorganized

shouting, singing strange tuneless songs, wild laughter, dancing, violent shaking of the limbs, rolling on the floor, speaking odd mixtures of English and meaningless mumbling, muteless staring, even tobacco smoking, as well as many other strange gesticulations and sounds. Then they suddenly stop and the meeting ends. They conduct several such meetings daily."¹⁷

THE MISSION TO NEW ENGLAND

In 1781 Ann Lee decided to lead a religious mission to New England. She had first envisioned the trip several years earlier, but now several events provided the impetus for her to go: the increase in membership made available the human resources essential to extensive traveling and preaching; a hostile political climate had recently developed in the Niskeyuna-Mt. Lebanon area; and a growing number of complaints, including an accusation that the Shakers were conspiring with the British, made life uncomfortable in New York.

So in May of that year Mother Ann and six associates left Niskeyuna and proceeded to Mt. Washington, Massachusetts. Then they traveled to Enfield, Grafton, and Stillwater, before arriving in Harvard where they established their mission headquarters. They spent the rest of 1781 preaching in Harvard and the surrounding area. During 1782 they spread the Shaker gospel through the Massachusetts towns of Petersham, Granby, Montague, Asfeld, Shelbourne, Shirley, Stillwater, Bolton, Woburn, and Rehoboth; and in Stonington, Enfield, Preston, and Stafford, Connecticut. Physically exhausted, they spent the winter in Enfield, returning to Harvard in the spring of 1783.¹⁸

On this missionary trip the Shakers profited yet again from a New England revival movement. A rebellion against structural Calvinism began within the Baptist church in New Durham, New Hampshire, under the leadership of one Benjamin Randall. The Baptist dissidents organized the so-called Free Will Church, and Free Will Baptism became rather strongly entrenched and widely dispersed across New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. So, during the summer of 1782 Mother Ann sent a preaching delegation to investigate and open a dialogue with the Free Willers. Since the Free Will movement was closely akin to Shakerism their adherents were easily swayed and converted by the Shaker preachers.¹⁹ Former Free Willers James Hewett and Joseph Catton became the leading Shaker proselytizers in northern New England: Hewett preached in New Durham, Canterbury, and Enfield, New Hampshire, and in Hartford, Vermont; Catton spread Shakerism through Aldred, Gorham, Lyman, Waterborough, Windham, Falmouth, Poland, and New Gloucester, Maine.²⁰

Unfortunately for the faithful, the anti-Shaker demonstrations which had hindered the New England mis-

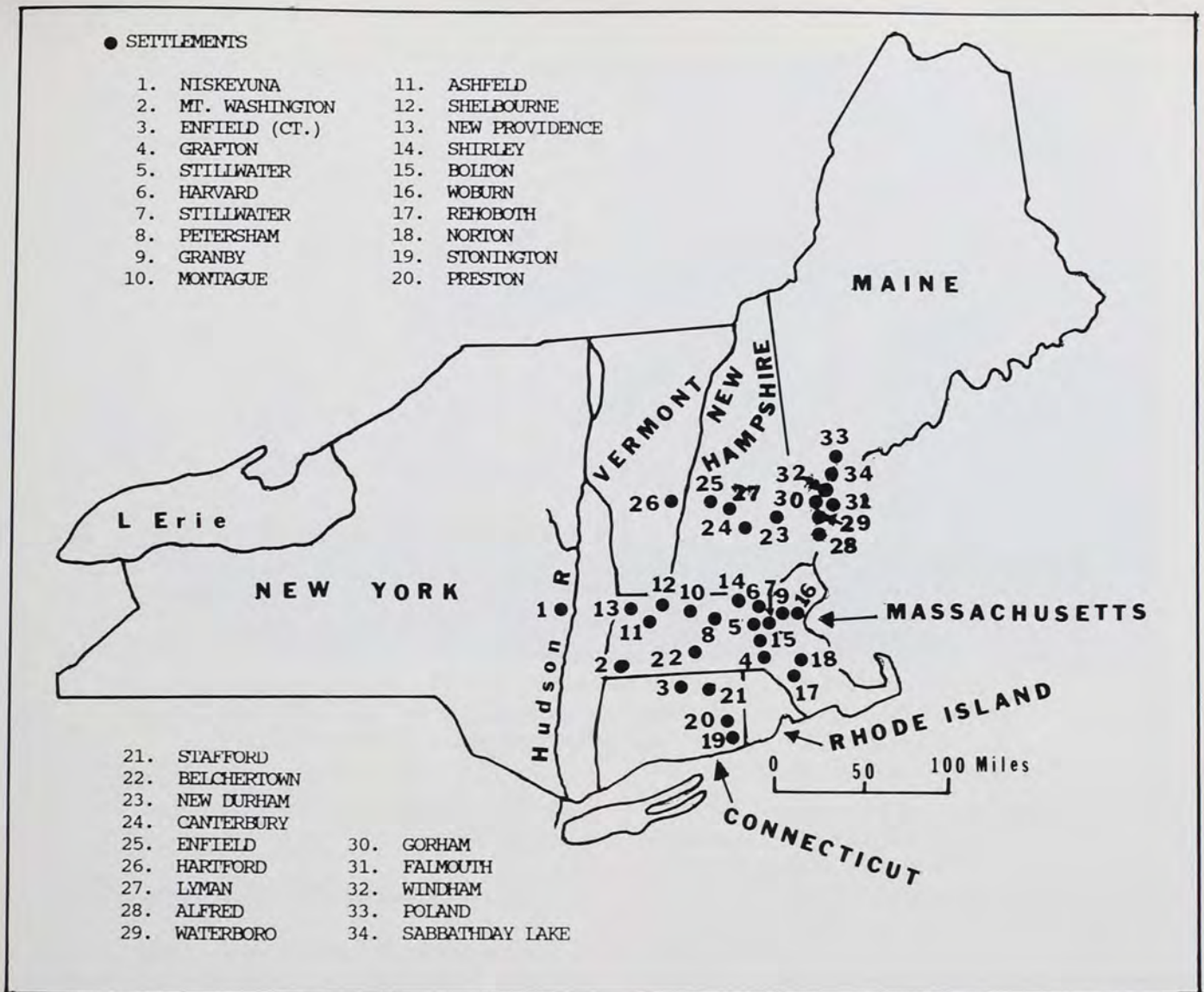


Figure 1; Shaker settlements in the Northeast.

sion since its inception in 1781 gradually intensified in the following two years. Shakers were arrested, subjected to mock trials, frequently incarcerated, and sometimes physically abused. They were accused of witchcraft, sorcery, delusion, subversion, treason, and "collusion with the Papacy." Riots occurred in Enfield, Connecticut, and in Bolton, Petersham, and Harvard, Massachusetts, with the Harvard demonstration being especially violent. There Ann Lee and her immediate associates were subjected to a mob tribunal, and were savagely beaten and dragged through the streets. The next day they left for New York and arrived home on September 4, 1783.²¹

And so, after two years and four months of labor and hardship, Ann Lee returned to Niskeyuna broken in health. Those years of incessant work, of exposure, privation, and persecution had sapped her strength, and her health deteriorated rapidly. She died at Niskeyuna on September 4, 1784; she was not yet forty-eight years old.

Considering that she had but one decade of life in America, Ann Lee's achievements are most impressive.

She established the Shaker faith on American soil; methodically organized her religious doctrines and theological precepts; witnessed the founding of two small but thriving settlements, Niskeyuna and Mt. Lebanon; and spread the faith across large sections of New England and obtained a large number of converts (see Fig. 1). Her efforts led to the establishment of eleven celibate religious communes, the basic Shaker settlement pattern in America.

* * *

Mother Ann had made it very clear that she was to be succeeded by James Whittaker and he, in turn, by Joseph Meacham. Thus, following Father James's untimely death in July, 1786, one of Father Joseph's first actions was to elevate Lucy Wright to lead the female line; this appointment was the initial step in organizing a dual order based on sexual equality. And it was Meacham who organized the Shakers "into communities holding a 'joint interest' or common property,"²² when he founded the first communes at Mt. Lebanon



*The gambrel-roofed building in the background was the first Shaker Church built at New Lebanon in 1785; it was replaced in 1822 by the larger building in the foreground. (From Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple* p. 20; all photographs reprinted with permission.)*

and Niskeyuna (later renamed Watervliet) in 1787.

In New England, where proselytizing Shaker missionaries had attracted converts in every town in which they preached, adherents gradually assembled in and around nine principal centers which were soon organized as celibate communes. These were at Hancock, Tryingham, Harvard, and Shirley in Massachusetts; at Enfield in Connecticut and Canterbury and Enfield in New Hampshire; and at Alfred and New Gloucester (Sabbathday Lake) in Maine.

An intensely dedicated missionary sect, the Shakers also tried to establish new daughter settlements, the result being small, relatively informally organized communities called out-families, missions, or branches. Most of these out-family settlements proved to be quite ephemeral, and only four were established in the northeast: at Cheshire and Savoy in Massachusetts; at Gorham, Maine; and at New Canaan, New York.²³

In contrast to the out-family settlements, the eleven communes all increased in population, and by 1800 the Shakers claimed 1,375 members.²⁴ Between 1774 and 1800 their population increased at the rate of approximately fifty-three per year. The average number of adherents per commune was nearly 125 in 1800, but since about fifty were members of the Cheshire out-family and an additional 100 were dispersed among other towns, the average communal population was about 110. Then, in 1804 there was suddenly another opportunity for expansion. Reports of an extraordinary religious revival in Kentucky reached the Northeast, and the Shakers decided to send a delegation consisting of

three distinguished preachers to investigate this new religious movement.

EXPANSION IN THE WEST, 1805-1830

With no specific destination in mind, the three men — Benjamin Youngs, Issacher Bates, and John Meacham — set out for Kentucky on January 1, 1805. They traveled south from Watervliet, following the main stagecoach line through Peekskill, New York City, Philadelphia, and Baltimore to Washington. Leaving Washington, they turned westward and crossed Virginia into Kentucky, completing a 1,033 mile trek.

On their journey from Washington to Kentucky the Shaker missionaries preached in Leesburg, Strassburg, Staunton, Abingdon, New Market, and Lexington, Virginia. They inquired about the Kentucky revival in all these towns without success. But persistent inquiries led them to Bulls Gap, Tennessee, where they witnessed a revival meeting on February 15. Then they traveled to Cane Ridge, Kentucky, where the movement began and was centered.²⁵

The Kentucky Christian Revival Movement was caused by reaction within, and arguments between the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches; three main-line denominations. The revivalists were former members of these three churches and were called New Lights, Schismatics, or Christians. For these dissidents the Scriptures were the only rule of faith and practice; the only acceptable standard of doctrine and discipline. Their religious beliefs and practices paralleled those of the



Figure 2; Shaker settlements in the West.

Shakers, which probably accounts for their being dubbed “jerks.” Because of the religious commonalities and the persuasive powers and missionary zeal of the Shaker preachers, the Schismatic revivalists were easily and rapidly converted.²⁶ Consequently, two specific trends were closely correlated: Increasing membership in the revivalist societies usually produced a corresponding decline in the main-line churches; after which the Schismatics were converted to Shakerism.

The tireless evangelical enthusiasm of the frontier preachers undoubtedly accounts for the rapid numerical growth and territorial expansion of Shakerism in the West. The preachers conducted extensive missionary excursions across Ohio and Kentucky, completed several trips through Tennessee, and braved the frontier to the western border of Indiana. They swam rivers and streams, waded swamps, crossed woody bog lands, and traversed grassy plains. They were often cold, hungry, and without shelter, but never daunted.²⁷

Their intensive evangelizing produced noteworthy settlements at Turtle Creek, Eagle Creek, Straight Creek, Beaver Creek, Springfield (Spring-Dale), Darby, White-water, and North Union in Ohio; at Paint Lick, Cane

Ridge, Gapser, Shawnee Run, and Pleasant Hills in Kentucky; at Bulls Gap, in Tennessee; and at Busro, Indiana; as well as smaller centers across these four states²⁸ (see Fig. 2).

By 1806, the Shakers began focusing their preaching and evangelizing activities around the settlements of southwestern Ohio and north-central Kentucky. Intense evangelizing in these regions resulted in the establishment of seven communes and two out-families in the western states. Communes were founded at Union Village, Watervliet, North Union, and Whitewater in Ohio; at Pleasant Hills and South Union in Kentucky; and at Busro in Indiana; and out-families were established at Darby and Straight Creek, Ohio.²⁹

In 1826 a preaching mission from New Lebanon, New York, established the last Shaker commune founded on American soil; it was located at Sodus Bay, New York, along the shore of Lake Ontario. The mission was undertaken in response to a suggestion that a number of sympathizers resided in the Sodus Bay area. This group was easily converted by the Shaker preachers, and the commune was subsequently organized. Then, in 1836, the Society procured a new tract of land at Groveland,

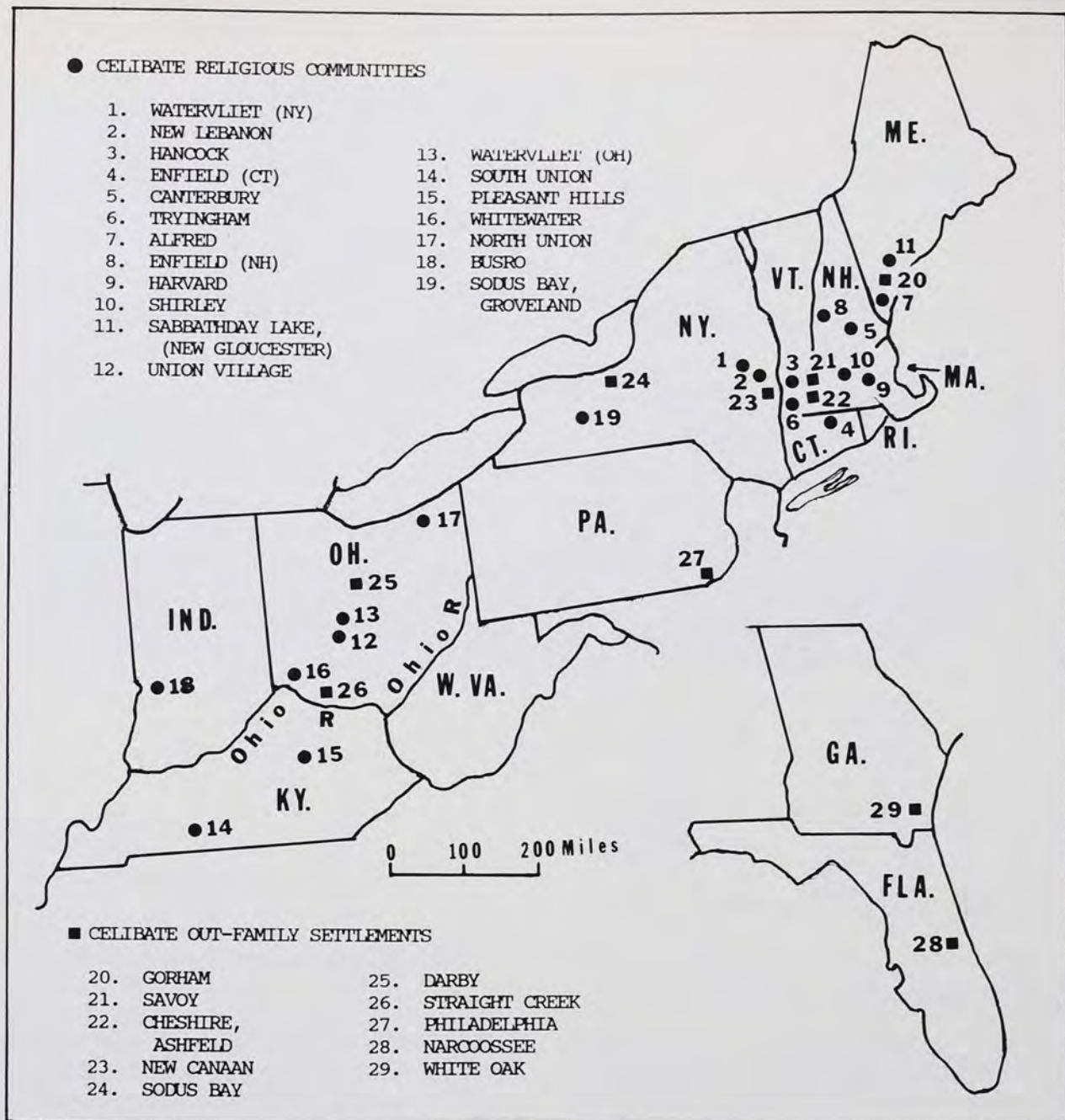


Figure 3; Shaker communes and out-families, 1780s-1988.

