

Lunacy and Dissent Among the Shakers

By Tom Sakmyster

Very little is known about Shaker ideas concerning insanity and the ways in which Believers reacted when members became mentally deranged. Perhaps the best known case of insanity at a Shaker village was that of Isaac Newton Youngs, a key figure in the history of the Shaker movement. According to his biographer, prior to his apparent suicide at Mount Lebanon Shaker village in 1865, Youngs became hallucinatory and his mind began slipping away “into regions dark and frightening.” Having succumbed to “mental debility,” Youngs leaped to his death from a fourth-floor window.¹ The presence of individuals suffering from mental derangement at other Shaker societies earlier in the nineteenth century is known from an occasional mention in a visitor’s account;² references in Shaker diaries, journals, and correspondence; and, more rarely, court records. Shakers must have found it difficult to cope with the situation when a member of their religious community acted in an irrational or demented way. The surviving sources suggest that they reacted with puzzlement, shock, anxiety, and even abhorrence. Such was the uneasiness that Believers felt about this topic that mentions of insanity in Shaker diaries and correspondence were usually very brief and uninformative. In the more prominent or controversial cases information was disseminated among Shaker societies by word of mouth, but no Believer is known to have addressed the broader issues relating to mental illness either in correspondence or in a published article or book.

The events involving insanity and alleged insanity at White Water Shaker Village to be explored in this article can offer new insights into how Shakers dealt with the problems posed by the mentally deranged. This story, which involved a large family named Hobart that arrived at White Water in 1846, is unusually well documented in both Shaker and non-Shaker materials. I propose to use it as a case study to offer tentative answers to such questions as: How did Shakers define insanity? How did they respond when a Believer showed signs of mental derangement? What

treatment was deemed appropriate? How did Shaker views about insanity compare to those held by non-Shakers? Finally, in what ways did the Shaker abhorrence of dissent complicate their views about the nature of insanity?

For a proper understanding of the narrative of events to be presented here, a brief sketch of general attitudes toward insanity held by Americans at the time is needed. Throughout history and well into the nineteenth century most people in the western world had a very poor understanding of mental illness. The prevailing view was that insanity, or lunacy as it was more commonly known, was supernatural in origin. The devil or demons had captured the mind of individuals and caused them to speak irrationally and do bizarre and sometimes evil things. In folklore the demented were said to howl at the moon, hence the term lunatic, from the Latin for moon, “luna.” There was no formal medical treatment of the insane. There were lunatic asylums, such as the notorious Bedlam Asylum in England, but in such institutions, which usually also housed criminals, dissenters, and paupers, no systematic treatment was provided to the insane. Many of the mentally deranged who were regarded as dangerous were incarcerated in work houses or jails. In general, however, the prevailing view was that responsibility for the care of the insane rested with their families.³ Most deranged individuals were thus kept in the home, typically well away from public view, for many were ashamed to have a lunatic in the family. If the demented person became violent, most people felt justified in using chains and other severe methods of restraint, as well as enforced isolation in cellars or cubicles commonly referred to as “lunatic boxes.”⁴

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, however, there was a revolution in the understanding and treatment of the insane. In Europe and the United States some physicians began to specialize in mental illness, form professional associations, and publish journals. The early American psychiatrists launched a national campaign to convince the public and government officials that lunacy was an illness, and as such could be treated and even cured. State governments were successfully lobbied to establish new lunatic asylums that would be exclusively for treatment of the mentally ill and would be staffed by trained doctors and nurses. The first state mental institution on this new model was established in Massachusetts in 1832 and by mid-century nearly every state had at least one lunatic asylum. In Ohio there were three—two state institutions and one municipal, in Cincinnati.⁵ Medical authorities encouraged people to

act promptly when a loved one showed signs of mental derangement, for those in the early stages of dementia were deemed “curable lunatics.” Indeed, priority for admission into asylums was often given to those whose condition was regarded as “recent.” The prescribed procedure included taking the disturbed individual first to a judge for a legal committal, and then to one of the new asylums.⁶ In the second half of the nineteenth century Americans and their family physicians began slowly to accept this new approach. No doubt many were persuaded by the superintendents of the asylums, who trumpeted their success by claiming cure rates of 60, 70 or even 80 percent. Most of these “cured” patients were released within a year of their admission.⁷

