

Old-Time New England

THE BULLETIN OF

The Society for the Preservation of
New England Antiquities



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England, 1825-1840

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The Passing of the Shakers

By CLIFTON JOHNSON

With photographs by the author

(Concluded from Vol. XXV, page 19)

A SHAKER household usually consisted of from thirty to ninety men and women with such children as had been apprenticed to the family, and they lived in one or more large dwellings. At first the architecture of the communes was that of the environment in which the members found themselves.

It began with log cabins, and these were followed by other structures that were humble, but not so primitive. Next they adopted the gambrel-roofed house and other new world Puritan types, and only after prosperity smiled on them and there were large families of the believers, did they build the big, simple buildings that were in keeping with their taste and circumstances. They sought uniformity, and the positions of the buildings on each side of the road were as nearly alike as possible, allowing for the lay of the land.

The architecture was scoffed at by the public, who said the structures had the appearance of being mere factories or human hives, and the Shakers themselves conceded that they sought little else than utility. No conscious attention was paid to grace and beauty, and ornament was avoided.

On the other hand the taste of the public of that period was for an ornate artificiality, and most were blind to the virtues of a quiet simplicity, agreeable proportions, and impressive size. The Shakers might well have retorted that what their critics called beautiful was both absurd and abnormal.

One predominant feature of the buildings is their small window panes. These were in common use in the Shaker period of most active construction, and they have been retained ever since in dwellings, meetinghouses and all kinds of buildings, large and small.

The houses are set high on their foundation walls so that you walk up several steps to enter them, and a stout iron rail of standardized type flanks the steps on each side. Frequently an old mounting platform dating back to the days of horseback riding, and of saddles and pillions, has been preserved in its accustomed place.

The Shaker stone walls, whether along the village roads or defining the boundaries of fields and pastures, are very substantial. Still more interesting are the numerous gateways. Often the gates themselves are gone, but not the big stone monoliths that served for gate posts. Father Time can seldom do more than tilt them at varying angles.

There never has been any question but that the best of materials were used in all construction projects, nor that for a long time the buildings were kept in perfect order and repair.

The house interiors, with their unpapered walls and low ceilings, were characterized by a certain bareness, though not such as was inconsistent with comfort. It was customary for brethren or sisters, when they entered their house, to uncover their heads and hang their

hats and bonnets in the lower corridor. They opened and shut doors gently "in the fear of God," and the whole house was kept "sacred unto the Lord."

Each chamber accommodated two brethren or two sisters. The furnishings included simple cot beds, conveniences for washing, a looking-glass, a wood stove with a small broom and a dustpan close at hand, a table for writing, and there were several chairs, which when not in use were hung on pegs along the walls. On the floor were strips of quiet-colored rag carpet. One feature of the brethren's rooms was a large spittoon filled with sawdust, and at the entrance doors were scrapers and mats that served as an invitation to clean one's shoes. The strips of carpet were easily lifted, and the floor below was as clean as if it were a table from which to eat.

Everywhere was a most scrupulous cleanliness in and about not only the dwelling, but the shops, stables, wash-houses, and all the rest of the premises. Wood for the fires required much storage space, and in the farmyard of some of the larger families was a mammoth woodshed three stories high.

The brethren's rooms were separated from those of the sisters by a wide hallway, and the men and women used different entrances to the building. On the first floor was the dining-hall, and a kitchen equipped with a big cookstove. Down below were capacious cellars, and no matter where you went there was an abundance of wall pegs. The hanging habit was so general in connection with these pegs that even the Shakers made a joke of it, saying, "We hang everything but people. That we leave for the world to do."

Getting-up-time in a Shaker family was four in the summer and five in the winter. A bell gave the signal, and the

persons in each room promptly dressed and knelt together in silent prayer. After the praying each took two chairs, set them back to back, removed the coverlets and blankets piece by piece from the beds, folded them neatly, and laid them across the backs of the chairs. Next they "lightened" the feathers in the ticks and opened the windows to get fresh air. For all this fifteen minutes were allowed.

On Sunday the time for rising and breakfast was deferred a half hour. Every morning, by breakfast time, the women had swept, made the beds, and put everything to rights.

After entering the dining-hall the Shaker family all knelt at their places for about a minute silently invoking a blessing on the food. The men were at one table, the women at another, the children at a third. Conversing was not allowed while eating "because the confusion would be too great if all talked together." Whispering and laughing were likewise banned. Table-cloths were not used, and there was no glassware.

The Shaker diet was wholesome and ample, but meat was regarded with more or less disfavor, and pork was not eaten at all. Many would use no food that was an animal product, and denied themselves milk, butter, and eggs. In some societies two tables were set, one with meat, the other without. There were extensive vegetable gardens and orchards at all the communes, and fruit was eaten freely at every meal.

When the business of eating was concluded, there was another short kneeling period, and then those who had eaten hung up their chairs on the wall pegs, thus leaving the floor free from that much obstruction for the benefit of the women whose task it was to clean up the dining-room. At the end of the day

everyone was in bed and the lights out by half-past nine.