New York, where the commune was reorganized. Groveland served as a communications link between eastern and western Shakers. A small group remained at Sodus Bay operating as an out-family mission³⁰ (see Fig. 3 and Table 1).

The Shakers succeeded in establishing these eight new colonies only because they were willing to suffer extreme hardships. For these western missionaries endured the severe privations of frontier life, in addition to experiencing the same persecutions inflicted upon their New England brethren. Harassed almost from the time of their arrival in the West in 1805, they were accused of witchcraft, sorcery, preaching false doctrine, collusion with the Roman Church, anti-patriotism, fraternizing with the Indians, and even of kidnapping.

Anti-Shaker demonstrations became commonplace in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and gradually in-

creased in frequency and ferocity, often ending as riots. Both Shakers and New Lighters were beaten, arrested, fined, and jailed; it was not unusual for their property to be pillaged and burned. Generally the excuse for each riot was to obtain the release of a kidnapped child. The last serious mob violence occurred in 1824.³¹

Unfortunately, persecution was not the only cause of distress. Shaker pioneers were subjected to all the rigors of frontier life: hunger, cold, exposure, disease, and food shortages associated with the vagaries of unfamiliar weather and climatic conditions were common occurrences. There was much suffering from epidemics of mumps, measles, whooping cough, influenza, malaria, and other maladies.³²

In fact, it was just such conditions which proved calamitous for two of the western settlements in the 1820s. A combination of drought and crop failures



A room in the South family residence at New Lebanon, N. Y. Notice the two-step foot bench or sewing stool which raised a book or needlework to a comfortable

height when crossed legs were rested on it. (Andrews, Shaker Furniture, Plate 27.)

linked with disease and an inability to attract new converts caused the Darby mission to close and its remaining members to move to Whitewater in 1823. And malaria and other diseases, crop failures, and declining membership forced the Busro Shakers to abandon their community in 1827; the remnant membership moved to Watervliet, Union Village, and Whitewater.

Still, these were the exceptions. The other Shaker settlements in the West not only survived, but thrived as their population increased in the years from 1806 to 1827. It is believed that about 400 members were dispersed across Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Indiana when the first communes were founded in 1806. By 1820 almost 1,100 Shakers resided in the six western communes, and by 1830 they had 1,450 adherents. Thus, during the twenty-four-year period in question, the Shaker population in the West was increasing by forty-six members a year; in the East during the period 1800-1830 the increase was only about thirty-one members a year.³³

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

In general, the Shakers attempted to live within the "sacred" boundaries of their colonies and remain apart from the "profane" outside world. So Shaker communities were usually relatively rural and isolated, but economically self-sufficient settlements. Factors affecting the early spatial arrangement of buildings are not known with certainty, but their location and spacing

probably entailed considerable planning. What is certain is that the communes' internal organization clearly reflected the emphasis placed upon the work ethic — a basic religious precept. And the religious hierarchy was the supreme and final authority in all clerical and secular affairs within the commune;³⁴ every facet of the all-important communal economy was monitored by its religious leaders.

As already noted, Joseph Meacham organized the first commune at New Lebanon in 1787; all the communes established afterward were similar to it. Meacham patterned the New Lebanon commune after the Jewish Temple which was comprised of three courts, or orders: an inner, sacred order; a junior order; and an outer order. The inner court was made up of those having the greatest faith and ability, and included the core of the labor force as well as the foremen and overseers. Second order members — younger adults considered less skilled and not as dedicated — were assigned agricultural and other tasks. The outer court consisted of the aged and infirm; they supervised the settlement's extensive economic affairs.³⁵

The formal organization of a commune was known as a "gathering" (defined as "an inflow of converts"). A gathering constituted the acceptance of a covenant by prospective members. Usually implemented as an oral agreement and later committed to writing, the covenant included all the rules and regulations of the colony, and bound the members and their goods to the community.

SHAKER GOVERNMENT

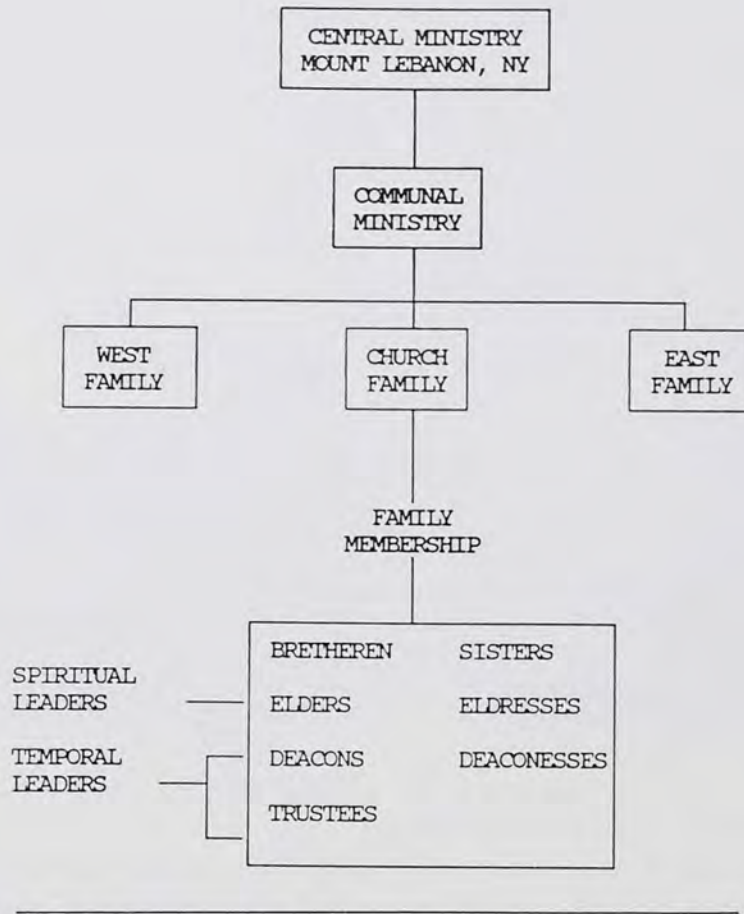


FIGURE 4. SOURCE: EDWARD HORGAN, THE SHAKER HOLY LAND, p. 52.

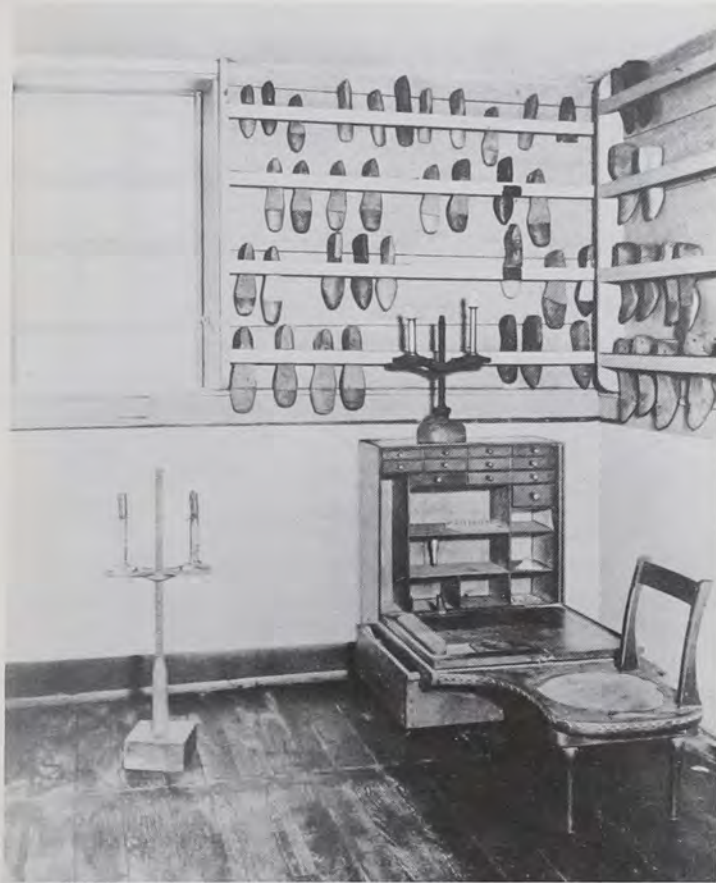
It was, in essence, a clerical-temporal constitution.³⁶

Supreme authority over the entire United Society was vested in the central ministry of two elders (Fathers) and two eldresses (Mothers) centered in New Lebanon. They appointed the communal ministry of two elders and two eldresses (spiritual leaders), two deacons and two deaconesses (temporal leaders), and one or more trustees.³⁷ Overseeing the colony's celibate dormitories was one of the trustees' principal duties. As the hallmark precept of the faith, the necessity for surveillance of the sexually segregated dormitories was recognized from the beginning of the communal system. In general, the trustees were responsible for all facets of civil life within the colony (see Fig. 4).

From the time of its inception, the Shaker movement emulated the religious rituals and worship practices of the other primitive sects. But in the first quarter of the nineteenth century there was a turn toward discipline and decorum in worship, and the disorderly service described above gradually became subservient to the well-being of the Society as a whole, for the Shakers at that time were trying to gain the respect of the outside world.³⁸

Such mystical experiences and rituals as speaking in tongues, telepathies, prophecies, automatism and, in fact, all the Charismatic gifts³⁹ associated with the primitive church, were indicative of an acute awareness and striving to live a righteous life; they were practiced in a rather chaotic manner. In time, the elaboration of early and newly instituted gifts became increasingly ceremonial. The traditional acts of shaking, quaking, whirling, rolling, singing, dancing, screaming, laughing, and sweeping clean were designed to mortify pride and induce humility. The newly instituted gifts of smoking, warming, love, and others were devised to permit all the faithful to partake of the celestial parents' blessing.⁴⁰ Consequently, the worship service became more formal and was held on Sunday; private family worship became the scene of most "gift" rituals.

Rigid order and uniformity were clearly evident in the daily life of Shaker communities. The members of the sexually segregated residence halls arose at 4:30 a.m. and assembled in their hall's refectory; prayer and meditation preceded all meals, and table monitors emphasized good manners and economy. The workday was from sunrise to sunset, and members returned to their



*The original shoemaker's shop of the Second family of the Church Order, New Lebanon. The cobbler made his own lasts for every member of the family; they can be seen here on the wall racks. (Andrews, *Shaker Furniture*, Plate 47.)*

respective dormitories for lunch at noon, for dinner at six and, at the end of the day, for devotions, prayer, conversation, and rest.

Shakers wore plain clothing designed to identify and segregate them from the profane world.⁴¹ This garb simplified surveillance when believers interacted with non-believers, for communication with the outside world was limited to the pursuit of business and was subject to constant scrutiny. Such conversation was restricted to what was essential to selling merchandise; the only exception was during proselytizing endeavors when Shaker religion was being explained to outsiders.

While their plain dress was typical of many religious sects, their emphasis on education was not. For recognizing education as the foundation of a prosperous economy, the Shakers advocated post-elementary education. Capable youths were taught reading, writing, spelling, grammar, history, geography, mathematics, and other subjects; all young people were taught vocational skills. Children (who were indentured to the deacons or trustees, and who lived with a special caretaker in their own order⁴²) were permitted to participate in such recreational activities as ball games, marbles, gymnastics, fishing, and various other sports.⁴³



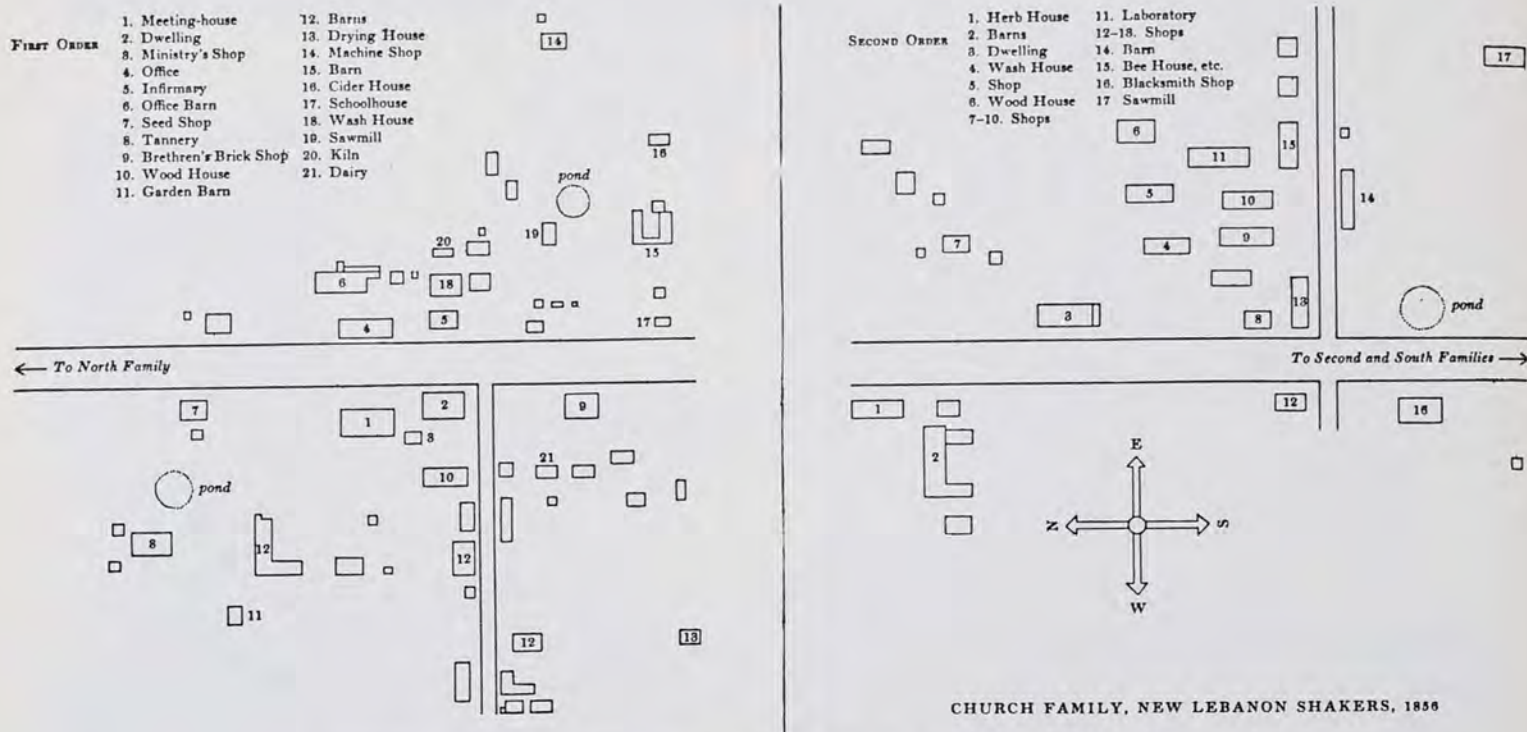
*Deaconess' desk used at Hancock, and leather-bound Shaker books on a bookrack from New Lebanon. (Andrews, *Shaker Furniture*, Plate 37.)*

But despite the emphasis on education, the biological sciences were precluded from the curriculum. Rooted in religion, medical and health practices were primitive. Mother Ann had insisted on faith healing, and believers relied on bleeding, powwowing, shaking, poulticing, and herbal remedies. Yet the evidence indicates that Shaker mortality rates were comparable to those of the general population at the time.⁴⁴

On the subject of mortality, Shakers believed in a living soul separate from the body, and so denied the doctrine of bodily resurrection. Therefore funerals were simple and without ceremony, and coffins were wood and unadorned. And, unless they had experienced them before conversion, believers never participated in the Eucharist, baptism, confirmation, courtship, or marriage; for the sacraments and other ceremonial functions emanating directly or indirectly from the Scriptures were the antithesis of celibate Shakerism. Consecrated labor was the focus of communal life;⁴⁵ even conversation was dominated by talk of work, for the repetitive tasks of daily life were seldom conducive to any subject more profound.