Despite this apparent progress, the causes of insanity were still not well understood. There was a general consensus among medical authorities that mental illness could be inherited, yet not all members of a family susceptible to insanity did in fact become insane. So doctors speculated that there was usually a triggering mechanism that brought out the latent insanity in a vulnerable person. The most commonly suggested causes were alcoholism, masturbation, sudden changes in economic well-being, and, most important for the topic under consideration, religious fanaticism.⁸ The religious movements that doctors considered most dangerous were those that involved their members in highly emotional activities, such as Methodists with their revivalist camp meetings and Adventists with their fevered delusions about the imminent return of Christ. Shakerism, though not often directly named, was also considered a dangerous religious movement, not only because of the frenetic nature of some of its worship services, but because of the practice of spiritualism. Many psychiatrists were highly critical of those who embraced spiritualism, for in their view the belief that one could communicate with the dead was clearly delusional. In the view of Amariah Brigham, one of the most respected and progressive physicians in ante-bellum America, “spiritual manifestations experienced by individuals in a state of religious excitement were illusions or hallucinations that were the evidence of the onset of insanity.”⁹

By mid-century the belief that religious fanaticism was a possible cause of insanity was widespread in American society. The idea was accepted not only by psychiatrists and superintendents of lunatic asylums, but by journalists, judges, and many in the intellectual elite. With regard to the Shakers, such views tended to reinforce previously held prejudices. Among those Americans who were most hostile to the Shakers, there were a few

who argued that the Shaker movement not only could trigger insanity in its members, but in fact tended to attract as members those who already were demented. One anti-Shaker writer in 1825 described Shakerism as a “crackbrained religious practice” and suggested that Shakers showed “stronger evidences of lunacy” than even the inhabitants of Bedlam Asylum: “No man in the full enjoyment of his senses can deliberately subscribe either to their tenets, or their preposterous forms of devotion.” Another critic declared that Shakerism was a “species of insanity” that was similar to monomania in that “the aberration of mind relates to one subject, while the judgment may be sound in other matters.” Similar views were sometimes expressed by members of the professional elite. In a child custody case in 1848 involving a brother at White Water Shaker Village, a Cincinnati judge declared that a father who abandoned his children to the “cold ascetic bosoms of female caretakers” of the Shakers acted in a manner “bordering on insanity.”¹⁰

The Shakers either remained oblivious to these aspersions or decided that it was wisest not to attempt a rebuttal in a public forum. Certainly they would have strongly resisted the argument that Shakerism attracted individuals who were already mentally unbalanced or that spiritualism promoted mental disorder. After all, spiritualist activity, which had from the start been an integral part of the Shaker religious experience, was raised to new levels of intensity in the 1830s and 1840s in the period known as the Era of Manifestations. For several reasons it was likely that Believers would also have been resistant to the revolutionary changes that were occurring in the understanding and treatment of insanity in the mid-nineteenth century. For one thing, there was the fact that Ann Lee, known as Mother Ann, had at one time been taken to a lunatic asylum in Manchester as punishment for her religious dissent.¹¹ The memory of this may have led the Shakers in America to be suspicious of asylums, even those on the new model that were specifically designed for the treatment of the insane. In addition, the Shakers, always fearful of being contaminated by the evil of “the world,” from the early years of the movement preferred, whenever possible, to use their own medical practitioners to treat those who became ill. Instructions along these lines were found in the Millennial Laws of 1821, a set of guidelines for proper Shaker conduct. A similar injunction appeared in revised versions of the Millennial Laws, including one that was issued in 1860: “It is advisable for Believers to avoid employing doctors of the world, except it be in some extreme cases, and the Ministry and

Elders should decide whether it be proper or not.”¹²

During the ante-bellum period there were undoubtedly some individuals at Shaker villages who suffered from mild cases of mental illness, although Shaker records remain mostly silent about such cases. Those that were remarked on and left an imprint in the documentary record and Shaker popular memory involved individuals who displayed highly irrational and threatening behavior that alarmed the members and leaders of their societies. The best known cases occurred at eastern villages in the 1820s and 1830s, at which time the new approach to mental illness was still in its early stages and the first of the new lunatic asylums were just being established. The Believers involved were Harriet Hosford at Watervliet, Seth Babbitt at Hancock, and Oliver Train at New Lebanon.