There was scarcely an action in the routine life of these people that did not have a rule for its perfect and strict performance. Rules were formulated even for such things as dressing the right side first, stepping with the right foot first when ascending stairs, folding hands with the right-hand thumb and fingers above those of the left, kneeling with the right leg first, and harnessing first the right-hand horse or ox.

In the olden time the Shakers drank intoxicating liquor, chewed tobacco, and took snuff as a matter of course, but after 1828, when a temperance wave swept over the country, they discontinued the use of spirits and the custom of placing wine or cider before visitors. Somewhat later a spirit-land message from departed founders of the faith prohibited smoking tobacco, but exempted users over sixty years of age. A few chewed, although this was rated a weakness which stood in the way of a perfect life.

Not only did the Shakers from an early period generally avoid the use of fermented drinks and tobacco, but they regarded with disfavor tea and coffee. An elder even spoke outright one Sunday against such abominations as pie and doughnuts.

Immediately after breakfast the able-bodied members of the sect went to work under the guidance of caretakers. None of the women worked in the fields except in light tasks like picking berries. In each family a brother was appointed to aid the sisters in doing the heavy work of the wash-house, dairy, and some other departments. The men milked in weather that was stormy or cold, and the women milked in weather that was pleasant and warm.

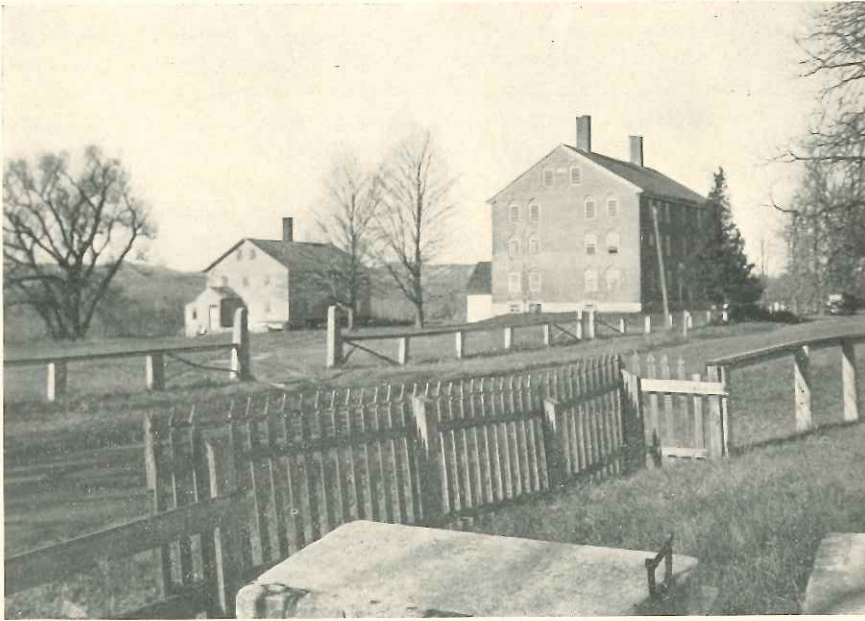
There was no servant class until com-

paratively recent times, and monthly relays of the older sisters took turns in cooking, and in the work of the dining-room. Washing and ironing were tasks of the younger sisters. It is an interesting fact that cats, kept to destroy rats and mice, were the only pet animals in Shakerdom.

All members of the sect had an assignment of tasks that kept them busy during the working hours of the day. There was no room for drones, yet it was not the habit of the Shakers to toil severely. They lived economically, but with no haste to be rich, and labor was made a pleasure. As champions of the equality of women with men, they made no distinction between the sexes in selecting their officials, and the sisters shared with the brethren the privileges and responsibilities of leadership and labor. But in a general way it was recognized that women's work was in the house and men's outdoors.

When a time came of continued rapid decrease in numbers the Shakers found themselves burdened with a larger industrial and agricultural plant than they had workers to carry on. They did not wish to weaken their system with an alien element, and non-believers were hired regretfully. As employers they were kind and liberal, and any person hired by them was considered fortunate. Everywhere they had the reputation among the world's people of being strictly honest in all their transactions.

Their rules stipulated that the Sabbath should be kept pure and holy to a degree which banned practically all books that had originated among the world's people. No unnecessary work was allowed, not even the cooking of food, taking a bath, cutting the hair, beard or nails, or blacking shoes and boots. Fruit to be eaten on Sunday must be carried to the dwelling on Saturday. No one could go to a work-



Shaker Buildings at Canterbury, N. H.

shop or walk in the gardens and orchards. But if any property were likely to be damaged—as hay or grain that lay in the field and might get wet before Monday—it could be secured on the Sabbath.

One handicap has been incendiary fires. At Watervliet in 1871 two fires within a week destroyed the Shaker barns and sheds with all the winter supplies for stock. These fires were attributed to a gang of hoodlums in the vicinity.