* * *

Since their religious beliefs dictated that as many



SOURCE: EDWARD D. ANDREWS, *THE PEOPLE CALLED SHAKERS*, pp. 202- 203.

Figure 5

needs as possible be satisfied within the community, each settlement produced a wide range of agricultural products and an array of manufactured goods. The precise crop mix was dictated by soil, drainage, and weather conditions and by the terrain, but generally included a variety of grains, vegetables, fruits, and specialized crops. Feed grain and fodder, meats, dairy products, poultry and eggs, and even fish, cultured in community ponds, were also part of the agricultural output. Manufactured wares included flat brooms, baskets, lumber, wood products, paper, hats, leather goods, water-repellent cloth, pottery, utensils, metal pens, packaged seeds, herbal medicines, nails, screws, wire, tools, agricultural machinery, and many other products.⁴⁶

The reputation of Shaker furniture — simple, functional, and beautiful — was well-known and highly prized.⁴⁷ And the quality of other Shaker manufactured goods also opened large external markets. Industrial production was prodigious, the Society reaped substantial profits, prosperity prevailed, and affluence provided further incentive to an already dedicated work force, since the worker was permitted to share in the profits.⁴⁸

The Society presumably equated fertile land with wealth and economic prosperity, for they frequently paid mammoth sums for desirable tracts. This influenced the territorial organization of the settlements, for communes usually consisted of two or more discon-

tinuous sub-units called “families.” (For all practical purposes, the family was a community within a community.) In general, when the colony’s population reached one hundred, it was divided into families. The several communes were thus divided into between two and eight families, and some communes organized and administered out-family branches, or missions.⁴⁹ The distance between the families comprising a commune depended on the availability of desirable farmland.

The so-called Church Family — the oldest family of the oldest commune, New Lebanon — exemplifies the characteristic organization of buildings, out-buildings, and other structures which made up a settlement.⁵⁰ Church Family was comprised of two separately inhabited units: First Order and Second Order.⁵¹ The latter was established after 1805, whereas most of the First Order construction was completed before that date, a fact which partially explains the distributional pattern of buildings and activities (see Fig. 5).

Church Family utilized eighty-six structures, fifty-seven on the First Order site and twenty-nine on the Second Order property. Forty buildings are identified, twenty-three on the former and seventeen on the latter site; six other facilities are named but not identified.⁵² Approximately fourteen structures or parts of structures were used to meet the requirements for food; clothing; shelter; sanitation; food storage; and health, education, religious, and other social services. These buildings included two celibate dormitories with dining rooms, a

church, two wash houses, two wood houses, an infirmary, a school, and two offices. A home for the aged, a youth house, and a coal house are not identified.

No less than eighteen buildings were used for agricultural purposes or to provide products and services for residents, some of which also provided surpluses for outside markets. About twelve buildings primarily accommodated communal needs: seven barns, a dairy, a drying house, a cider house, a bee house, and a seed shop (the Shakers did market some cider, honey, and packaged seeds). Seven facilities supplied products both for communal use and for sale: a tannery, an herb house, a laboratory, two sawmills, two blacksmith shops (one of which is unidentified), a brick shop, and a kiln.⁵³

THE PERIOD OF DECLINE

Between 1830 and 1850 the Shakers enjoyed a period of growth and prosperity which they called the Golden Age. The Society claimed about 3,900 members at the dawn of the Age, and more than 5,000 in 1840. They insist membership approached 6,000 in the late 1840s, but unofficial evidence suggests the maximum population never exceeded 5,500.⁵⁴ The western settlements grew more than those in the East during the 1830s; in that decade annual growth was twenty-nine members in the East and eighty-seven in the West. In the next decade, the annual decline was forty-eight in the East and twenty-six in the West. Thus the eastern communes grew more slowly and declined more rapidly than those in the West during the Golden Age.

But even before the end of the Golden Age, an array of religious, economic, and socio-cultural factors signaled the beginning of a steadily accelerating and irreversible decline in the Society's fortunes. Chief among their problems were the mismanagement of communal wealth, the impact of American industrialization, the closing of the frontier, and socio-cultural dissatisfaction which produced a religious schism within the Society.

As early as the 1830s, for instance, the Society's young people (at first in the West and then in the East) began voicing complaints about the monotony of celibate communal life. Soon thereafter, youths and adults in all the settlements were openly objecting to the rigid vows of celibacy as well as to other socio-cultural constraints. Then, adherents of all ages began trickling from the Society in the 1840s; they left in growing numbers in the following decades. In a direct response to the problem of recruiting converts, a small missionary group from New Lebanon organized an out-family in Philadelphia in 1846.⁵⁵

But it was too little, too late; a number of emerging internal problems were about to provoke further decline, as a growing restlessness with the mismanagement of the Society's wealth began to permeate the entire Shaker community.⁵⁶ The real cost of maintaining communal holdings, although substantial, was almost nominal in comparison with the huge amounts ex-

pendent by the religious leadership to improve lands and buildings and procure additional property,⁵⁷ if for no other reason than to impress the general public, and perhaps to attract converts. Unfortunately the same leaders also imprudently invested mammoth amounts which were lost. The Shakers reverted from a creditor to a debtor society, and while the clerics mismanaged the funds, the community work force was responsible for the debt. This pattern of fiscal irresponsibility caused deep chagrin throughout the Society, and this feeling intensified as growing indebtedness produced increasing shortages of basic necessities.⁵⁸

Mismanagement was compounded by the impact of industrialization, which put the communal system of traditional cottage-craft production at a serious disadvantage. Industrialization not only made many standard Shaker products obsolete, it also meant voluminous quantities of easily accessible, readily replaceable, low cost products. In contrast, the pre-industrially tooled and powered Shaker work force produced small supplies of often difficult to replace, less easily accessible, and more expensive commodities. Although their products were of superior quality, communal craftsmen simply could not compete with the lower prices of industrial products.

In response to industrialization, the Shakers initiated a shift from male to female occupations, since the products no longer in demand were produced by men, while the kitchen-craft goods made by the women became increasingly marketable. So the male segment of the labor pool concentrated on re-tooling certain industries and expanding agricultural production, while the females broadened craft products' production.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, the Civil War inflicted a mortal blow on their efforts to restructure, as the rapid expansion and development of the American economy in response to the war's demands just overwhelmed the Shakers.

Essentially it was a clash between economies of scale — the gigantic productive capacity of a modern industrial nation versus that of fewer-than-two-dozen widely scattered, almost pre-industrial villages. Placed at such a competitive disadvantage, community efficiency deteriorated, production declined, and depression intensified. Then many members, attracted by higher wages and better living conditions, left the order and further accelerated the erosion of the faith.⁶⁰

The economic problems caused by mismanagement and industrialization precipitated a religious rift which struck the final, mortal blow to the communal system.⁶¹ The schism began when, in the 1830s, three factions developed within the Society. The liberals, under the able leadership of Elders James Prescott and Frederick Evans of New Lebanon, agitated for complete religious, social, and economic reform. The conservatives, under the guidance of Elder Harvey Eads of South Union, demanded strict obedience to all the traditional principles of the faith. A moderate group, led by Eldresses White

and Taylor of New Lebanon, tried to mediate between the two; they advocated retention of conventional precepts, but supported broadening the social and economic systems to meet changing times.⁶² Other splinter groups magnified the religious rift by demanding specific changes which weakened the faith still more.

The central problem was one of opposition to the almost totalitarian theocratic government, and the manner in which religious leaders were selected. As the deepening schism caused substantial numbers to leave, the only hope of replacing them was by making converts. Communal life, however, no longer seemed so attractive, nor the Shaker religion so mysteriously charming and tranquil to the outsider. As the West became settled and the East more densely populated, large scale preaching missions such as those to New England and the West became increasingly difficult, then impossible. Then, too, all of the above-described problems sapped the Society's youthful enthusiasm, and distracted members from proselytizing efforts. Consequently, by the third quarter of the nineteenth century the Shaker movement was impotent and, as time went on, moribund.

* * *

By their own admission, the Shaker Golden Age ended by 1850 at which time they claimed a membership of 6,000.⁶³ Their census reports, however, appear to have been haphazard efforts; indeed, sometimes they are little more than inflated estimates. Moreover, the government's census reports are not completely reliable either, because of the way in which the Shakers defined church membership.⁶⁴ Historians studying the Shaker movement insist their population peaked in the mid-1840s, at which time it ranged between 5,000 and 5,500 adherents.⁶⁵ Careful analysis of the principal sources of demographic information suggests the population peaked at between 5,000 and 5,200 around 1845. This information further suggests that some western communes began declining in the 1840s,⁶⁶ but increases in other communes resulted in absolute annual increases until about 1845 (see Table 3).

Nevertheless, the number of Shakers declined from about 5,200 to 4,300 in the years from 1840 to 1850,⁶⁷ and that decline has continued, uninterrupted, to the present. Impartial students agree the Shakers conducted three accurate censuses: in 1874, 1890, and 1900. These, and two other noteworthy dates in Shaker history, 1922 and 1960, merit further discussion.

From 1850 to 1874, the Shaker population dropped about forty-three percent to 2,415 members.⁶⁸ During these twenty-four years the Society lost almost 79 members a year; about forty from the western communes and about thirty-eight from the eastern settlements. The Shakers were surprised and terrified by the 1874 census, and in desperation initiated what proved to be an unsuccessful advertising campaign for members.⁶⁹

By 1890 the population had diminished to 1,750,⁷⁰ a loss of nearly forty-four percent and an annual decrease of almost forty-two members a year; twenty-four from the East and seventeen from the West. By the turn of the century there were only 1,000 Shakers,⁷¹ a forty-three percent drop, as each year there were seventy-five fewer of the faithful, with forty-four members leaving the western colonies, and the eastern settlements decreasing by just over thirty members annually. In 1922, the demographic history of the western Shaker congregations came to an end as the last commune there closed.⁷² And, only about 235 members remained in the East, for membership there had been declining at the rate of thirty-five believers a year.⁷³

Although their large scale population declines and the communal closings are closely related, the former obviously preceded the latter. The largest numerical losses occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century, but the majority of communes did not close until the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Shakers had established nineteen communes between 1787 and 1836, and developed ten out-families (missions) between 1780 and 1898.⁷⁴ One of these communes and six of the out-family branches closed before the end of the Golden Age in 1850: Busro and Darby because of their aforementioned problems with crop failures and disease; and Cheshire-Richmond-Ashfield, Straight Creek, Gorham, Savoy, and Sodus Bay because of declining population.⁷⁵ When the remnant membership decided to close a settlement the property was sold and the residents moved to another commune. Evidence suggests, however, that a few properties were abandoned.

During the last half of the nineteenth century three communes — Tryingham, North Union, and Groveland; and two out-families — Philadelphia and New Caanan, were closed. During the early years of this century, the out-family phase of Shaker religious-geographical history ended with the disbanding of the White Oak and Narcoossee missions. Between 1901 and 1930 the Shakers closed nine communes: Whitewater, Shirley, Watervliet (Ohio), Pleasant Hills, Union Village, Enfield (Connecticut), Harvard, South Union, and Enfield (New Hampshire)⁷⁶ (see Table 2).

In the years from 1931 to 1960 the communes located at Alfred, Watervliet (New York), New Lebanon, and Hancock were closed.⁷⁷ By 1960 membership had diminished to only twenty-five Shaker women who were faithfully maintaining the last two Shaker properties at Canterbury and Sabbathday Lake. At the present time, the Society is comprised of seven elderly Sisters, two of whom live at Canterbury, New Hampshire, and five of whom reside at Sabbathday Lake, in Maine.⁷⁸ These women and some of their now-deceased co-believers, have made arrangements to preserve these remaining Shaker properties as tourist centers, with the proceeds from tourism used to maintain and perpetuate libraries and museums for the study of Shaker religion and

TABLE I
COMMUNES AND OUT-FAMILIES,
CHRONOLOGY OF FOUNDINGS
(See endnotes 23 and 24)

history.⁷⁹

Their foresight will be appreciated by anyone interested in learning more about the diverse social and economic contributions made by this unique group; this celibate society which flourished for seventy-five years, and which has endured for more than two hundred. And, "though the temper of an industrial age has left this semi-monastic culture behind, it may yet be claimed that the Shakers represent the oldest, most successful, and most consistently pure communism in the new world, and that their experiment in primitive Christianity has been replete with lessons of value to all mankind."⁸⁰

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ENDNOTES

¹F. E. Mayer, *The Religious Bodies of America* (St. Louis, 1961), p. 451.

²Don Yoder, "The Spiritual Lineage of Shakerism," *Pennsylvania Folklife*, Vol. 22, no. 3 (Spring 1978), p. 2. An excellent essay on "Shakerism as a system of ideas . . . as a way of life . . . and as an expressive culture."

³Edward D. Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (New York, 1953), pp. xi-xii, 3-13. Anna White and Leila S. Taylor, *Shakerism Its Meaning and Message* (Columbus, Oh., 1904; New York, 1971), pp. 13-14.

⁴The name was spelled "Anne Lees" in England.

⁵Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 3-13; White and Taylor, pp. 14-21, 28-30.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Yoder, pp. 2, 4.

⁹Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 3-13; White and Taylor, pp. 14-21, 28-30.

¹⁰Yoder, p. 4.

¹¹Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 19-34; Constance Rourke, *The Shakers* (New York, 1947), pp. 1-23.

¹²White and Taylor, pp. 37-46.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Mayer, pp. 450-452.

¹⁵Mayer, pp. 450-452; M. Catherine Allen, *The American Shakers* (Sabbathday Lake, Poland Springs, Maine, 1974), pp. 1-4.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, p. 30.

¹⁸Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 35-53; Frederick W. Evans, *Shakers* (New York, 1859), pp. 9-32.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Evans, pp. 17-36; White and Taylor, pp. 47-63; Marguerite Melcher, *The Shaker Adventure* (Princeton, 1841), pp. 19-51.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Edward D. Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple: Songs, Dances, and Rituals of the American Shakers* (New York, 1940; 1967), p. 5.