The treatment of these three Shakers suggests that in this era Believers responded to cases of mental derangement in much the same way as their counterparts in the world. Their hope was to deal with the problem within their own families, at first using humane methods of moral persuasion, religious discipline, and various herbal medicines or other improvised medical interventions, such as bleeding. When these more benign methods failed, desperation set in and more severe measures were employed. At Watervliet Harriet Hosford acted in such an irrational manner that in 1826 chains were used to restrain her.¹³ In the early and mid-1820s at Hancock Village Seth Babbitt became deranged and in time was so unmanageable that he was subjected to beatings and was forcibly confined to unheated, windowless, and unsanitary rooms.¹⁴ At Mount Lebanon the case of Oliver Train was particularly troublesome, for over a period of several years in the 1830s he frequently left the society, only to return after a short time requesting a “privilege,” that is, permission to reenter the society. The elders were remarkably patient, allowing him to return even when his mental derangement became obvious. In 1833, however, he threatened to kill one of the sisters and they concluded that he was “crazy as a bear.” He was forcibly confined, as was another member of his family, Elizabeth, who “had been growing crazy for some time past.”¹⁵

From a modern perspective the behavior of Shakers in this period toward those in their communities who became insane might seem inhumane and even abusive. Yet the Believers were acting on beliefs about lunacy that were commonly held by Americans at the time, and their sometimes harsh methods were often employed by non-Shaker families who were grappling with similar problems. Most people believed that insanity was incurable

and that strong measures were justified in restraining the “demons” who had seized control of the demented person. It is worth noting that when Shaker elders at Hancock village were placed on trial in 1826 and accused of cruel and abusive treatment of Seth Babbitt, they were exonerated of the charges and received support from members of the local professional elite, including some doctors.¹⁶ This suggests that the measures employed by the Shakers were consistent with the standard practices of that era. And in one sense the Shakers showed true humanity in their attitude toward the mentally deranged. At times non-Shakers became so frustrated in their efforts to provide for a mentally ill family member that, in desperation, they simply evicted deranged individuals from their homes and left them to fend for themselves as beggars or so-called village idiots. With one possible exception, Believers are not known to have expelled members from their societies solely on the grounds that they had become demented.¹⁷

When the revolutionary changes in the understanding and treatment of mental illness began to gain some acceptance in American society in the 1840s, the Shakers were not unaffected. By this time the distrust of doctors from the “world” had lessened at some Shaker societies, even though the Millennial Laws were still technically in force. At Canterbury and Enfield (New Hampshire) non-Shaker doctors made frequent visits to treat Believers suffering from a variety of ailments, including insanity.¹⁸ For the 1850s and 1860s there are reports of insanity at Watervliet (New York) and Mount Lebanon.¹⁹ Little is known about these cases, except for the fact that Shakers remained reluctant to comply with the advice of the medical authorities on how to respond when a family member showed signs of severe mental derangement, namely to act quickly by taking the individual to a judge to be committed to a lunatic asylum. In the Shaker western societies, however, a few cases are known of individual Believers being taken to a judge to be committed to a lunatic asylum.²⁰ The earliest, most complex, and best documented of these is one at White Water Village that occurred in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

This case study involving lunacy and alleged lunacy at White Water Village focuses on events involving members of a family named Hobart. They arrived at White Water in the late 1840s as part of the influx of Adventists that nearly doubled the membership of the society. The Hobart family was large, consisting of the parents, John and Naomi, and nine children. At first John Hobart was shown a good deal of deference. An educated man, he was a former Baptist preacher and a co-founder of

Franklin College in Indiana.²¹ He also was an avid poet, who soon after his arrival began composing poems that were infused with zeal for the new religion he had fervently embraced.

It soon became evident, however, that John Hobart, though a “good honest believer,” was a “very nervous person” who was “very set in his own opinions.”²² Nonetheless, he must have impressed some with his potential as a leader, for in the early 1850s he was appointed second elder in the Church Family. By the mid-1850s, however, some Believers at White Water were having second thoughts, for Hobart began to disturb church meetings with horrible shrieks, violent marching, intense whirling about, and declarations that he was being instructed by heavenly spirits to perform certain tasks, such as licking the dust off the floor. Often he would fall to the floor in a catatonic state, completely rigid and immovable. There he would remain for hours, until finally several brothers would have to carry him off to his room.²³ During the Era of Manifestations such behavior might have seemed unexceptional to Shakers, but church meetings at White Water had become much more sedate by the mid-1850s and some believers apparently felt that Hobart was becoming a nuisance. A group of sisters even complained to the elders that Hobart’s rigid poses bordered on the obscene, for, as an elder then put it to Hobart, he was “turning his butt towards the sisters” and kicking his heels and feet over his head. The elders were able to calm Hobart down and diplomatically persuaded him to avoid such disruptive behavior, which they suggested had been provoked by evil spirits.²⁴