In February, four years later, the Church Family at Mount Lebanon lost by a fire of incendiary origin eight buildings including the dwelling-house. There was no insurance, and the loss was one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Other burnings of this sort occurred at Mount Lebanon in 1890 and 1894. Two days after the second of these fires the society at Harvard was visited by a fire

fiend, and the great barn and various other structures were wiped out by the flames.

Alfred, Maine, lost several buildings by a conflagration in 1901, and Canterbury, New Hampshire, had a similar visitation. Indeed, these catastrophies were general nearly everywhere that the Shakers settled.

VI

In the Shaker's religious services there was no audible praying, for they maintained that God did not need spoken words. Their aim was to "walk with God" as with a friend. Mental prayer could be a large part of their lives without interrupting their usual avocations. The Sunday service was either held in the meetinghouse, or in the large assembly hall that was in every family house.

One of the world's people, who at-

tended the Sunday Shaker meeting in a Massachusetts commune during a summer vacation, tells of its starting with the singing of a hymn which was followed by reading from the Bible. Then an elder made a brief address on holiness of living, and an eldress spoke in a similar vein. Next there was a lively hymn tune in which everyone joined. At length the time for marching came. Until then the brothers and sisters had sat confronting each other on settees, which they now placed out of the way against the wall. A group formed, with two lines of marchers outside of them, and some one started a stirring march tune. Those in the middle rocked back and forth on their feet and swayed their bodies to the music, while the marchers began their round, beating time with an outward gesture of the arms and an upward gesture of the palms, and a frequent clapping of hands. The scene was thrilling and fantastic yet not ludicrous.

The exercises were varied by reforming of ranks, by speaking from men and women, and by dancing "as David danced before the Lord," the dance being a sort of shuffle. Occasionally a member who was moved more deeply than the rest, or perhaps in some tribulation of soul, asked the prayers of the assembly, and an elder requested all to kneel for a few moments in silent prayer.

More rarely a person came to the front, bowed before the elder and eldress, and began a singular whirl which might continue for quite a while. Afterward some brother or sister would perhaps deliver a message of comfort or warning from spirit-land.

In their marching and dancing they held their hands before them, and made a motion as of pulling something in their direction. This was called "gathering a blessing." In a somewhat similar man-

ner, when prayers and sympathy were requested, they pushed with reversed hands toward the brother or sister that which had been requested.

They were all Spiritualists, and they believed that many of their hymns came to this brother or that sister without regard to special genius. Poetically the hymns were mediocre, but the music was wild and sweet.

One of the Shaker hymns alludes to their houses of worship in the following fragment:

"No sin can ever enter here—
Nor sinners rear a steeple;
'Tis kept by God's peculiar care,
For his peculiar people."

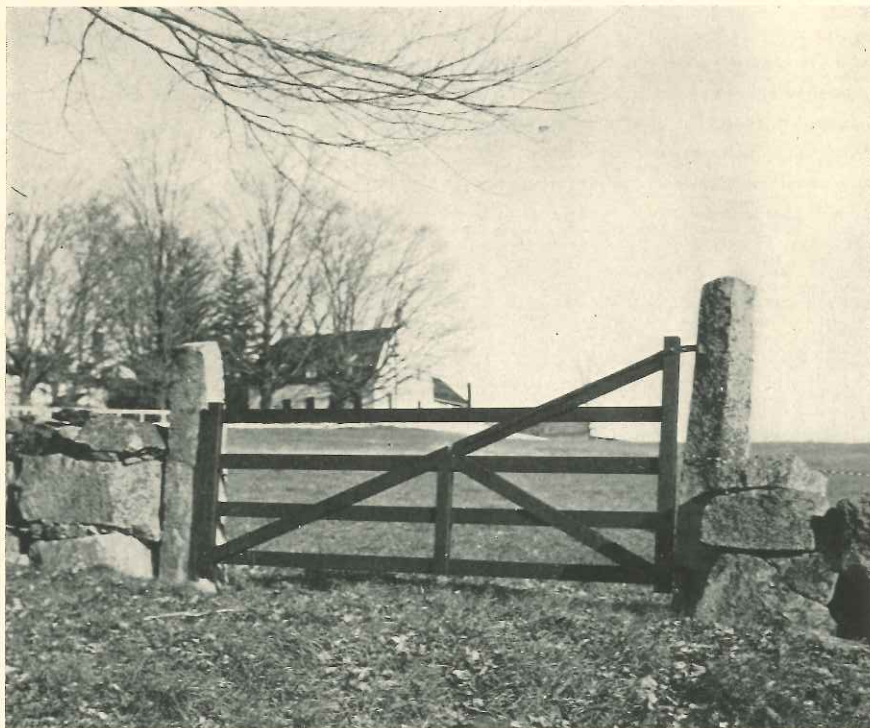
"Steeple-houses" were hateful to them. Such structures smacked of pride and ostentation.