	Commune	No. Families	Date Founded
1	Watervliet, NY	4	1787
2	New Lebanon, NY	8	1787
3	Hancock, MA	6	1790
4	Enfield, CT	5	1790-92
5	Canterbury, NH	3	1792
6	Tryingham, MA	2	1792
7	Alfred, ME	3	1793
8	Enfield, NH	3	1793
9	Harvard, MA	4	1793
10	Shirley, MA	3	1793
11	New Gloucester - Sabbathday Lake, ME	3	1794
12	Union Village, OH	6	1806
13	Watervliet, OH	2	1806
14	Pleasant Hills, KY	8	1806-09
15	South Union, KY	4	1806-10
16	Busro, IN	2	1810-11
17	North Union, OH	3	1822
18	Whitewater, OH	3	1824-25
19	Sodus Bay - Groveland, NY	2	1836
	Out-family		Date Founded
1	Ashfield, Richmond Cheshire, MA		1780s
2	Gorham, ME		1808
3	Straight Creek, OH		1808
4	Savoy, MA		1817
5	Canaan, NY		1821
6	Darby, OH		1822
7	Sodus Bay, NY		1836
8	Philadelphia, PA		1846
9	Narcoossee, FL		1894
10	White Oak, GA		1898

²³Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 290-292 (Map source); Flo Morse, *The Shakers and the Worlds People* (New York, 1980), pp. 9-15. Note: Sources are in disagreement concerning the Cheshire, Straight Creek, Darby, New Caanan, and Philadelphia missions.

²⁴Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 290-291; Priscilla Brewer, *Shaker Communities* (Hanover, 1984), pp. 215-218; Henri Desrouche, *The American Shakers, From New Christianity to Pre-Socialism* (Amherst, 1955), pp. 125-130, 259-260; John J. Shea, *The American Shakers and Their Furniture* (New York, 1971), pp. x-xv. Note: Demographic and census data differ among all sources, and information presented in those sources is for different time periods; all caution that the data is an estimate.

²⁵Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 70-93; White and Taylor, pp. 113-129; Rourke, pp. 36-52.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Brewer, pp. 168-197; Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 70-93; Rourke, pp. 36-52.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*

³²Melcher, pp. 52-67.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Edward Horgan, *The Shaker Holy Land* (Harvard, 1982), pp. 50-56.

³⁵Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 54-69.

³⁶Brewer, pp. xv-xvii.

³⁷Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple*, p. 5; Horgan, p. 52; see also Desrouche.

TABLE II
COMMUNES AND OUT-FAMILIES,
CHRONOLOGY OF CLOSINGS
(See endnotes 23 and 24)

	Commune	No. Families	Date Closed
1	Busro, IN	2	1827
2	Tryingham, MA	2	1875
3	North Union, OH	3	1889
4	Groveland, NY	2	1895
5	Whitewater, OH	3	1907
6	Shirley, MA	3	1908
7	Watervliet, OH	2	1910
8	Pleasant Hills, KY	8	1910
9	Union Village, OH	6	1912
10	Enfield, CT	5	1917
11	Harvard, MA	4	1918
12	South Union, KY	4	1922
13	Enfield, NH	3	1923
14	Alfred, ME	3	1932
15	Watervliet, NY	4	1938
16	New Lebanon, NY	8	1947
17	Hancock, MA	6	1960
	Out-family		Date Closed
1	Ashfield, Richmond		1780s
	Cheshire, MA		1808
2	Straight Creek, OH		1819
3	Gorham, ME		1823
4	Darby, OH		1825
5	Savoy, MA		1836
6	Sodus Bay, NY		1860
7	Philadelphia, PA		1897
8	New Canaan, NY		1902
9	White Oak, GA		1911
10	Narcoossee, FL		

Table III
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS 1790-1850
(See endnotes 23 and 24)

Date	Eastern Communes and Out-families	Western Communes and Out-families	Total Population East and West
1790's	538	-----	538
1800	1373	-----	1373
1810	1611	410	2021
1820	2076	1095	3171
1830	2436	1465	3901
1840	2727	2335	5062
1850	2249	2075	4324
1860	2060	1700	3760
1870	1444	1200	2644
1874	1340	1075	2415
1880	1178	950	2128
1890	950	800	1750
1900	645	355	1000
1910	460	125	585
1920	245	20	265
1930	170	---	170
1940	125	---	125
1950	70	---	70
1960	45	---	45
1970	25	---	25
1980	15	---	15
1988	7	---	7

³⁸Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 54-69; Brewer, pp. xv-xvii.

³⁹Defined as any manifestation of the power of God. Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple*; Harold E. Cook, *Shaker Music* (Lewisburg, Pa., 1973); Daniel J. Patterson, *The Shaker Spiritual* (Princeton, 1973).

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Melvin J. Friedman, *The Shaker Realist* (Baton Rouge, 1970), pp. 300-344; Samuel V. Thomas, *The Simple Spirit, A Pictorial History of a Shaker Community* (Harrodsburg, Ky., 1973); Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 94-136.

⁴²Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple*, p. 5

⁴³Friedman, pp. 300-344; Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 94-136.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶Theodore E. Johnson, *Hands to Work and Hearts to God* (Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Me., 1969), pp. 1-9; Shea, pp. 24-25; Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 94-136, 202-203; Beverly Gordon, *Shaker Textiles* (Hanover, N.H., 1980); White and Taylor, pp. 310-319. The Shakers are credited with a multitude of inventions and developments among which are the flat broom, cut nails, metal pens, metal wire, stick pins, condensed milk, seed packaging, the screw propeller, rotary harrow, circular saw, pea sheller, and others.

⁴⁷Shea, pp. 1-24; Edward D. Andrews and Faith Andrews, *Shaker Furniture* (New York, 1950), pp. 1-133; Charles A. Muller, *The Shaker Chair* (Winchester, Oh., 1984).

⁴⁸Brewer, pp. xv-xvii; White and Taylor, pp. 297-319; Everett Weber, *The Search for Utopia: The Communal Movement in America* (New York, 1959).

⁴⁹Brewer, xv.

⁵⁰Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 94-136, 202-203; see also Horgan, p. 100, for a map of the Shirley Shaker settlement.

⁵¹Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 200-203.

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴David A. Lamson, *Two Years Experience Among the Shakers* (West Boylston, Ma., 1848; New York, 1971), pp. 121-148; White and Taylor, 153-180; Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 70-93.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*; see endnote 23.

⁵⁶Morse; Friedman; Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 224-240.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Horgan, pp. 94-132.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹Desrouche, pp. 104-114; Morse, pp. xvi-xvii. Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 224-246.

⁶²"Final Chapter Verse," Reading, Pa. *Times*, March 1, 1988, p. 11; Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (New York, 1875) p. 256, taken from Desrouche, p. 124; Brewer, pp. 212-219; Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 290-292.

⁶³Desrouche, pp. 124-139; Brewer, pp. 214-217.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.* Note: Mean population of principal sources.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸Johnson, pp. 7-8.

⁶⁹Brewer, pp. 214-217; Desrouche, pp. 124-129; Morse, pp. xiv-xviii.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹Shea, p. ix; Brewer; Morse, pp. xvi-xvii; Desrouche, pp. 124-127; see note 66.

⁷²"Final Chapter Verse," p. 11; Shea, p. ix-30; "Shaker, 93, Remembered for Kindness," Reading, Pa., *Times*, June 15, 1988, p. 41.

⁷³"Shaker, 93, Remembered for Kindness," p. 41.

⁷⁴Brewer, pp. 214-217; Desrouche, pp. 124-129; Morse, xv-xvii; Andrews, *The People Called Shakers*, pp. 290-292.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁶*Ibid.*; and Shea, pp. ix, 24.

⁷⁷"Final Chapter Verse," p. 13; Shea, pp. 20-22.

⁷⁸"Shaker, 93, Remembered for Kindness," p. 41; "Final Chapter Verse," pp. 13-14.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple*, pp. 6-7.

INDIANA AMISH FAMILY RECORDS

by Ervin Beck

Since the Old Order Amish reject higher education, they have produced virtually no written history — of themselves or other people. Most histories of the Amish have been written by Mennonites.

In writing genealogies and family histories, however, the Amish are extremely active and interested. David Luthy, Amish editor and librarian from Aylmer, Ontario, observes that “most Amish homes have at least one family record book (genealogy) among the books on their shelves.” Luthy has identified at least 368 Amish family histories published between 1885-1977, many of them written by Amish. They continue to appear at the rate of about ten per year. Genealogy is “their most vigorous form of history,” says John Oyer, editor of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* at Goshen College.

An even more impressive Amish achievement in genealogy, however, lies in the family histories memorized by Amish people and transmitted orally by them from generation to generation. Some older Amish people are amazing storehouses of information on intricate family relationships, and their conversations frequently dwell upon who is related to whom, and through what ancestors.

The records of Amish family history depicted on the following pages — birth, wedding, family and memorial records — are counterparts in folk art of the folk histories of Amish families that the Amish community relishes. Since they present little more than vital statistics, their contribution to formal, academic history-writing is modest. But for the Amish homes in which they are hung they embody greater significance, as some aspects of Amish sociology and culture will clarify.

First, they nurture family identity and cohesiveness, which is a primary value among the Amish since it is through family structure that Amish beliefs and values are most intimately and effectively perpetuated.

Most Amish, of course, are “born” into the Amish faith; few are converts from the “English” world. That creates a religious community that is relatively homogeneous and stable in ethnic stock. Indeed, in *Amish Society* (1980, pp. 241-42), John A. Hostetler points out that among the 85,000 Amish in America there appear only 129 different family names, and 18 of those names are represented by only one household.

Amish settlement patterns are family-related in special ways. Three generations often live in an Amish household. Amish church districts are organized according to number of families, not individuals. And since families tend to settle in their blood relatives’ communities, and since horse and buggy transportation encourages density in Amish settlements, family connections remain strong even after offspring marry and leave their parents’ households. For instance, in each of the three largest Amish communities in the United States — eastern Ohio, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and north-central Indiana — over half of the population represent only five different family names.

Artistically, the records embody additional importance. Since most of the records pictured here were made within the past two generations, they testify to the active, valued presence of folk artists in the Amish community. Most of these records were made for pay by Amish folk artists, which is interesting in light of the otherwise low status traditionally assigned to “art” by the Amish. I have discussed this topic elsewhere in regard to Amish and Mennonite painting on glass — namely *Folklife Annual* (1988) and *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* (April 1989).

Although the earliest record shown here dates from c. 1867, and although Lancaster County Amish used wall-hung family records in the nineteenth century, the making and displaying of family history records is a relatively new development among Indiana Old Order Amish. Prior to about 1945, Indiana Amish records were ap-

parently kept mainly in family Bibles, whether written on the flyleaves or on notebook paper folded inside the pages.

The development since 1945 of a tradition of displaying family history records on the wall is symptom of a greater toleration by the Amish of all kinds of wall decorations (except those that depict the human form). Church rules regarding what may be displayed on interior walls vary from district to district. A good case in point is in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania, where an Amish family makes glass-painted family records that may not be hung on the walls of their own homes because of the church *Ordnung* (rules). In this regard, the Amish districts of Elkhart and LaGrange Counties in Indiana are more liberal.

Another feature of Amish belief helps explain why the display of family records has such great appeal for many Amish. That is their literal interpretation of the Second Commandment which, since the Jakob Amman split (1693-97) from the Swiss Mennonites, has led them to forbid the depiction of the human form in art and which, in turn, has led modern Amish people to reject photography.

In a culture that forbids the taking of family pictures for posterity, the records shown here become treasured substitutes for photographs of infant births, marriage parties, family reunions, and aged forebears. Thus, although these records preserve only vital statistics, they contribute much more to the emotional and religious experience of belonging to an Amish family — indeed to the Amish faith.

(NOTE: Since the Amish prefer anonymity, little will be said here about the living subjects and artists

associated with these records.)

BIRTH RECORDS

The three birth records pictured here are done in the tinsel-painting medium, sometimes called *hiner sich schreiben* (backward writing) or *hinerst siet schreiben* (back-side writing) by the Amish. Although the Amish are virtually the only American group to practice this folk art today, it is an old art with origins in ancient Rome; it had a special flowering — first as a fine art and later as a folk art — in the early Renaissance and Reformation.

All of the paint is applied directly to the back side of a piece of glass, which means that the writing is indeed done backward by the artist. The writing and the outline of the design are first done in black oil paint or india ink. Parts of the design are filled in with colored translucent paint, parts are left unpainted, and the rest is painted with opaque colored or white (for background) paint. Before the record is framed, a crinkled piece of aluminum foil is placed between the glass and its backing. The foil shines silver through unpainted areas, and various, glittering colors through the translucent paints.

Figure 1, the birth record (13 x 20 in.) for Daniel Glick, continues an old tradition of making such records for people long after the birth itself. This one was made for Daniel in 1947, when he was 52 years old, by his wife Mary, who was a prolific tinsel artist near Topeka, Indiana. The Glicks were Amish when they lived in Iowa, but became Mennonites after moving to Indiana.



Figure 1; birth record, Daniel Glick (all photographs by Jeff Hochstedler).



Figure 5; marriage record lithograph.

Figure 5, the lithographed marriage record (14.5 x 18.5 in.) upon which the design is based, was copyrighted in 1889 as "No. 14" by Meyer and Brother of Chicago.

The tinsel painting version (17 x 21 in.) made in 1971, preserves almost all of the scriptural and factual text of the lithograph, but replaces the border and other decorations with bolder floral designs and changes the ovals to open books, presumably Bibles. Most important, the marriage record adds a list of twelve table-waiters at the bottom. The married couple's friends and relatives who serve the wedding meal are regarded as honored members of the bridal party and therefore included on the permanent record of the marriage. Wedding records like this are sometimes prepared in advance of the wedding and first displayed on the wall behind the *eck*, or corner table, where the wedding party sit for the wedding meal.

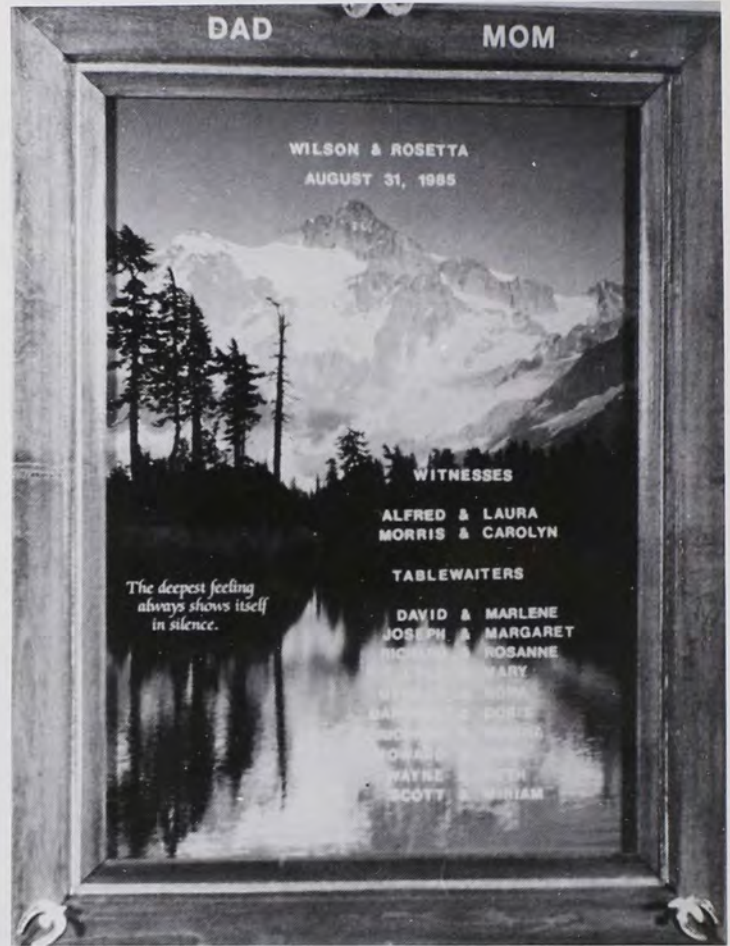


Figure 6; marriage record, Wilson and Rosetta.