Hobart’s conduct at the church meetings apparently was sufficiently similar in nature to previous examples of spiritualist activity that no one at White Water suspected him of being mentally unstable, although a modern understanding of mental illness suggests that he was likely suffering from catatonic schizophrenia.²⁵ However, no sooner had John Hobart agreed to act in a more subdued manner than other members of the Hobart family began to exhibit signs of mental illness. In August 1857, the mother, Naomi, began to conduct herself in ways that suggested derangement. No details of her behavior are known, but it was sufficiently alarming that members of her family decided that some action had to be taken, for apparently the medical practitioners at White Water and local doctors were unable to deal with her condition. Thus, the family, with the approval of the elders, decided to take Naomi to a judge in Cincinnati with the request that she be examined by a court-appointed doctor and, if

necessary, committed to a lunatic asylum. Although there is no surviving record of the court proceedings, Naomi was in fact committed and taken by two of her children to the lunatic asylum in Dayton. In the following months she received regular visits from family members. After a course of treatment that lasted less than a year, she was released as cured and returned to White Water Village.²⁶

In 1859 one of the sons in the Hobart family, James, also began to show signs of derangement.²⁷ James, who was twenty-three years old at the time, had been appointed second elder in the Center Family in March, 1859. But by the summer he was behaving in ways that led some Believers to conclude he too was “crazy.” In this case the family once again followed the recommendations of medical authorities of the day and in late August took him to the Probate Court in Cincinnati. After James was examined by a doctor, the judge ruled that he had lost his reason “through religious excitement.”²⁸ He was immediately taken to the asylum in Dayton, where in the following months he was visited by family members and other Believers from White Water. There he remained only four months, at which time he was released to his family as cured. Perhaps there was some thought that he might have to return to the asylum for further treatment, for he was taken at first to live at Watervliet Village, which was located not far from the asylum. Later, in April 1860, he was able to return to White Water.²⁹

In the circumstances, it is perhaps understandable that many Believers at White Water had by 1859 come to believe that lunacy was a hereditary trait in the Hobart family. This was to affect their attitude toward John Strange Hobart, the protagonist of this story. John S. Hobart was fourteen years old when he arrived at White Water with his family in 1846. Unlike most other sons in Adventist families at White Water, who departed as soon as they reached the age of consent, he chose to remain faithful to Shakerism. He signed the covenant and by all accounts became a devoted and talented Believer. The elders must have been impressed by his leadership potential, for in 1852, at the age of twenty, he was appointed second elder in the Gathering Order. In April 1856 he was moved to the Center or Church Family and appointed deacon. When his brother James was taken to the lunatic asylum in 1859, John took his place as second elder in the Church Family. In short, at a relatively young age John S. Hobart had assumed a leading role at White Water Village. He was well known not only to members of the Ministry at Union Village, but also to

some in the Mount Lebanon Ministry, for when a delegation from the East made a tour of the western Shaker villages in 1858, Hobart served as their guide as they visited the societies in southern Ohio.

In January 1860, however, Hobart became seriously ill with what was diagnosed as “nervous typhoid fever.” One of the sisters who nursed him, Mary McKinney, later recalled that while on his sickbed Hobart became delirious and she feared he was “drifting into insanity.”³⁰ In the nineteenth century typhoid fever often proved fatal, but after several weeks of confinement in the nurse’s house, Hobart recovered. Yet it quickly became clear to the other Believers at White Water that he was a changed person. Hobart now claimed that while on his sickbed he had been in contact with heavenly spirits and had had a revelation, or series of revelations. As result he now realized that Shakerism was not based on “correct principles” and was therefore in decline. Unless certain reforms were enacted, such as a loosening of the ban on marriage, the Shaker movement was bound to die. He now believed that he had a divine mission to propagate these reforms not only at White Water but at other Shaker societies as well.