A lively verse in another hymn, to which the Shaker congregation marched with clapping hands and skipping feet, was this:

"I mean to be obedient,
And cross my ugly nature,
And share the blessings that are sent
To ev'ry honest creature;
With ev'ry gift I will unite,
And join in sweet devotion—
To worship God is my delight,
With hands and feet in motion."

During periods of overwrought revivalism, when inspiration reached a climax, verses in unknown tongues often came from the spirit world. The following is a specimen.

"O calvini cristi I no vole,
Calvini cristi liste um,
I no vole vinin ne viste,
I no vole viste vum."



Shaker Meeting House, Canterbury, N. H.

While the years of spirit manifestation lasted the hymns and anthems of the Believers greatly increased. Over a thousand were produced, copied into manuscript books, and learned by heart. None of the manuscripts were taken into meeting except by the leaders.

Evening was a time of diversion in the Shaker Communities. They sang well and spent much time in learning new hymns and tunes. There was some family meeting every evening. At Mount Lebanon one evening each week was devoted to reading selected articles from the newspapers. But crimes and tragedies were omitted, and interest was concentrated largely on scientific discoveries, social movements of the day, and speeches concerning public affairs. On one of

the other evenings there was a union gathering for conversation. Thursday night the meeting was a religious service in which the attendants "labored to get good."

From 1871 to 1900 the sect published a monthly journal. At first it was called "The Shaker," but soon this title was changed to "The Shaker and Shakeress" because the women thought they ought to be represented in the title equally with the men. Still later the periodical was called "The Manifesto." It set forth the views of the sect with much shrewdness and ability, but it was concerned almost exclusively with religious matters, and there were few details of the communal daily life.

On Sunday evenings it was the cere-

monial habit of groups of sisters to visit groups of brethren. From four to eight of the former sat in a row on one side in the straight-backed Shaker chairs. Each wore a neat hood or cap, and each had a clean white handkerchief spread stiffly across her lap. Brethren of corresponding number sat opposite, and they, too, had white handkerchiefs on their knees. The company conversed on the news of the week, farm operations, and the weather, they sang, and they punctuated their conversation with mild laughter.

W. D. Howells was an interested and sympathetic attendant one summer at the Harvard Community meetings. He even went to a funeral ceremony in the plain white meetinghouse where the brethren and sisters sat separate facing each other on rows of long settees. The sisters wore stiff gauze caps, and the brothers had broad straw hats which they hung on wooden pegs. From their pockets they took large white handkerchiefs and laid them across their knees.

Some one began to sing a hymn and all joined in with fervent rapture, meanwhile beating time on their knees with their hands. They dispensed with prayer and any set discourse, but many spoke of Sister Julia's faithful life and their affection for her, and verses extolling the "arisen one" were read by several of the mourners. The younger sisters gave way to tears. Most notable of all, there were none of the trappings of grief that for so many of the "world's people" leave an aftermath of debt to hamper the future of the living.

A former habit at funerals was to appeal to the spirit of the departed to communicate with those present at the service, and in the course of the meeting a medium would report some words alleged to have come from the person who had died.

It was the Shaker custom never to touch a body until four hours after death, so as to give time for the spirit to leave the body. A vigorous Shakeress of middle age recently commented with a good deal of feeling on the present methods of embalming. To illustrate, she said of elder so-and-so: "He wanted us to promise he wouldn't be embalmed when he died. If we did he was coming back to han't the one who embalmed him. He was mediumistic and he communicated with his sister who was dead. She told him that a spirit suffered terribly trying to leave a body that is embalmed."

The Shakers have their cemeteries, but they stress the belief that the person whose body they bury "is not there," and usually the places of interment have received only minor attention. Shakers speak of "the bourne whence travelers now return so *easily* to commune with the living." One elder would have a tree planted by every grave, and he would "add to the earth's fertility by the deposit of a body for which he no longer has any use."

Not only have the Shakers tenaciously maintained that they have intimate intercourse with the spirit world, but they assert that the spirits of their own dead have reacted on that world and formed communities of Shakers there numbering many thousands.

In the autobiography of an elder who was converted to Shakerism in 1830 by spirit manifestations that lasted three weeks, we are told that the exercises in Shaker meetings always had been singing and dancing, shaking, turning, shouting, speaking with new tongues, and prophesying.

Starting in 1842 there seems to have been a period of spirit manifestations of remarkable intensity, but at the end of



Shaker Settlement at Hancock, Mass.

ten years the spirits who ministered to Mother Ann's Believers announced that they were about to leave them and go out into the world to visit every city, hamlet and cottage in the land working for the uplifting and enlightenment of humanity. Their departure caused great sorrow among the Shakers. Eventually the dancing in the Sabbath service was omitted. No doubt the elimination of the spectacular meant a loss of public interest, and quite likely the faith was just naturally destined to run its course and end.

However that may be, a gradual change came over the Shakers as the years passed. They were less emotional in their religious manifestations, and the older members who wished to "keep the

fire of the spirit glowing at white heat" had to accept the inevitable. A calm serenity replaced the former exuberance, and they shrank from rousing ridicule and misunderstanding.