Figure 6, a wedding record (18 x 23 in.) made near Nappanee for Wilson and Rosetta in 1985, uses a photographic poster, stuck-on letters and styrofoam decorations, all purchased in stores. Only the frame is homemade. Since this record was presented to the parents of the newlyweds, it also serves the same function as the three-dimensional wedding souvenirs discussed next.



Figure 7; wedding favors, *Stanga Glas*.

WEDDING FAVORS

Customarily, the Amish bride and groom prepare personalized mementos of their wedding and give them to their parents and members of the wedding party. Usually three-dimensional, the wedding favors record the first names of the couple, the date of the wedding, and the names of the people to whom they are given. They are displayed in cupboards and on tables, just as wedding photographs would be in other cultures.

Apparently the oldest form of such wedding records is the *stanga glas* (stemmed glass), which consists of a goblet holding various items (Fig. 7). The one in the center of this picture was prepared for the wedding of Mose T. and Mary Troyer Yoder on December 12, 1909, near Shippshewana. It consists of a six-inch goblet with a colorful silk handkerchief draped over it. Originally, the goblet probably held a cookie with names and dates in-

scribed on it. Both of the larger *stanga glas* (15-inch arrangements) date from 1976, which shows an amazing continuity in Amish customs, despite the styrofoam and other new elements.

In recent years the forms that Amish wedding favors assume have multiplied, giving the impression that couples now try to create souvenirs that are as different as possible from those of previous couples. The favors in Figure 8 are called "floats" or "trophies" by the Amish, since they bear some resemblance to floats that appear in parades and trophies given as achievement awards (although not in Amish culture). The styrofoam Bible (7 x 10 in.) is dated December 1971; the wooden float is from 1984. Styrofoam parts to use in assembling wedding favors are available in Amish country stores. Amish woodworkers frequently have patterns for several different kinds of wooden floats that they can make, and adapt, upon demand.



Figure 8; wedding favors, *Floats and Trophies*.

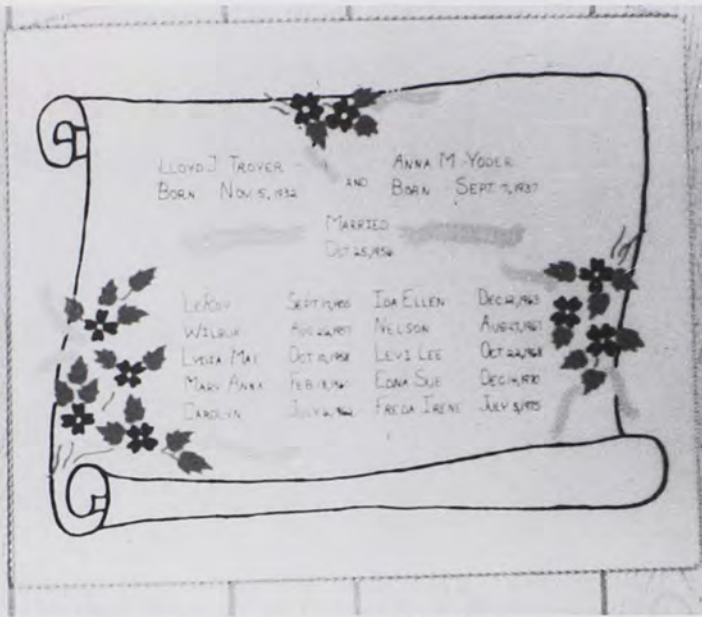


Figure 9; family record, Lloyd Troyer.

FAMILY RECORDS

Most Amish family records (their name for genealogies) made today include only the vital statistics for two generations of a family — parents and children. The most common medium for family records is painting on glass. Many resemble the tinsel “Holy Matrimony” illustrated previously. The scroll-shaped record shown in Figure 9, made recently near Goshen, has lettering and design painted on top of the glass, with a colored background sprayed onto the backside. The glass is then “framed” with a ladder chain that grips all four sides and has a piece attached for suspending the record from a nail in the wall.

The tradition of fine penmanship lingers in some Amish family records. The Mast family record (Fig. 10; 11 x 17 in.) was done with pen and ink in 1982 by an Amish man from near Topeka, who learned Spencerian penmanship by studying manuals and corresponding with an older Amish calligrapher from Kansas who critiqued his work. For models of Gothic and other scripts, he consults a book of examples.

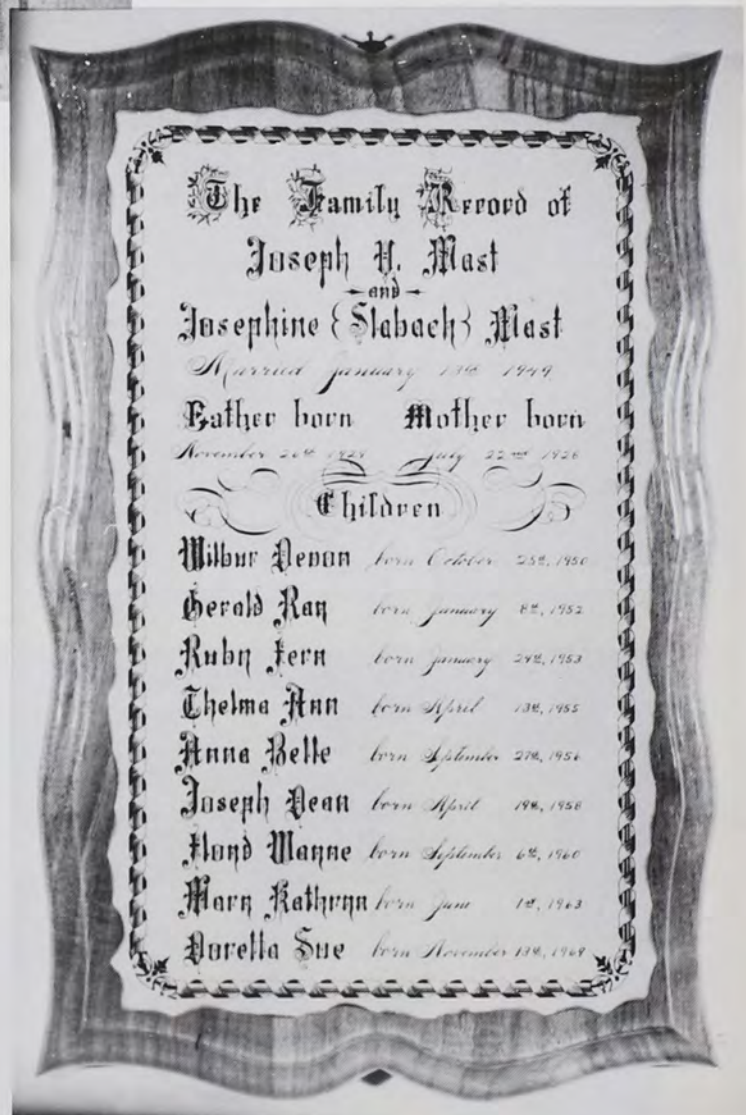


Figure 10; family record, Joseph Mast.



Figure 11; family record, Seth Troyer.

The Troyer family record (Fig. 11; 23 x 29 in.) was made in 1964 by Levi S. Troyer of near Middlebury. Made with ballpoint pen and washed colored pencil, it features birds from the Spencerian tradition, angels from the fraktur tradition, and an overall design that the artist found in a family record form in the front of a Bible.

Although the Amish did not bring fraktur, as such, with them from Europe or Pennsylvania to Indiana, two records show a continuing interest in using that type of art for commemorative purposes.



Figure 12; Greenawalt family record.

The oldest family record known to me from the northern Indiana Amish community is the one made for John and Lydia Greenawalt c. 1867 (Fig. 12) by John's brother Christian C. of near Topeka. The design of the register area comes from a printed form published by Currier and Ives in 1852. The floral design, while related to fraktur work, is actually theorem art, which was popular in the United States during the early nineteenth century. Theorem art consists of an artistic arrangement of outline patterns that are then filled in with watercolors. The "hex" sign at bottom center, surmounted by paired birds and a one-stem tree of life, is all that remains of the Pennsylvania German folk inheritance of the Greenawalt family, which originated in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. The other flowers, foliage and birds are from mainstream American designs.

The large size (20 x 26 in.) and bright colors might, at first thought, seem unusual for an Amish record of so early a date. They can be explained, however, by noting that the Greenawalts were actually Amish Mennonites, meaning that they belonged to a large group of American Amish who eventually merged with the Mennonite Church, unlike the Old Order Amish who, during the period from 1850 to 1880, established a more rigid *Ordnung* (rules) and have since resisted acculturation and technological change to a much greater extent.

Figure 13, the Hochstetler family record (16 x 20 in.), was made in 1983 by a middle-aged Amish man near Topeka. Done with speedball ink, it is based on a design currently being used by an Amish man from Gap, Pennsylvania.



Figure 13; family record, Ivan Hochstetler.

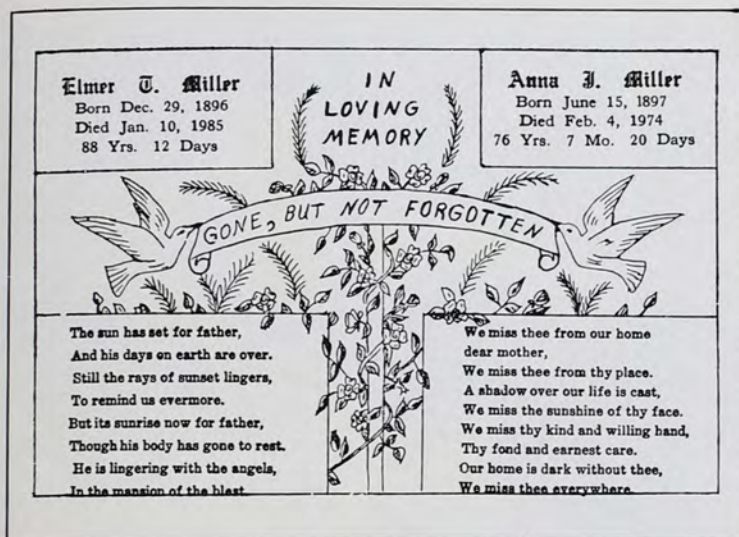


Figure 14; Amish memorial card.



Figure 15; death record, father and mother.

DEATH RECORDS

To commemorate the death of a loved one, Amish families usually order printed memorial cards from an Amish printer in Gordonville, Pennsylvania, the one shown in Figure 14 (6¼ x 4½ in.) being dated 1986. Such cards are often displayed behind the panes of glass-door cupboards in Amish homes.

The design of the printed memorial card has obviously influenced death records (sometimes called "loving memories") in other media, including this glass painting (Fig. 15; 11 x 14 in.). Made near Goshen in 1968, it adapts a tinsel glass design to a slightly different glass-painting technique. Like tinsel painting, all paint is applied to the back side of the glass; unlike tinsel painting, the sparkling effect comes from silver glitter glued to the glass, rather than from crinkled tinfoil between glass and backing. Since the painting needs no backing, it can be framed with ladder chain, like the family record shown earlier.

EEL FOR CHRISTMAS — An Italian Tradition

by Juliana Bova



Juliana Bova's grandmothers, Mary Chirichigno (left) and Rose Bova.

This past fall the Commonwealth's largest city celebrated the "Arts of Italian Americans in Philadelphia" in an exhibition entitled "Uses of Tradition."¹ When I think of Italian-American traditions, I remember an eel for Christmas.

If you were to ask me how this custom started, I would have to say that I do not know, but that it *is* a tradition and because of such traditions "everyone knows who he is and what God expects him to do."² That quotation is from Tevye's opening monologue in *A Fiddler on the Roof*, and it applies not only to Jewish people but to other cultures as well.

Because Christmas Eve day is a fast day in Roman Catholic countries, fish is in great demand; and, in Italy, eels are especially popular. In fact, Christmas Eve dinner without eel is to an Italian what Thanksgiving dinner without turkey is to an American. In many southern Italian villages the tradition of an eel dinner is so strong that a family that cannot afford to buy one will sell a prized possession in order to be able to do so.³ The most desirable eel is called *capitone*; it is a slithering three or four feet long, and is bred in lagoons near the mouth of the Po River.⁴

The custom of an eel dinner on Christmas Eve was continued by many Italians when they emigrated to this country. Of course eel is not the only item on the menu, for

although the holiday is a night of fast, it is also a night of vigil anticipating the birth of Christ, and a large meal is held in celebration of this much-longed-for event. My Grandmother Chirichigno, for example, provided me with a typical Italian-American Christmas Eve dinner menu. It includes spaghetti with codfish sauce; baked or fried eel; baccala (dried codfish served in tomato sauce); squid; smelts; and whitefish. Instead of a green salad, an orange salad is prepared by slicing extra-large oranges and sprinkling the slices with paprika. There are different kinds of pastry for dessert, with wands (fried pastry) and honey clusters being the most popular.⁵ Italians also eat a special kind of nougat candy known as *torrone* at Christmas.

The number of traditional dishes prepared varies. Grandmother Chirichigno says in her family the tradition is to eat nine different dishes, while my Grandmother Bova tells me her family believes one must eat thirteen different foods. Yet another woman I spoke to said her family believes twenty-five dishes must be consumed. Interestingly, she was the only one who offered a reason for having a particular number of foods: according to her, they represent the twenty-five days of the Christmas season, starting with Advent.⁶

In trying to determine a rational explanation for the other numbers, I found that nine may represent the no-



An eel for Christmas.

venas that are held before Christmas, while thirteen may stand for the thirteen days of Yule—Christmas Day and the twelve days following.⁷ Again, no one is exactly sure of the reasoning behind, or the origin of, the tradition, but like Teyve, many follow their tradition faithfully.

Another holiday tradition is that of never completely clearing the dining table of food on Christmas Eve.⁸ In fact, it is customary for the table to always be left at least partially set with a cloth and candles so that, should the Christ Child appear, he could be quickly served a meal.

In Italy there are no Christmas trees; instead, people build large and elaborate manger scenes. One woman remembers that in her little village in the Old Country the entire community collaborated in building a huge wooden nativity scene for the middle of the town.⁹ And, in many Italian-American homes today the manger scene is always the main attraction on Christmas Eve; it is usually found underneath the Christmas tree.