The White Water elders were naturally much alarmed by this development, for to all appearances Hobart had suddenly become a heretic who rejected fundamental tenets of the Shaker faith. They could only conclude that he, like his mother and brother, had become insane. They were strengthened in this belief by two things. In the past there had, of course, been some individuals at White Water who had decided that they could no longer accept certain Shaker doctrines or the discipline demanded of Believers. When that happened the dissenter left for the “world.” Some became full-fledged apostates who continued to rail against the Shakers, but most simply chose to move on in their lives. But Hobart insisted on staying on at White Water in order to promulgate his heretical views. This decision seemed to the elders to be so unprecedented and outrageous that it could only have been made by a raving lunatic.

A second reason why the leaders at White Water quickly concluded that Hobart was demented was the butcher knife incident. Shortly after announcing that he had a divine mission to reform Shakerism, Hobart began carrying around a large butcher knife. From time to time he offered the knife to other Believers and stated that if they were to stab him, he would have the power to heal the wound because he was on a divine mission. If it turned out that he was not worthy, the stabbing would put him out of his misery.³¹ No one took him up on this offer, and there is no evidence

that Hobart threatened to stab others so that he could miraculously heal the wound. Nonetheless many Believers at White Water apparently began to fear that Hobart was prone to violent acts and might harm not only himself but others. Unsure how to deal with this problem, the White Water elders wrote to the leadership at Union Village and Mount Lebanon and asked for advice on how to proceed. To emphasize their belief that Hobart was insane, they reported that he was going around threatening to stab others and then work a miraculous cure.³²

Given these developments, it is no surprise that in late January or early February 1860 Hobart was forced to step down as second elder in the Church Family. In February he tried to speak up at church meetings and inform others of his revelations and the plans he had formulated to reform Shakerism. In theory all Believers had the right to speak at meetings, but the expectation was that what they said would take the form of confessions, testimonies, or similar expressions of religious zeal. The elders thus gave instructions that whenever Hobart sought to speak, the singers were to drown him out. Others who were present were encouraged to join in, and they did so by “halloo[ing] like so many Indians.”³³ Hobart was so angry and frustrated by what he regarded as a violation of his freedom of speech that he became abusive and threatening. He declared that if the elders continued to deny him his basic civil rights, he would get what he wanted “one way or another,” even if he had to “burn up the place.”³⁴

Hobart in fact did not resort to arson, but instead sought another venue for his proselytizing. He somehow managed to gain temporary control of one of the barns, which he renamed the “Gentleman’s Hall.” It was there, he said, that intelligent Believers who were interested in reform should gather. The “rude and illiterate” could continue to assemble in the meeting house, which he now called the “Loafer’s Lodge.” To the chagrin of the elders, Hobart lured a good number of the Believers to the “Gentleman’s Hall.” They were primarily, if not exclusively, members of the Gathering or Junior Order. It was in this venue that Hobart was able to outline his plans for reform. His main thesis was that, primarily because of its insistence on celibacy, the Shaker movement would be unable to keep up with the modern world and would ultimately die out. In his vision of a reformed Shakerism, Hobart suggested that there would be four levels, or spheres, in each society. In the lowest or beginning sphere, initiates would work ten hours a day. As they proved their worthiness, they would advance to the next level, where the workload would be less. In the highest sphere

they would have reached a state of holiness which required they work a maximum of only four hours a day. Furthermore, at that point they could marry.³⁵ Hobart argued that only through marriage and reproduction could the Shaker movement survive. He conceded that the devil had imposed on mankind “the iron shackles of foul lust,” but this could be replaced by a system in which “male and female should be united by a golden chord of innocent affection.” Specifically, he thought that by the age of fifty each worthy male Believer should have had two children.³⁶

In his talks at the “Gentleman’s Hall” Hobart denounced Shaker leaders—whether at White Water, Union Village, or Mount Lebanon—as shortsighted, degenerate, and corrupt. He proposed that they be swept away and replaced, oddly enough, with a monarchical system. Each Shaker society would have a king and queen, who would travel around in a fine carriage drawn by six white horses. Hobart was not so egomaniacal that he thought he should, at least at the start, be a leader of the community. Instead, for the new “king” of White Water he proposed John Martin, a Believer at Pleasant Hill (formerly from Union Village) whom he had come to know when Martin visited White Water in the late 1850s to help resolve a debt problem. For the new “queen” Hobart suggested Louisa Farnham, a long-time member at White Water with whom he had been on cordial terms. Once the new order was established, Hobart envisioned that the society would sell its land and assets and move westward to Colorado, where they would establish a new Jerusalem in the vicinity of Pike’s Peak in Colorado.³⁷