VII

Shakerdom did not cohere very closely, but so far as it had a centralizing tendency its chosen region was New England, the oldest society of which was founded in 1790 at Hancock in Western Massachusetts. There, the plain, almost barnlike meetinghouse that was erected the first year by the Hancock society still stands. But now the ancient house of worship and the rest of the serene group of buildings that are half hidden by trees and vines and shrubbery, are close to a

busy modern highway that connects Pittsfield with Albany. Some of the buildings are of brick or stone, but the great majority are wooden and painted white.

A feature of the village which always has been regarded as a curiosity is a round stone barn with a circumference of two hundred and seventy feet. This rises from a rocky eminence, and its widespread massiveness is suggestive of a grim medieval castle. In the primitive times when it was built the cost was eight hundred dollars, which seemed a big price to pay then. About fifty years ago, after the barn had been gutted by a fire that started from an overturned lantern, the masons charged considerably more than that sum just for repointing the stone work.

Hancock's East Family engaged for a time in shipping iron ore from a mine on their farm to a furnace twenty miles distant.

The part of the Hancock Society that lived beside the Pittsfield highway, dwelt in a four-story brick house of impressive size surmounted by a cupola. Every communal family home had its cupola, and in this hung a bell that was rung for a variety of purposes. Neither the ancient meetinghouse nor a neighboring venerable schoolhouse have been used for years, but there is a chapel and a schoolroom in the brick house. The former is used only at irregular intervals and there are no children for the latter.

On a hill beyond the meetinghouse is a forlorn cemetery in a corner of a mowing field. The stones are unpretentious gray slabs, all of a size, and only the width of a grave apart. Nor is the monotony mitigated by trees, hedges or flowers.

About the buildings still in use trees are rather abundant, some scattered, and some in groves, especially if they are tall evergreens. Besides there are flowers and

shrubs, climbing vines, and graceful arbors; and rustic flagstone walks lend their attraction.

Nevertheless there is a prevailing sense of encroaching delapidation, fences are allowed to get decrepit, and the less important buildings are being worsted in the warfare with nature. But what else could be expected? Only twenty-five members are there now—not enough to keep the place going—and all except two are women.

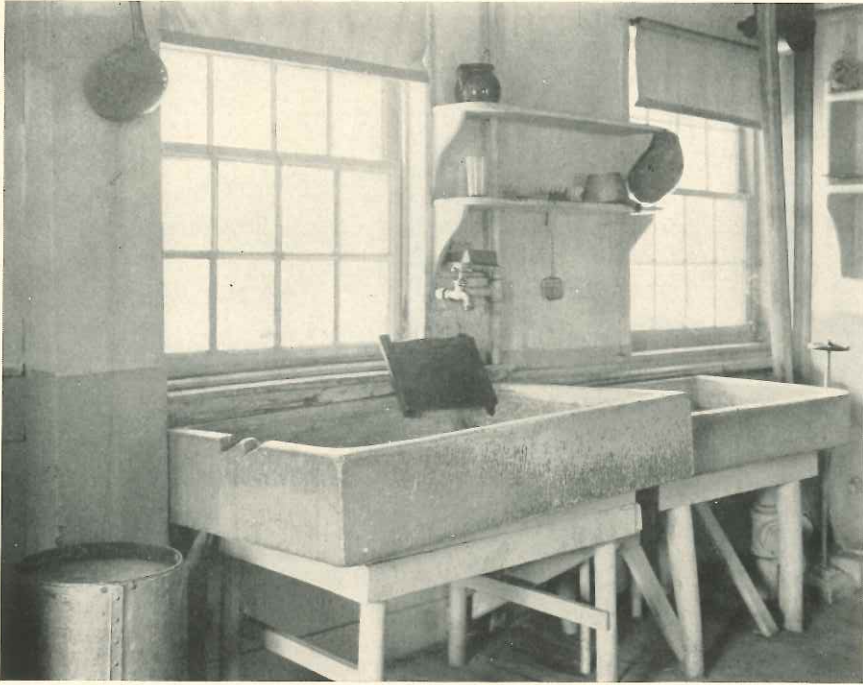
At the neighboring Mount Lebanon commune, the real estate of which is partly in Massachusetts, the present population is barely a score, of whom the two oldest are Sister Emma who is eighty-six, and Brother Ferdinand, who is eighty. The youngest member is fifty.

The most picturesque of the communes was a few miles south at Tyringham. A mountain rose several hundred feet above the buildings, while the valley that afforded the best tillage was many hundred feet below. Some of the houses that were entered from the roadway were built against the side of the mountain, and had two stories in front and four in the rear.

The first move toward founding the commune was made in the midwinter of 1807 when a number of Tyringham people went to Mount Lebanon and asked to have teachers sent to them. The request was granted, meetings were held, and in the spring the town experienced a powerful revival.