This tradition has its roots in thirteenth century Italy. There, on Christmas Eve in 1224 at a village church in Greccio, St. Francis of Assisi arranged a very realistic tableau of the Nativity. Joseph and Mary (represented by real people) watched beside a manger in which a figure of the Holy Child lay upon the straw, while a live ox and an ass were tethered nearby. Mass was celebrated and St. Francis preached on the topic of the season. This simple object lesson was called the *presepio* or creche, or popularly, the “Christmas crib.” With innumerable variations it has been reproduced not only in every Roman Catholic Church, but far beyond the limits of the church of Rome as well.¹⁰

As might be expected considering its religious origins, a main event of the holiday in Italy is attending church. Depending on the region of the country, people attend midnight Mass or Mass on Christmas day. Fireworks, which go off at midnight to celebrate the birth of the Christ child, are the highlight of the Christmas Eve Mass.¹¹ After Mass, families return home to complete their celebration of the holiday.



Eel, orange salad, and pasta with fish sauce.

The holiday season in Italy is thirty-two days long. It begins on December 6, St. Nicholas Day,¹³ and continues until January 6, twelve days after Christmas. January 6 is Epiphany, the day on which the three wise men arrived in Bethlehem with gifts for the Christ Child, and so it is on this day—not on Christmas Eve or Christmas day—that Italians exchange presents. And in Italy it is *La Befana*, a benevolent old woman who rides a broomstick,¹⁴ that brings them, not Santa Claus. Said to possess a stern nature and a rather forbidding appearance, she came down the chimney on the eve of Epiphany carrying a can in one hand, and a bell (to announce her appearance) in the other.

It was said that on this evening many little children would hear a bell ring, and would then be told to hurry off to bed “before *La Befana* comes.” The next morning good children would find the gifts they wanted in their stockings, but naughty children would find she had left only bags of ashes or a lump of coal.¹⁵ My Grandmother Bova told me of a song she used to sing in Italy when she was a little girl anticipating a visit from *La Befana*: “*Zitto zitto questa notti/La Befana dalle grotti*”¹⁶ (“Quiet, quiet, this night/The Old Woman comes to the cave”).

A variation of *La Befana* occurs in Sicily on the evening of November 1—the eve of All Soul’s Day.¹⁷ Little Sicilians have been told that on this night the family dead are supposed to bring presents to children who have been good, and who have prayed on their behalf. It is believed that on the eve of All Soul’s Day the departed leave their dread abode and come down to steal sweets and toys and new clothes from rich shopkeepers. It is said the “visitors” are often clothed in white and wear silken shoes so as not to get caught while they secure their gifts. And they do not always enter the houses of the recipients: sometimes the presents are left in the children’s shoes which have been put outside doors and windows.¹⁸

Two other customs of the Christmas season should be mentioned as well. The first is the *Novena di Natale*—the nine days of Christmas church services which are major social events in small towns. The second is the arrival in



Orange salad.



Traditionally, the table is left at least partially set all night on Christmas Eve.

Rome and other Northern Italian cities of the *zampognari*. These are bagpipe players dressed in rustic sheepskin jackets and thong-laced shoes. They are reminiscent of the shepherds of Bethlehem and play old tunes in exchange for gratuities.¹⁹

Thinking of this rich Old World heritage led me to wonder how much of it has been retained in a New World setting. Hoping to find out—and, indeed, hoping to discover a few traditions I had not read about—I interviewed relatives and friends with Italian backgrounds. Many of the comments of my grandmothers, Rose Bova and Mary Chirichigno, have already been presented; the results of the other interviews are as follows:

ANN VANNUKI: On Christmas Eve we eat the traditional fish dinner. On Christmas Day it is a tradition in our family to eat risotto—rice cooked in a meat and tomato sauce, and to cook chicken on hot bricks. Our main dessert at Christmas time is a rich chocolate and almond torta. We open our gifts on Christmas Eve and attend midnight Mass.²⁰

TINA COCCA: We have the traditional eel-fish dinner on Christmas Eve. Then we relax and wait for Christ's birthday by having friends and relatives in and playing a game called Tombola which is similar to Bingo. After we open our gifts we attend midnight Mass.²¹

ALBA CORDON: We eat the traditional fish dinner on Christmas Eve. Our appetizer consists of fried donuts in different shapes called zippoli. Our desserts feature cannoli, torone, and a raisin cake called panettone. We have a lot of different fruits, especially figs. We play a

game called Noccioli which is similar to Bingo only you use nuts as tokens. Family and friends visit all night long. We attend Mass and open our gifts on Christmas Day. My husband is Greek but we still celebrate with Italian traditions.²²

SISTER MARY JOHN: Our family gathers together and we have the Christmas Eve fish dinner. Then we attend midnight Mass since that is the most important event in my Christmas celebration. It is the day Christ revealed Himself to the Gentiles.²³

ROBERT SANSONE: We eat the traditional Christmas Eve dinner and open our gifts at midnight. Family and friends gather around the tree and visit.²⁴

JANET AEILLO: We have a huge antipasto for lunch and we also eat the traditional fish dinner. On Christmas Eve, we leave the food out until 4:00 a.m. Family and friends visit and then we all attend midnight Mass. We open our gifts Christmas morning.²⁵

ROBYN ABRAHAM: My father is Syrian and we mainly practice his family's customs on Christmas Eve. We do, however, eat all types of food on Christmas, including Italian and Syrian dishes.²⁶

DIANE ARDINE: We attend midnight Mass and open our gifts in the morning. I can remember my mother talking about the traditional fish dinner, but during my lifetime we have never eaten it. We have a Christmas tree and a manger scene underneath it.²⁷



Smelts and zippoli.

BETH CASSETTI: My mother is not Italian so we don't adhere specifically to Italian tradition. On Christmas Eve we play Christmas carols, sing and visit with friends and family, and put the finishing touches on the Christmas tree. We attend early morning Mass and then return home and open our gifts.²⁸

DANA CECCONI: The family gets together, sings carols at the piano and drinks eggnog. My mother is not Italian so we don't practice Italian traditions. I end the evening by helping my parents play Santa Claus to my younger brothers and sisters.²⁹

While it would be presumptuous to attempt to draw conclusions from such a small sampling, it *is* interesting to note that most of the people interviewed maintain some aspect of their Italian heritage. As might be expected, some of the old traditions such as the fish dinner and the *presepio* merge with new ideas such as the Christmas tree and Santa Claus. It is also interesting to note that in most of the families surveyed, it is the mother who maintains the old customs. I am a little disappointed that some of the people of my generation forget so quickly and so easily the traditions of their rich heritage. To me, these traditions make the holiday season special and more beautiful, and I intend to make sure that my own family will also remember an eel for Christmas.

ENDNOTES

¹USES OF TRADITION Arts of Italian Americans in Philadelphia; an exhibition sponsored by the Phila. Folklore Project and the Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial from Sept. 1–Oct. 19, 1989.

²Stein, Joseph, *Fiddler on the Roof*, p. 2.

³Interview with Mary Chirichigno, 78 years old; family background, Colabraro, Naples, Italy.

⁴Irving R. Levine, *Main Street, Italy* (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Company, Inc., 1963), p. 491.

⁵Interview with Mary Chirichigno.

⁶Interview with Alba Cordon, 40 years old; family background, Palmi Calabria, Italy.

⁷Irving R. Levine, *Main Street, Italy*, p. 492.

⁸Clement A. Miles, *Christmas in Ritual and Tradition* (Gale Research Company, 1968), p. 287.

⁹Interview with Alba Cordon.

¹⁰Elva Sophronia Smith, *The Christmas Book of Legends and Stories* (New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Company, 1944), p. 327.

¹¹Irving R. Levine, *Main Street, Italy*, p. 493.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 491.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Elizabeth Hough Sechrist, *Christmas Everywhere* (Macrae-Smith Company, 1936), p. 146.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶Interview with Rose Bova, 80 years old; family background, Adore Marino Reggio Calabria, Italy.

¹⁷Clement A. Miles, *Christmas in Ritual and Tradition*, p. 192.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Irving R. Levine, *Main Street, Italy*, p. 492.

²⁰Interview with Ann Vannuki, 58 years old; family background, Lucca, Italy.

²¹Interview with Tina Cocca, 39 years old; family background, Mugnano-Del Cardinale Provenienza of Avellino, Italy.

²²Interview with Alba Cordon, 40 years old; family background, Palmi, Calabria, Italy.

²³Interview with Sister Mary John; family background, Benici, Italy.

²⁴Interview with Robert Sansone, 23 years old; family background, Sicily, Italy.

²⁵Interview with Janet Aeillo, 51 years old; family background, Sicily, Italy.

²⁶Interview with Robyn Abraham, 20 years old; family background, Naples, Italy.

²⁷Interview with Diane Ardine, 20 years old; family background, St. Pietro Avellano, Italy.

²⁸Interview with Beth Cassetti, 21 years old; family background, Cotulo, Italy.

²⁹Interview with Dana Cecconi, 20 years old; family background, Florence, Italy.

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Stein, Joseph. *Fiddler on the Roof*.

RECOLLECTIONS OF NINETY-TWO YEARS

by Grover M. Detwiler



Grover M. Detwiler in 1983.

I was born on May 13, 1891, the seventh of nine children born to Jacob M. and Lillie Ashenfelter Detwiler. A native of Port Indian, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, I lived the earliest part of my life on my father's vegetable farm in the house in which my mother was born, and with the exception of a few years, the house in which she lived her seventy-nine years.

Our farm of approximately twelve acres was located on the banks of the Schuylkill, just upriver from Norristown, the county seat. I do not know when or by whom Port Indian was named, but there is no doubt many Indians did hunt and fish along the river, and as I worked in the fields there as a boy I found scores of arrowheads (twelve of which were perfect) and a tomahawk.

Our house faced the river, and the Pennsylvania Railroad was twenty or thirty feet from the back of the building, parallel to the water. A road, Schuylkill Avenue, was on the other side of the railroad from the house. A path of twelve to fifteen feet led from our kitchen door to a springhouse into which cold water flowed through a 125-foot lead pipe from a spring in the orchard, located at one end of the cow pasture on the hillside above the road. The pipe was put in long before the railroad tracks were laid in 1884-86.

The house in which I was born, raised, and lived for more than twenty-nine years was a large, two-story stone dwelling built in 1803; its walls were eighteen inches thick. In 1904 my father built an addition on one end; a kitchen downstairs, and a bathroom (our first) and two bedrooms upstairs. The house was only one room deep and, beginning at the left side as it faced the river, the rooms in order were the added kitchen, dining room, living room, a wide hall with an open stairway, and the parlor with its slippery haircloth furniture. This parlor was not used at all as far as my sisters and I can remember. There were three large and two smaller bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor, and an attic on the third floor.

The front porch (including the section added at the kitchen) which looked out over the river was eighty-five feet long, and my sister Ella always said that was a lot of porch to sweep. When the new kitchen was built, the water from the spring was hooked up to the sink, so that the cold water spigot was always running. There was also an outside spigot that ran continually, and we all had to wash our hands and faces there in the morning, no matter how cold it was. There was nothing like spring water and cold temperatures to wake a person up. In 1914, electricity and heat were put in, but not a telephone. According to my father we didn't need "that thing."

The stone springhouse, which must have been the original dwelling when the property was settled in 1763, was used by us as a summer kitchen. A room below was used for cooling milk in the summer, and as a refrigerator until electricity came. There was a loft over the kitchen, and the roof extended over an area beyond the kitchen which sheltered a pump, a small trough, and a bench where the men waited until called to the table at mealtime. There was an old-fashioned bake oven built into the wall, and a smokehouse attached to the outside wall.

This separate little building was used for cooking and eating during the summer months. It was also used for canning vegetables and making pickles and chow-chow. In this way the big house was kept cleaner for entertaining company (there would be far fewer flies) and cooler for sleeping. Just one big room, the summer kitchen was furnished with only the bare necessities—a wood stove, an old-fashioned cupboard in one corner to hold the dishes and another to hold pots and pans, an old dough tray used as a work table, and a few nails near the stove to hang two dishpans and a couple of frying pans. There was also a long table, eight or ten chairs, and a highchair for the baby.

Moving into the summer kitchen was always exciting. A few days before we had all helped to clean it thoroughly, washing the windows and furniture, sweeping the walls, and scrubbing the board floor with a brush and soap. The finishing touches were a delight—laying a few strips of carpet on the floor; putting a new, flowered oilcloth on the table and a bouquet of flowers in a fruit jar in the middle; and hanging fresh curtains made from flour sacks at the windows.

Eating the first meal in the summer kitchen each spring was like having an extra holiday, or like coming home from a trip. I remember lots of good food: pancakes with blueberry sauce in the morning; radishes, green onions, corn on the cob, and leaf lettuce from the garden; big kettles of green peas and new potatoes, ham and string beans, and chicken soup; and homemade bread with all our meals. I also remember what a problem the flies were, with all that good cooking going on. We had no fly spray at the time, only sticky paper to trap the pests. They settled thickly on the old screen door, just waiting to get inside, and with three young children running in and out they had plenty of opportunity.

There was no plumbing in the summer kitchen, and all the water used for cooking and washing dishes came from the hand pump outside. A large teakettle was always on the stove to provide hot water, unless someone had forgotten to fill it. At the end of the summer, when the days began to get chilly and heat from a fire felt welcome again, we moved back into the big house, taking the necessities with us. This, too, was like coming back from a trip.

And speaking of trips, the railroad (completed the year before my parents moved into the house) played an important part in our lives. When I was young many freight

trains went past our house in both directions; they were not supposed to interrupt passenger train schedules, there being certain places to switch to another track and let the passenger train pass; one such switchover was at Port Indian. Quite a few unshaven, derelict men traveled along the railroad hitching rides on freight trains, bunking in the station house, and then coming along to our house to beg for food. Most of these tramps were harmless, but we kids were always afraid of them. There were also a few peddlers who stopped by, carrying large packs containing numerous small articles for sale; everything from shoestrings to hairpins. It was quite an attraction for us to look over their wares.

Train crews that passed the same places regularly learned to know the people who lived along the track. One such crewman, Harry Rittenhouse, a fireman, was married to Carrie Ashenfelter, a double cousin to our family. Harry always blew the train whistle in greeting when he passed our house. One time he started blowing it a half mile from the house, and kept it going to attract our attention and get someone to come outside. Then he tossed a note to tell us our Cousin Grace (his sister-in-law) had died at age twenty-one.

My father was hit by a train one night when he was coming home from market. It was late in the evening, and though he saw the light from the engine of the freight train up the track, he mistook it for the station light. (He had left home at 3:30 that morning and was no doubt very tired.) The horse was literally cut in half. At home we knew the train had stopped, but we did not know why until someone knocked at one of the back doors and told us. Of course the doctor was called, and he came and put many stitches in my father's injured head.

My father left home every market day at 3:30 a.m., for ours was a truck farm and he sold vegetables in Norristown all year round. Saturdays (later Fridays) and Tuesdays were market days, and customers arrived at five in the morning, anxious to get the freshest vegetables. That is why he had to leave so early.

It was my father's custom to set out about a thousand lettuce plants, and one year when I was about seven or eight years old, he designated a corner of the patch—about one hundred plants—for my brother Charlie and me to look after. He said we would get the money for them, perhaps as much as ten cents each, after he sold them at the market. After watching the slow growing plants for several weeks, we were itching for the money and decided they were big enough to sell. We had half our lot cut off and in buckets before my father saw what we were doing. He said the lettuce would not be ready for market for several weeks, and made us give what we had already cut to the pigs and chickens; so all we received for all our work was a good lecture.