Although many Believers at White Water were curious about Hobart’s plans, apparently very few actually took them seriously and offered to support his venture. John Martin and Louisa Farnham firmly rejected the offer to become leaders of the reformed community and joined the elders in denouncing Hobart as a hopeless lunatic who was under the influence of the devil. But not everyone at White Water concurred in this judgment. Many observed that, apart from his fixation on reforming Shakerism, Hobart acted quite normally and showed no signs of dementia. They did not share the alarm felt by the elders over the butcher knife incident, believing instead that Hobart had no intention of using the knife as a lethal weapon. Hobart’s parents and siblings, who had previously shown the ability to recognize mental disorder in their family, were unanimous in believing that he was not insane. The Hobart case thus caused a good deal of divisiveness at White Water, which greatly alarmed the elders.

Hobart tried to convince skeptical Believers of the legitimacy of his mission, but succeeded only in frightening them or strengthening their belief in his lunacy. He told a group of White Water sisters that he had received a special message for them from God. Not surprisingly, the sisters so approached were not curious to hear what the message might be.³⁸ When his attempts to reach some sort of accommodation with White Water elders failed, Hobart naively hoped that he could persuade the Shaker leaders in the Union Village Ministry of the merit of his plans. On one occasion in mid-March 1860 he travelled to Union Village and sought out Elder Harvey Eades, whom he apparently considered a friend. Hobart explained the nature of the revelation he had had and urged Eades to join him in overthrowing the leadership at White Water. But Eades, who had been informed by the White Water leadership of Hobart's bizarre behavior, refused to go along. In fact, like others at Union Village he quickly concluded that Hobart was "quite wild" and "insane, hopelessly so." Eades urged him to sever his connection with the White Water society, and offered him \$5 as an incentive to do so. Hobart took the money but had no intention of leaving voluntarily.³⁹

The leaders of White Water had also been trying in vain to persuade Hobart to leave. They gave him rigorous and time-consuming work assignments that they hoped would sap his energy, divert his attention, and convince him to give up on his fantastic mission. When this tactic failed, the elders decided to take more decisive action. In April, acting on advice received from the eastern Ministry, the elders made a proposal to Hobart. If he agreed to leave White Water, he would be permitted to move to the "Hobart estate" in Indiana and earn his living there. This farm, which had been consecrated to the White Water society by John and Naomi Hobart when they signed the covenant, was now owned by the society and supervised by the White Water trustees. If, however, John S. Hobart refused this generous offer, the only alternatives open to the elders were to confine him in the White Water hen house or take him to a judge in Cincinnati to be committed to a lunatic asylum.⁴⁰

When Hobart showed no interest in this proposal, the elders decided that as a temporary measure they would place Hobart in the village's nursing house, where for more than a week in April he was kept incarcerated and under close supervision. As an explanation of their action, the elders informed the members of the society that Hobart was a lunatic who posed a danger to the community. Hobart was infuriated by this harsh action,

especially when he discovered that the sisters refused to cook meals for him. He managed to receive food only through the efforts of his biological sisters. His request that a doctor from the “world” be called to examine him was refused.⁴¹ Hobart’s forced confinement heightened tensions in the White Water community. Two members, John Sharp and J. B. Walker, were emboldened to speak out and criticize the way in which Hobart, whom they believed to be sane, was being treated. They were immediately accused by the elders of being “as crazy as Hobart” and under the influence of the devil. When they persisted in their dissent, Sharp and Walker were incarcerated for periods of time in the hen house, which became known as the White Water jail. In time they were both expelled. Others who sympathized with Hobart were cautious enough to remain silent, although many simply withdrew from the society. In the spring and summer of 1860 about twenty Believers (out of approximately 150), unhappy about the state of affairs at White Water, left the community.

While he was being kept in the nursing home, Hobart received some letters that the elders suspected might be links to nefarious individuals in the “world” who were manipulating him. In earlier decades elders at White Water had opened and inspected all incoming and outgoing letters, but such censorship of the mail was by the this time no longer strictly enforced. So the elders went to John Hobart, Sr. and asked his permission to open the letters. The father, who thought his son was being ill-treated, refused. Instead he proposed a “peace agreement” whereby his son would be released from the nursing home with the understanding that he would conduct himself in a more subdued manner. The elders agreed, hoping that the father would now have a calming influence on his son.