From 1795 until 1874 the community for the most part prospered on its mountainside overlooking Hop Brook Valley. It had nine sturdy structures including a mill, and at its peak there were one hundred members who cultivated fifteen hundred acres.

The Harvard community, northwest of Boston, was two miles north of the



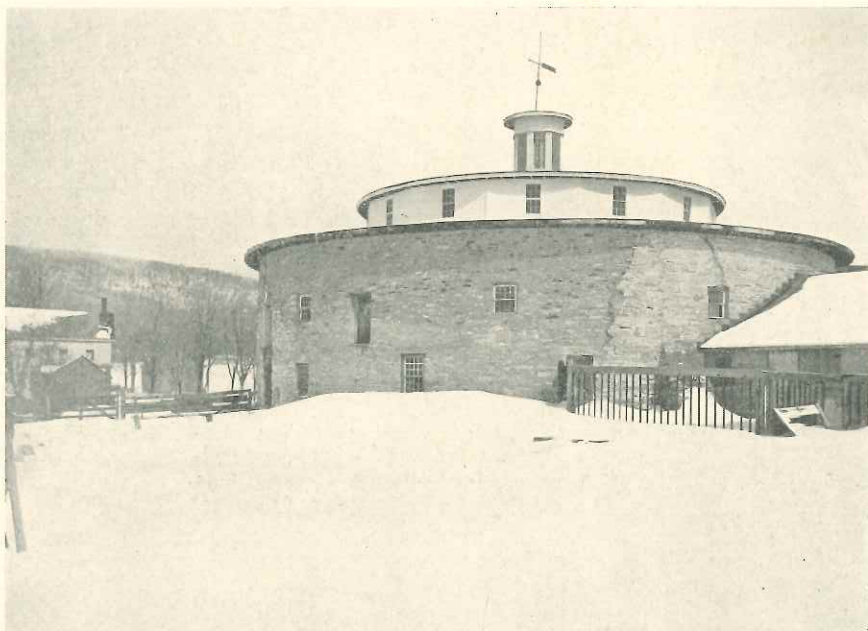
Stone Sinks in the Dairy of the Shaker Family, Hancock

town center. Harvard itself is on a lofty ridge, and the commune was hidden in the hilly woodlands. Here, in separate hollows at no great distance apart, were four families who acquired a home farm spreading over 1800 acres of pastures, woodlands, and meadows. Twenty yoke of the finest oxen dragged the heavy plows turning up the rich earth that nourished the corn, oats, rye and buckwheat. Besides, there were thriving gardens and potato fields.

The last of the diminishing Shaker residents migrated to other colonies about fifteen years ago, and the property now belongs to aliens. Most of this wide realm of the Believers has reverted to woodland and only stone walls in the forest show where the old fields and pastures were. Some hay and apples are still salvaged,

and there are patches of land cultivated by tenants. Several buildings have burned and the process of deterioration continues. The summer is enlivened more or less by vacation folks who rent rooms in the old living-quarters of the big houses.

The most imposing of surviving structures is a great stone barn with one end abutting a hillside so that loads of hay can be driven in at an upper story. This barn was built with money realized in selling Shaker-made turkey-feather fans, except the shingles, which were a gift from the New Hampshire Shakers floated down the Merrimac River on a raft to Lowell. The largest family home has the customary cupola sheltering the long-silent bell. Beyond is a line of industrial buildings, some large, but merging into sheds that in part are ruinous.



Round Stone Barn of the Hancock Shakers.

COST \$800, TO BUILD

More interesting than all else is the cemetery, an expanse of about two acres on a gentle grassy slope where some ancient pines cast their shadows. A massive stone wall has been built around it, and a few big boulders show within the burial space. On all sides round about is forest. The graves are in serried ranks all facing the same way, and each with an inscribed marker of iron painted white.

It is noticeable that the graves are not crowded as was the old-time custom. An examination of about half the markers revealed one person who had "passed away." The rest had "died." On an average the age of the deceased was notably high. There were many more from sixty to ninety than there were under sixty. The cemetery was the one spot in all the old Shaker territory at Harvard that showed no trace of neglect.

In some of the cemeteries, as for example at Mount Lebanon, Enfield, Connecticut, and Canterbury, New Hampshire, all the old flat stones that marked the individual graves have been removed, and there is substituted in the center of the cemetery a fair-sized but unostentatious monument.

The Harvard society's Mount of worship was called the Holy Hill of Zion. It was close to their village, and a beautiful avenue of maples flanked by stone walls, led to a wood road that wound around the hill to the summit. There, the brethren removed the trees, roots, and stones for about a quarter of an acre in the form of a square, which they seeded down to make an attractive lawn. This was surrounded by a fence, and near the center was erected a marble slab nearly four feet high with an inscription that had for



School House of the Hancock (Mass.) Shakers

its first two lines—

“Written and placed here
by the command of our Lord and
Savior Jesus Christ.”