There was always plenty of work; chores were many and everyone had to help, especially with pulling weeds. And



Grover's parents, Jacob M. and Lillie Ashenfelter Detwiler, on their 50th wedding anniversary.

my sisters and I remember preparing beets for market—cleaning, bunching, and packing them in barrels. I remember baskets of lima beans waiting on the long front porch to be shelled when we came home from school. Sometimes we shelled forty or fifty quarts, for people wouldn't buy them if they weren't shelled. (These were pole limas only; there were no bush lima beans then.) We also sold dried lima beans, and my sister Ella remembers that some were soaked overnight before they were taken to market; evidently people wanted convenience foods, even then. We also sold spinach in the spring and in the fall, but mostly in the fall when it had thicker leaves. All our produce was washed or scrubbed to take to market.

Our main winter crop was celery. This had been buried in a trench and covered with heavy paper and leaves; we made a special trip to the woods to get the leaves. Cleaning the celery with spring water in the winter was very hard on the hands. The other vegetables we sold in the winter—carrots, beets, turnips, winter radishes, and cabbage—were also buried. The earthen mounds which covered these crops could only be opened when the ground had thawed, for frozen dirt would be in clods and couldn't be packed down; then air would reach the remaining vegetables and cause them to spoil.

When I was young my father generally kept about one hundred hens so that we would have plenty of eggs to eat; the surplus he sold at the market. In those days our chickens were allowed a free range; today a more balanced, nutritious formula is fed to hens and they lay many more eggs. Our chicken house had about thirty nests, and the eggs were gathered from them every evening. A hen knows by instinct that if she keeps a dozen or so eggs warm for a number of days (twenty-one) she will have a family to raise. So toward that end she would stop laying eggs, become broody, and continue sitting. Then we would put her and fifteen eggs in a nest in another room, and in three weeks her family of chicks would hatch, and all would be put in a little house the size of a small doghouse and given mash, grain, and water. In the summertime some of our hens would make their own nests out under the bushes and lay twelve to fifteen eggs (all that could be kept warm). When the new families finally emerged they too would be furnished with a little house and food and water.

During my youth practically all farmers, as well as many others who lived in the country, raised two or more pigs for their own use during the fall and winter months. In the spring they bought shoats (young, weaned animals) and fed them until the fall when they might weigh two

hundred pounds or more. Then the animal was killed, dressed, the entrails removed, and the carcass left hanging until the meat cooled. At that time most farms had a smaller, one-room building with an open fireplace as we did. Before the pig was killed we filled the two large kettles hanging on the crane in the open fireplace with water, and brought the water to a boil. After the pig was dead it was taken to the wagonhouse and raised to the ceiling with a rope and tackle. A barrel half full of boiling water was placed beneath the body which was then lowered into it until it was half covered by the water. Then it was pulled out and the other half lowered and dipped. The hot water loosened the hair and bristles which were scraped off, leaving a nice white skin.

After the carcass was dressed and while the pig was still hanging the head was cut off, the body sawed in half down the back and carried into the summer kitchen. There the hams, shoulders, spare ribs, bacon, and pork chops were cut out, and the fat, from which lard was rendered, trimmed. The rest of the meat went through the grinder and was used either for sausage or scrapple; the cleaned small intestines were used for the sausage casing. In order to keep the bacon, shoulders, and hams from spoiling, they were put in a barrel with salt for about a week, then smoked in the smokehouse attached to the summer kitchen. The sausage was smoked too, and hung in the attic until needed. We really did use everything of the animal but the squeal, and butchering a pig was, along with other chores, a two-day job for the whole household.

Before 1920 most farmers had an orchard of a dozen or more trees, usually apples, peaches, pears, and plums, and they also raised grapes. Anyone with a good-size orchard made their own cider and vinegar. To make vinegar, fresh cider was put in a barrel and mother of vinegar—a gummy, slimy congealed mass formed by bacteria—added to start the fermentation.

I recall that during my elementary school days there were large chestnut trees on local farms and in the woods. The chestnuts grew one, two, or sometimes three in a soft shell that could be removed with a penknife. The nuts were enclosed in large, prickly hulls that hung on the tree in clusters. Heavy frosts opened these and they fell to the ground. The nuts were delicious eaten raw, boiled, or roasted on a hot stoveplate. In the fall we spent hours gathering chestnuts, shellbarks, and walnuts. Then during the winter evenings we cracked the shellbarks and walnuts and picked out the kernels; my mother and sisters made delicious candy with molasses and chopped nuts. Today we still have walnut and shellbark trees, but the chestnut trees are no more; they were all killed by a blight many years ago.

The one-room school I attended, Port Indian School, was about a half mile away. Of course there were no school buses, and we walked the half mile, rain or shine. Pupils started school there in the first grade at age five, and graduated at sixteen from grade eleven. Houses were few and

far between in the country then, which accounted for the one teacher having to teach all the grades. I only ever had women teachers in that school, and I remember at butchering time we'd take the pig's tail to school and pin it to the bottom of a boy's jacket or sweater. When he went up front to recite all the kids would laugh at him; that would get the teacher riled up.

The little children had a small desk up front, and as they grew they were moved back to a larger desk. There was a long, low bench in the front of the schoolroom, and we always went to it to recite our lessons: spelling, English, reading, physiology, geography, and so forth. Just the pupils in one grade went up one at a time when the teacher called for their lesson.

The heater in that school had a floor register, and when pupils wet their pants (not an uncommon occurrence with all the first graders only five years old) the teacher routinely had them stand over the register to dry. My sister Ella remembers this happening to her when she had a red flannel petticoat on; of course the color ran onto all her other clothes when it got wet. Ella also remembers one little boy who had a more serious accident; standing over the hot-air register certainly announced his predicament to all in the room.

When I was a small boy there was seldom a day, winter excluded, that you did not see on the other side of the Schuylkill from our house a canal boat going up or down the river. The canal boat, possibly fifty feet long, was built of heavy timber and was pulled by two horses or mules, with a man walking behind them on the tow-path, and another man on the rear end of the boat steering it with a rudder to keep it from being pulled into the shore. When they were within a quarter mile of the lock, the man on the boat would blow a loud horn so the lock-keeper would have the lock ready to enter on their arrival.

The locks were built at the end of the dams where the water above the dam might be three or more feet higher than that below. The lock was about seventy feet long, with watertight doors at each end which were kept closed when the lock was not being used. If a canal boat was coming up the river the lock-keeper, who lived in a house beside the lock and who earned his living tending it, opened the lower door so the boat could enter. He then closed the lower door and opened the upper one so water could enter and raise the vessel level with the water above the dam. If a boat was coming down river, the upper door would be opened to fill the lock level with the dam, the canal boat would enter, the upper door would be closed and the lower door opened, and the boat lowered so it could continue on its way.

The Schuylkill Navigation Company was Pennsylvania's first canal system. It was opened in 1825 and the peak in traffic came around 1860. At Port Indian the canal boats used the slack-water pool in the river behind the dam. At other places along the river there were hand-dug canals, as in Mont Clare. By 1905 or soon thereafter, long freight



The annual 4th of July picnic in 1907. Grover's mother is in the second row in the dark dress; his father is behind her to the right; his sister Ella is sixth from the

left in the front row, and his brother Frank is first on the right in the front row. Grover is not in the picture.

trains were hauling coal to the towns and cities, and the canal boat became an antique.

There were no canal boats to be seen in the winter, but there was plenty of other activity on the river then. During the earlier part of the twentieth century winters were much colder than they are now, and the commercial ice industry flourished; ice was harvested from the Schuylkill every year. In fact, there were two icehouses between our house and the upper end of Barbadoes Island [at Norristown]: one on our side of the river, and the other on the opposite side. The icehouse was about a half mile from our house, a large building two stories high. It was built between the river and the railroad, and had a spur track leading to it. In the spring and summer large blocks of ice were loaded into the cars and shipped to Philadelphia.

The icehouse was built on elevated ground where a rising river could not reach it; there was a chute to the water's edge. When the ice was six or more inches thick, a channel the width of two-hundred-pound blocks of ice was cut out to about fifteen feet from the shore. There the ice was cut out in blocks with a large handsaw, floated through the channel to the chute, elevated, and packed in the icehouse with six inches of sawdust as insulation between the ice and the building's outer walls.

And, when I was a youngster, practically all country teenagers owned a pair of skates, and we often skated on the Schuylkill to Catfish Dam upstream, and to Norristown in the other direction. We did a lot of sledding too, and some of the boys had bobsleds that held five or six people. Sleigh rides were also fun, for at that time anyone

who owned a carriage horse also owned a sleigh. Oftentimes on calm winter days and evenings we would hear sleigh bells in the distance, becoming louder as they approached, then fading away.

Of course we looked forward to Christmas when we had a cedar tree decorated mostly with strings of popcorn. The popcorn was sugar coated, some of it red and some white. The tree also had a few small candy canes and Christmas cards—some with lace edges—hanging on it. There were no balls and no candles. On Christmas Eve we didn't hang stockings, we put plates out on the table. Santa Claus came down the chimney and filled these with an orange, some popcorn, a candy cane, and lemon drops; we didn't know what chocolate was. I have no memory of other gifts—we were too poor. Only after we were grown and working away from home did my brothers and sisters and I exchange gifts among ourselves.

The big event of our summer was the Fourth of July picnic, held every year until World War I. When the Fourth fell on the day before market day, we had to get up at 4 a.m. to finish picking string beans for market before our company came. We entertained nearly one hundred people in all, family and friends, many of whom came from Norristown on the train. There were two passenger trains a day each way past Port Indian, and our guests came on the earlier one which arrived at 7:30 a.m. In fact, there were so many people on this train headed for our picnic, the engineer had to proceed at a crawl in order for the conductor to be able to punch all the tickets (the trip cost a nickel).

Every family brought food; my Aunt Carrie, for example, always brought a ham on the train. The food was all put together and we ate at long tables set up in the front yard. These tables were trestles covered with the long boards used to cover the hotbeds where the plants were started. We still have a large, framed picture of the 1907 picnic; it shows all the men and older boys, and even some of the younger boys, all wearing long-sleeved white shirts and neckties. For many it was the only place they went all summer, so they didn't mind dressing up.

One not-so-pleasant memory of my childhood is of an event which took place more than eighty years ago, although it is as vivid to me as if it had happened just yesterday. One Sunday when I was eleven or twelve years old, my brothers and I had been left home from church, and I was playing with a match and a dynamite cap (probably used to get rid of tree stumps) I found on my father's bureau; I thought it was a spent .22 rifle shell. A spark from the match caused the cap to explode in my hand with a loud bang. I remember sitting in the wide window sill in the dining room while the doctor sewed up the wounds. From that day until the present, my mutilated right hand has been a reminder never to play with matches, guns, or fire.

* * *

After graduating from Port Indian School I completed a two-year secretarial and bookkeeping course at Shisler's Business College in Norristown. I daydreamed of a successful business career—of possibly becoming an executive some day. For ten years I held a clerical position; eight years with the Pennsylvania Railroad Company in the old Broad Street Station in Philadelphia; the building has since been demolished. I started on the ground floor at a messenger's rate of pay, working up to a fair living wage.

For four months I was assigned as stenographer on the *Pennsylvania Limited*, a first-rate train running between New York and Chicago. The train was made up of Pullman sleeping cars with an observation car on the rear where a stenographer was located for the convenience of traveling businessmen, or anyone else who wanted to use the service. The *Limited* was a fast train, making only six stops between New York and Pittsburgh. I boarded it in New York at 10:00 a.m., and arrived in Pittsburgh at 7:00 p.m. Between Pittsburgh and Chicago the passengers spent most of their time in sleeping compartments, so the stenographer left the train in Pittsburgh, spent the night at the Fort Pitt Hotel, boarded a return *Limited* the next morning at 7:00 a.m., and arrived back in Philadelphia at two in the afternoon. I was off the following day, but the morning after that I was back in New York at 10 a.m. for another round trip.

During August of 1918 I received a notice from the draft board to report for a physical examination for induction

into military service. I was rejected on medical grounds (in 1910 I had contracted an illness which required an operation and left me incapacitated for more than a year), but wanting to do my part in the war effort I immediately made application for service with the American Red Cross. The railroad granted me a furlough for the duration of the war, and after being outfitted with a summer and winter uniform, a pair of shoes, cap, hat, overcoat, and captain's insignia, was assigned to the Debarkation Hospital at Camp Stuart in Newport News, Virginia.

At that hospital thousands of wounded American soldiers were being admitted from overseas, kept there a short time, and then transferred to military or private hospitals. The hospital consisted of large, one-story buildings; vast rooms with row upon row of cots which, after being filled with wounded soldiers swathed in bandages, presented a pathetic picture of human misery. The Red Cross group there consisted of ten men, each from a different state in the Union, and all much older than me. My principal task was to render any assistance possible; to help some to write letters, and to type letters for the handicapped. No matter how badly injured, the men were all cheerful and glad to be back in America. Many wanted to get in touch with the homefolks.

I stayed at the hospital for six months, until the number of incoming soldiers became less and less and I felt I was no longer needed. For my service with the Red Cross I received, along with my uniforms, meals, lodging, wages of sixty dollars a month, and a great deal of satisfaction. Inasmuch as I had not been called to take part in the actual fighting, each time I talked to a wounded soldier I had the feeling he had sacrificed something for me; I was glad to be of service to him.

* * *

At a social gathering of young folks in the Jeffersonville Presbyterian Church in 1917, I met a young lady by the name of Helen B. Danehower. She was a school teacher living at home with her parents and sisters, Mary and Cora, on a dairy farm in Upper Providence Township, near Yerkes. She was filling a position in a Plymouth Township school and went home each weekend, but spent the week nights at the home of her brother and his wife in Jeffersonville. Helen and I soon became attracted to each other, fell in love, and following a three-year courtship set the wedding date: August 10, 1920.

When I began working for the railroad in 1913 I received a salary of \$19.25 a month; by 1920 I had received ten increases, and was making \$154.12—a fair wage at that time. Helen and I figured that with my salary, our combined savings of around six thousand dollars, and with her continuing to teach, we would be well able to buy and furnish a comfortable home. One day when we were considering possible locations Helen jokingly said: "If you were



Grover Detwiler and Helen Danehower on their wedding day in 1920. They were attended by Helen's sister Mary, and Grover's brother Frank.

a farmer we could live at my home"; adding that her father's hired man had just given notice of leaving. I was a country boy and somewhat familiar with the duties required of a farmhand; I didn't have to be warned that it entailed much manual labor, particularly then when there was no power equipment. At my present job I worked a forty-hour week with a two-week vacation and with legal holidays off, and received a living wage. Should I change for a job working an unlimited number of hours (including six hours on Sunday) with no stated holidays or vacations? On the other hand, a change to farm life would make a decided change in everyday living for Helen and me. We would be able to spend more time together and my life would be less confined. After careful consideration it was decided I should make the change.

Therefore I timidly approached George Danehower, asking him for employment and a place to live. Telling him I could begin working on the farm in three weeks; one week to give my boss on the railroad a chance to fill my position, and two weeks for our honeymoon. After a short conversation I was assured of the job at fifty dollars a month. I handed in my resignation at the railroad effective September 5, 1920. Although my boss was quite displeased he offered his congratulations on my wedding and kindly granted passes so we could take our honeymoon to Montreal, Canada, via Niagara Falls, Lake Ontario, and the St. Lawrence River.

My new life began the day after we arrived back home. Instead of arising at my usual seven o'clock in order to be

at work in Philadelphia by nine, I was aroused at 5:00 a.m. and milked eight cows before breakfast. Being raised on a farm, I was used to milking a cow by hand; electric milking machines had not been invented in 1920. In fact, there was no electric line in the vicinity at that time. The only illumination on the farm was from coal-oil lamps, which had to be filled, the wicks trimmed, and the globes washed regularly. In the early morning and in the evening we carried oil lanterns into the barn, always being careful of fire. There was a telephone in the house, a box-like instrument which hung on the wall and had to be cranked to get the operator. It was a six-party line, and any of the other five could listen in on your conversations if they were so inclined.