On the Holy Hill were held all-day meetings, a feature of which was worship in the dance that was particularly intricate and ecstatic. Shaker mediums were present and held converse with the famous dead of all nations, even including Arab sheiks and Indian chiefs. We are told that on one such occasion forty thousand spirits were seen circling the hilltop during the hours of worship. Practically all the Shakers went to these meetings, and the day was one of rejoicing and feasting.

“Many bright and holy angels,” among whom were “blessed” Mother Ann and the early elders, are recorded to have been present at some of the Har-

vard meetings. The Shaker records have preserved numerous other illuminating items such as noting that on a February Sabbath in 1840: “The meetinghouse was very much crowded. It is judged that about five hundred of the world attended one meeting.”

That same year in November the statement is made that, “After evening meeting we had the privilege of following Christ’s example in washing one another’s feet.” In the evening of September 4th, 1841, “many of the ancients attended our meeting such as Noah, Abraham, Jeremiah, Isaiah, also some of the ancient sisters, the Virgin Mary and others.”

August, 1842. “We have meetings on the Holy Hill almost every other day.” December 25. “We were visited by Christ and Mother and many more good spirits.” December 31. “Some of the In-

dian spirits made themselves known and spoke in meeting this evening."

January, 1843. "This evening Jacob of old and his twelve sons attended."

These fragments are concerned with the years that culminated in 1843 with the commune's attaining high-water mark in population—one hundred and twenty.

It was disturbing to the Shakers to see anything wasted, and each Harvard guest who was being seated at table was handed a printed injunction to take on the plate only what was to be eaten. The sheet was entitled "Table Monitor," and the injunction was in the form of an eight-line poem.

Stones and other missiles used to be hurled through the Shaker window panes at night by some of the perturbed Harvard residents of the past, and there were threats and curses, but now the public interest in the sect is recognized by maintaining in the town a museum illustrating the life and activities of these people who risked martyrdom to maintain their faith.

A half dozen or more miles to the northwest is Shirley where was another, but less important commune of Believers. In the summer of 1792 work was begun on a meetinghouse, and in October the frame was erected silently at night lest the work should be stopped by local opposition. Beside the highway stand the old meetinghouse and two other commune buildings still intact. Their primitive character has been admirably preserved, but not the environment, for a State Industrial school has absorbed the region. Fortunately the architecture of various new buildings has kept to the Shaker type, and the ancient flavor is not likely to be wholly lost. The Shirley commune at one time built a large cotton mill, but the enterprise ran them into

debt and was not long continued.

VIII

At Enfield, Connecticut, a Society of Believers came into existence in 1781, and a meetinghouse was erected five years later, but no community dwelling-house was built until 1792. In its most flourishing period there were five families.

The last time Mother Ann visited Enfield a mob surrounded the house where she was staying, but with no apparent fear she came forth accompanied by a young girl and commanded the crowd to stand aside. They huddled backward, giving the two a free passage around the house to some outside stairs. By ascending these, Mother Ann and her companion arrived at an upper door through which they disappeared. A general rush of the crowd ensued, but just then one of the Shaker brethren, who was both courageous and muscular, sprang on the stairs, faced the crowd, and ordered them to keep back. One cunning fellow tried to pass between his legs, whereat the Shaker caught the chap's head between his knees, and a vigorous spanking followed which created roars of laughter, and the vicious propensities of the mob evaporated.

In the final period of the Enfield commune's existence it was a famous eating-place for travelers and others who appreciated excellent food admirably served.

When the Society became too weak in numbers to carry on, the property was sold to a great tobacco syndicate, and after a period of years the syndicate ownership was transferred to the State of Connecticut which wanted the ancient Shaker stronghold for prison purposes.

Lingering reminders of the communal past still exist, and in particular there is



Cheese Factory, Shaker Settlement, Enfield, Conn.

the "Holy Acre" where the dead were buried. Formerly there were the usual close-set rows of stones all the same size. But latterly these hundreds of stones have been used in making a single central monument of substantial and pleasing proportions. They are piled flat and snug on a cement base, and cement also is used to bind them together and get permanence. It is evident, too, that arrangements have been made for continuous caretaking of the Holy Acre.

In 1782 Mother Ann sent two elders from Mount Lebanon to preach the gospel in northern New England. They were joined by a Believer in Vermont, and the three went along together until they came across James Jewett working on a bridge in New Hampshire at North Enfield, which is about twelve miles southeast of Dartmouth College. Jewett was a religious man seeking more light, and he took the elders to his home. Soon he became a whole-hearted Shaker, and the height on which his house was located has been known ever since as "Shaker Hill."

It is recorded of a visit made by another elder, that while he was preaching one night at the Jewett home the hill was so shaken that the neighbors fled



**Monument in Shaker Burping Ground
Enfield, Conn.**

IT CONSISTS OF HEADSTONES LAID ON A CEMENT FOUNDATION AND CAPPED WITH CEMENT. THE NUMBER IN SIGHT, THAT CAN BE COUNTED ON THE FOUR SIDES OF THE MONUMENT, IS 384



Shaker Buildings, Alfred, Me., now a Roman Catholic School

from their beds in terror. Eleven families of Shakers from nearby localities moved into Enfield and bought or exchanged farms so they were near their brethren. One man who owned a good farm that the commune wanted swore he would not sell for all the Shakers in the land, but they danced by day and by night until the farmer had heard so much shouting and shaking he could stand no more. It was midwinter, yet he piled his goods on sleds one night and left his farm, which presently became Shaker property.

Ownership of the Enfield Shaker buildings has recently been shifted to the Catholics for educational purposes, and golden crosses now tip the cupolas of the more important structures. The site overlooks Lake Mascoma, a notable feature of which is a picturesque "Shaker Bridge," although it is more a causeway than a bridge. It is very low and long and tenuous, and it is delightfully venerable-looking.

There has been only one other New

Hampshire society and this is at Canterbury twelve miles northeast of Concord, the capital of the state. Organization took place in 1792 when a local farmer donated his fine five-hundred-acre farm to the society. It is far up on a vast mounding hilltop of open fields, and has the air of retaining much of its primal vigor. Yet when one rambles over the highland and sees the yawning cellar holes, and the great blocks of granite scattered about that formerly were steps and foundation stones one feels as if on the site of some mighty devastation of the historic past.

Thirty miles southwest of Portland is a country town named Alfred in honor of the famous King Alfred of England. Some missionary Shakers stopped there in 1785 when it had been settled about a score of years, and after alighting from their horses they stuck the willow withes they had used as whips into the ground. A century later the trees that had grown from these sticks were nearly three feet in diameter, and there was a symbolic satisfaction in thinking that thus the seeds



Shaker Burying Ground, Alfred, Maine

of eternal truth planted at Alfred would continue to grow.

About 1781, John Cotton a resident of Portland moved to Alfred, where he presently became a New Light Baptist, and when a local emigration of the sect to Vermont started he went along. But on the way he fell in with a Shaker who expounded the doctrines of Mother Ann so persuasively that John was convinced of their soundness and confessed his sins to his latest religious adviser.

Emphatic testimony of the power of the spirit was received at the breakfast table, where he was seized by someone, or something, unseen, raised from his chair, and whirled rapidly about through the open door into the yard and down among the stones and stumps to the shore of Mascoma Lake. Then the process was reversed, and back he was whirled to his

chair, so that he found himself where he had started.

Without delay he returned to his old home at Alfred. He arrived in the middle of the night yet could not refrain from at once rousing two sleeping neighbors, John Barnes and his wife Sarah. Although at first much alarmed by the uproar he made, they listened to his eager relation of his experiences, and soon joined him in the Shaker faith, as did many others.

The society at Alfred was organized in 1793, a meetinghouse was built the next year, and soon afterward dwelling-houses and shops were provided. Waning numbers at length brought its career to a close in 1931, the buildings were sold for Catholic use, and the few surviving Shakers migrated to the Sabbath Day Lake Society in Maine.

The charming expanse of water that this Maine commune borders lies some twenty miles north of Portland, where its name was derived from the habit a hunting party had of meeting Sundays on the lakeshore. In 1793 the conversion of a local dweller to Ann Lee's gospel gave the Shakers a foothold here. Within a fortnight the neighboring families were gathered in, and a few months later a society had been organized.

At present the buildings and environment rank it among the best preserved Shaker homes in New England. Its ancient meetinghouse is now a fascinating museum of Shaker relics. But the most comprehensive collection of such relics, is that of the State of New York at Albany.

Comments made by dwellers at the communes often are illuminating. One elderly woman who had lived with the Shakers many years as a worker but never joined them, made the criticism: "They don't hold to Christianity no more. They're too old. The Christianity's all gone out of 'em."

Another significant sidelight has to do with a party of Shakers who went to town and by some mischance, when ready to return, had to stand and wait. A young Shakeress complained that she was not comfortable, and thereupon an older

companion said reprovingly: "You were not made to be comfortable—you are a Shaker!" Their philosophy was one of facing pain and misfortunes without complaint.

This is further attractively illustrated by the attitude of an eldress of somewhat advanced years, yet still vigorous and alert-minded, who said of her sect: "Oh! I know we're disappearing, but what of it? We've done our work. We used to be really needed to take care of orphans and other children, but institutions are plenty now where they are cared for. We've served our time. Yea! and if we go, something else that's maybe better will take our place."

Latterly a boys' school has acquired several large buildings in the heart of the old commune at Mount Lebanon, and one of these buildings is the famous meetinghouse with the barrel-vaulted roof. To see the boys moving about the village in an atmosphere redolent of the historic past, and with a background of vernal woodland, and outlooks over pastoral valleys and distant dreamy mountain ranges is delightful. It seems, too, as if they might get inspiration for sturdy living from the handicraft of the Shakers who in their buildings and in their industries always were striving to get the soundest possible results.