Many changes have taken place since 1920, both in the methods and the equipment used in farming. Around that time tractors were being introduced and as I recall, the first machines were equipped with large rear wheels made of iron and having treads ten or twelve inches wide, with four-inch cleats for traction. At first many farmers were dubious, feeling the heavy iron tractors would pack the soil, and so continued to use horses and mules for power. A farm of any size required at least four sturdy horses or mules, and many farmers also kept a lighter-weight carriage horse. The animals had to be curried and fed three times a day; acres of hay and grain had to be raised for their feed; and they had to be taken to the blacksmith's shop for shoe repairs several times a year.

Until the spring of 1923 Helen's father farmed with



The Danehower (later Detwiler) farm near Yerkes, Pa.

horses, and I vividly recall walking across a five-acre plot, out and back, guiding a twelve-inch plow for hours until the soil was all turned over. Then I walked behind a harrow to condition the soil for planting, and then again over the same field behind a grain drill; on such days I was always ready for bed by 8:00 p.m. Then it was up again at five, finish the barn chores, eat breakfast, and the same process of getting another field ready for planting. That was the routine for several months every spring. After we got a tractor in 1923 we were relieved of much walking, and the horses were gradually disposed of.

I have seen vast changes in the methods of raising and harvesting field corn, one of the main crops on a dairy farm. In order to raise a good crop the soil had to be properly conditioned before planting; then, when the corn was about two inches high, it was cultivated using a two-horse riding cultivator to keep down the weeds. This was repeated at least twice more, until the corn was about two feet high, when we went over the field with a hoe, row by row, to destroy the weeds the cultivator had missed. Today, soon after the corn is planted the field is sprayed to eliminate weeds, and cultivating and hoeing aren't necessary.

Along with other chores, it took two men a couple of months to harvest a ten-acre field. Prior to the invention of the corn harvester, each ear of corn was handled possibly a dozen times before it finally arrived at the sheller. A week before harvest we made what we called "horses" between every seventh and eighth row of corn. This was done by tying together four stalks of corn, each about three feet apart; the "horses" themselves were about twelve feet apart. Then each stalk on eight rows was cut off by hand with a corn knife, and the stalks were stacked around the "horse" and tied together at the top.

After all the corn was cut and in shocks it was time to

husk the ears. The legs of the "horses" were cut off, and four shocks (two from each shock row) were laid down to form a circle. The ears were then husked one at a time and thrown in a pile in the center of the circle. The use of a "husking peg" on the right hand aided in removing the husk from the corn. Then we tied the fodder in bundles with tar-rope (mice don't like it), two bundles to a shock, and the bundles of fodder from sixteen shocks were stacked together and tied around the top with tar-rope.

At the end of each husking day the ears of corn were picked up by hand, put into a bushel basket, and dumped onto a wagon. The horses pulled the wagon to the corncrib and we shoveled the ears into it. At shelling time it was shoveled out of the corncrib into baskets, again dumped onto a wagon, and then pulled to the side of the barn where it was shoveled onto the floor of the shelling room. There one man shoveled it into a basket and took it to the corn sheller which was run by a large one-cylinder gasoline engine. Another man fed it into the machine ear by ear. We had to shell corn about every two weeks.

One day while we were shelling corn our neighbor, Andrew Mack, came to visit and had his little fox terrier, Teddy, with him. Teddy soon discovered there were mice under the small pile yet to shelled, and he loved to catch them as they ran out. The Macks lived about a quarter of a mile across the fields from us, and after that visit if the wind was in the right direction so that Teddy could hear our gasoline engine running, he would know we were shelling corn. Then in about five minutes he would be with us, ready to catch the mice as they ran out.

In 1920 Helen's father had a reaper and binder to harvest wheat, oats, and barley. But in order to save grain which the horses and machine would destroy, we cut a six-foot wide swath with a cradle before the machine went into the field. The cradle was a scythe-like implement with six



*Studio portrait of
Grover Detwiler,
c. 1940.*

pointed, curved wooden tines the length of the blade. These tines held the stalks of grain as they were cut off, and with the proper turn in the same swing, they could be laid on the ground in a neat pile, ready for hand binding. This procedure took place around the field, after which the horse-drawn machine did the cutting. Twelve or fourteen bundles were then placed upright in shocks so the grain could dry.

Later the bundles were loaded on a wagon and taken into the barn where a rick was built. This was a waterproof stack that would keep out rain until the thresher came, as few farmers had threshing machines. Andrew Mack had a threshing machine and did custom work. At least six men were needed for the operation: two to pitch the bundles from the rick to the machine; one to remove the twine from the bundles and feed the machine; one to bag the grain; one to take it to the granary; and another to level the straw after it was blown into the mow. Feeding the machine and leveling the straw were both very dusty jobs.

Until about 1935 all hay was put into the haymow loose. It was mowed, raked in windrows, put on a pile, and then pitched by hand onto the haywagon. One man was on the wagon loading (placing) and two were on either side pitching. If the wagon was loaded properly, it could be unloaded in the barn with a two-pronged hayhook and lifted to the top of the mow by the horses. Then two men would spread the hay over the mow and tramp it. A few years

later we got a hay loader, a machine hitched behind the haywagon which brought the loose hay up on the wagon, where two men were loading.

Filling a silo in the 1930s also required hard manual labor compared with the methods of today. At that time I had a tractor with a pulley for belt power, and I purchased a fodder cutter with a blower and enough six-inch pipe to reach the top of the silo. I paid a neighbor who had a machine to cut the corn. This machine tied six or eight stalks in a bundle, and the bundle then had to be picked up by hand and loaded on a low, flat wagon and hauled to the barn. Then the twine was removed and the stalks fed into the cutter which blew it into the silo. Loading and unloading bundles of green corn stalks was not easy work.

* * *

When Helen and I were married my father-in-law was raising about a thousand chicks a year. He kept between five and six hundred laying hens, and sold the frying and roasting chickens to dealers at wholesale prices. Being familiar with the retail prices received in the marketplace, in 1921 I suggested that if he could spare me each Friday it would prove profitable for me to take the chickens, eggs, apples, and some sweet corn to market. He agreed, and I



Grover Detwiler and grandson John Simmons in 1954, one year before he retired from farming.

began attending the Borough Market Place in Norristown. After working up a trade, I sold at retail prices between fifty and sixty dozen eggs, and about twenty chickens every week. The surplus I sold to dealers at wholesale prices. After I took charge of farming in 1935, I continued attending market until 1941.

By 1935 the Great Depression was well advanced; the number of unemployed was vast, money became very tight, many people and businesses went into bankruptcy, and banks closed their doors which alarmed a lot of people and caused them to withdraw their deposits. Prices had dropped and the whole country was hard hit. I had not received my wages for six months, and all our savings except those invested in United States war bonds were exhausted. By this time the dairy had been disposed of because the Pennsylvania Board of Health had passed a law demanding strict sanitary conditions for the shipment of milk. To meet those conditions would require many changes and the expenditure of a large amount of money.

By this time Helen's father was seventy-four and wanted to be relieved of all responsibility and management; he asked me to take charge. During the previous fifteen years we had always gotten along well together; there was never a rift between us. But if we were going to remain on the farm we would have to spend a lot of money, and Helen and I felt an agreement should be properly drawn and signed; Helen's parents agreed, and it was done.

I then proceed to tear out the wooden stalls, including the horse stalls; poured concrete on the entire stable floor; installed twenty metal stanchions, a maternity pen, a calf pen and a bull pen; and built a milk house and a silo; all at a cost of around two thousand dollars. I also purchased an electric milking machine, an electric cooler, and ten cows; by the spring of 1936 I was producing milk for shipment.

I gradually increased the herd to twenty-one, and bought a bull for breeding purposes. (Today almost all farmers use artificial insemination for breeding; it produces a better line of stock.) The horse-drawn farm equipment was practically worn out so I bought a larger, more powerful tractor and the equipment to go with it: plow, disk, cultivator, planter, and baler. I continued attending the market, and with the production of chickens, eggs, and milk, we managed to make a comfortable living. The ten-year Depression of the 1930s was felt by almost everyone; many people were out of work and many experienced hunger. Fortunately our family fared well; nature provides that farmers need never go hungry.

But, throughout my entire life I experienced no poverty nor, during my childhood, did I know anything of luxury; we were thankful to have the necessities of life. For my father and mother to eke out a living while raising a family of eight children was a task of hard work, self-denial, sacrifice, and resourcefulness. However, we always had plenty to eat, were well-dressed and, I believe, were much happier than many families today who have bundles of spending money and all the modern conveniences. But I don't look back with nostalgia: I have heard many people speak of the "good old days"; but in those days when one wanted heat for warmth or cooking it meant chopping and carrying in wood or coal and taking out ashes. It is my opinion that the "good old days" came with the use of electricity, when power came with the flip of a switch.

But Helen and I never regretted my decision to leave the business world for the farm. Spending the first twenty-nine years of my life on a vegetable farm, the next thirty-five on a dairy farm (I retired and we sold out in 1954, retaining a twelve-acre plot), and the following thirty-two years growing an acre of vegetables, verifies that the roots of my life, as the roots of my crops, are in the soil.

Oldes un Neies

Old and New



Those Old-Time Children's Days

by Robert P. Stevenson

The practice sessions came in early June. The time was World War I. Soon after our mid-day meal, my two sisters and I would set off down the dusty township road to the Presbyterian Church in New Geneva, Pennsylvania, a mile away. There, under the guidance of women of the congregation, we passed much of the afternoon playing with other youngsters and learning our parts for a program to be presented about two weeks hence.

What was a Children's Day program like? Now, nearly three-quarters of a century later, many details are gone from my memory. But I do recall the general outline. Each child had at least one part, perhaps reciting a poem, singing a song, participating in a play, in a marching drill, or reading Bible verses.

Finally, when the adults felt all were ready, members of the congregation, as well as others from the neighborhood, gathered at the church about 6 o'clock of a Sunday evening for the program.

My part on one occasion was a Bible reading. I have always felt that a Bible reading should be delivered with *feeling*. So I did. Perhaps that was why several women later insisted that I ought to become a preacher, a vocation far removed from my own inclination towards journal-

ism, which I had even then. For another program, I remember learning and reciting a poem, cut from the pages of *The National Stockman & Farmer*, then published in Pittsburgh. My father subscribed to this publication all during my youth. Its fare always included a fiction serial. A high point of my week then was reading the latest installment. These usually were tales of the West.

For me, one of the best features of those June days of practice was trudging to and from the church along the quiet country road—a road that has now been wiped out by a major highway. I still associate wild roses with those walks. These grew profusely at one spot along our daily route. My sisters and I would stop and admire the fragile pink blossoms, and perhaps pick one and hold it to our noses to inhale the delicate fragrance.

Are Children's Day programs still a part of church life? They are not in New Geneva, Pennsylvania, at least. This Presbyterian congregation in the early 1920s built and dedicated a new church. This prospered for half a century. But finally, the congregation was dissolved and the building sold.

The accompanying photo shows children and adults who took part in one of those long-ago Children's Days

in New Geneva, either in 1916 or 1917. The group posed in front of the old Stone Church, a structure built in 1810 on land donated by Albert Gallatin, founder of the village. The building first was used as the community school.

Look at the group and you'll see me at the left front, then about ten years old, wearing a tie and white shirt and short pants—but in my bare feet, a wonderful condition that prevailed for me all spring, summer, and well into the autumn. Wasn't that a wonderful feeling—bare feet? Mother insisted of course that I wash them each evening before bed. But even with that requirement, going bare-foot was always a delight.

Those shown in the picture are: Front row, left to right:

Mary Lida Manning, Clare Manning, Unknown, Anna Manning, Mary Diehl, Edna Jenkins, Priscilla Stevenson Lockard, John Donaldson, William Ganoe, Ruth Stevenson Morris, and Dorothy Donaldson. Second row: Henry Dible, Robert P. Stevenson, Arthur Leckey, Katie Gray Sandusky, Mary Diehl, Mary Bixler, Mary Sandusky Fast, Harold Robbins, Hazel Robbins, Rebecca (Becky) Sandusky, Marie Lott (just behind the former), Unknown girl (just head), Dorothy Weller, Mary Lott Coffman, Mary Louise Weller, and Louise Sandusky Stevenson. (just head), Scott Diehl, Harold Bixler, Lawrence Dible, and Joe Gray. Back row: Isee Manning, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Davenport, Unknown girl (just head), Mrs. Frank (Mary)

BOOK REVIEWS

John A. Hostetler, editor, *Amish Roots: A Treasury of History, Wisdom, and Lore*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

Author of the best-selling *Amish Society*, Dr. Hostetler here lets the Amish speak for themselves, presenting an anthology of writings mostly by members of the sect, or, "if not by them, by those who spoke for them in appropriate times and in sensitive areas." His aim is to present enough material to allow readers to come to their own understanding and make their own judgments about the Amish lifestyle and ethos.

Toward this end a wide variety of topics are presented: the European background is briefly touched on ("A Fresh and Radical Break"); various accounts of the trip to the New World are given ("Our Voyage to America"); and pioneers relate their hardships in the American West ("Nebraska Prairie Fire"; "Oklahoma Living").

And the Amish struggle to remain separate from the world is well-documented in selections presented under such headings as "Church and Community Government"; "Amish Schools"; and "Conscience in Conflict." Particularly moving, for instance, is an account of life "Behind Prison Walls," by a young man arrested for violating the Universal Military Service and Training Act. There are also stories of "Joining and Leaving the Faith"; of "Controversies and Disputes"; of "Misfortunes" and "Malicious Attacks." The latter remind us that the Amish, too, are victims of a violence-prone, larger society ("Baby Adeline").

But I suspect many readers will find the greatest interest in the homely stories presented in the sections on "Agriculture and Everyday Life," "Home and Family," "Phases of Life," and "Speaking Out, The Amish Explain." As Hostetler notes, "the Amish use their words sparingly"; and, I might add, in most cases to very good effect. The simplicity and directness of their writings in-

form and move the reader in a way more polished efforts often do not. Scholars, for example, have written reams of articles on what it means to be Amish. But one Amishman cuts to the heart of the matter, and in less than two hundred words gives an answer that—once read—can never be forgotten. Reading these primary sources does, indeed, have its rewards.

Ruth Hoover Seitz and Blair Seitz (Photographer), *Pennsylvania's Historic Places*. Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books, 1989.

Long known as the "Keystone State" for its prominent and pivotal role in the nation's political, military, and economic history, Pennsylvania has a wealth of historic sites, thirty-one of which are described and pictured here.

As might be expected, these include Independence National Historical Park, Gettysburg National Military Park, and Valley Forge. But the book's real value is in telling the stories of important, yet lesser-known attractions: the early homesteads and mansions of eminent citizens; the religious communes established by German mystics; critical battlefield sites and military installations (including the strongest fortress ever built by the British in America—Fort Pitt); and villages and museums which commemorate the state's oil, iron, coal, railroad, and lumber industries.

There are beautiful photographs of each site (they alone are worth the price of the book—\$29.95 hardcover; \$19.95 paperback), and a short essay which describes its background and historical significance; there is also information on what a visitor can see and do at each today. The book was produced in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and includes an introductory essay by the Commission's Harold L. Myers.

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41st Annual

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