But this was not to be. John S. Hobart was infuriated by the “persecutions and tribulations” he had been forced to endure and his proclamations now became even more bombastic. He declared he would write a book about the harsh treatment he had received. Further, he insisted that the “peace treaty” that had been agreed on contained a clause that prohibited anyone personally “obnoxious to him” from bothering him with any further questions or directives. Nonetheless, several days after his release Elder Henry Bear approached him on some matter, and Hobart reacted violently. There was an altercation in which, so Bear later testified, Hobart struck him with a table and fractured his nose. At a subsequent trial Hobart was to dispute this account of what he called the “Battle of the Bear”: “I knocked him down with this fist—nothing else.”⁴²

This was the final straw. Convinced that Hobart was completely insane, the elders resolved to seize him and take him to a judge in Cincinnati to be committed to an asylum. His parents, John and Naomi, were not consulted. The elders and a group of brothers entered Hobart's room in the middle of the night in late April 1860, tied him up and urged him to cooperate, for otherwise they would have to "ride him from the village on a rail." Once in Cincinnati, he was dragged through the streets, kicking and screaming, to the Probate Court, where a hearing was set for the following day.⁴³ At this hearing on April 28 the complexities of the "Hobart case" were for the first time discussed in a public forum. The spokesman for White Water was John Martin, perhaps as a way of demonstrating the absurdity of Hobart's plan to install him as the king of his reformed Shaker movement. Martin and Elder George Rubush argued that Hobart was clearly insane and was a danger to himself and to others. They emphasized the incident with the butcher knife, and pointed out that Hobart had signed a covenant in which he had promised not to dissent from the rules and tenets of the society.⁴⁴

In the meantime, however, the Hobart family had secured the services of a lawyer, E. A. Thompson, who pursued a clever strategy. Focusing on the question of revelation and miraculous cures among the Believers, he got Elder George Rubush to admit that over the past decades many Believers at White Water had had revelations, and that these had all been accepted as valid. Similarly, there had been cases of miraculous cures. Thompson then asked why Hobart's supposed revelation and his claim to be able to heal wounds through divine intervention had not been respected. The response was that each individual revelation had to be judged critically. But the lawyer would have none of this. He asserted that Hobart was not a lunatic but a dissenter. He pointed out that every church or religious movement in the United States had its dissenters, yet they were not immediately declared to be insane. The Shakers of White Water, he suggested, had falsely equated dissent with insanity.

Several Believers from White Water, including some of Hobart's siblings, testified to their belief that he was not demented. Given the opportunity to explain his actions, Hobart elaborated on his reform plans and blamed a prevailing "old fogyism" at White Water for the resistance he met. He admitted that he had offered a butcher knife to some Believers and suggested they might stab him, but claimed that they had misinterpreted what he said. His intention was metaphorical: if he was unworthy to live and were to be stabbed, it was better that he move on to another world.

If he was worthy, the stabbing would not be fatal. Hobart showed both determination and flair in explaining his campaign for reform. He had been advised many times by the elders to desist and simply leave the society, but that, he insisted, would have been like King George telling George Washington to desist from rebellion. He was confident in his cause, and felt sure that if he could travel to all the Shaker societies, he would be able to “gather everything out of them that was worth taking.”

Hobart must have made a good impression on spectators in the courtroom. In his account of the hearing a Cincinnati journalist wrote that “there was a great deal of humor and natural eloquence displayed by Mr. Hobart in the manner of narrating his evidence, which satisfied all who heard him that he was not insane.”⁴⁵ This judgment was reinforced by the doctor, Anthony Carrick, whom the probate judge had appointed to examine Hobart. He concluded that Hobart was not insane, although he did seem to suffer from religious fanaticism. But, he added, those who testified against him might also be accused of acting from religious fanaticism.

Not surprisingly, the judge ruled that there was no evidence that Hobart was insane and he was ordered released. He concluded that the dispute amounted to nothing more than a difference of opinion about religious matters, and if such differences were used as evidence of insanity, than “one half of the world would have to put the other [half] in a lunatic asylum.”⁴⁶ Hobart emerged from the hearing in a triumphant mood and eager for revenge, which he sought in a variety of ways in the summer and fall of 1860. In this period he took up residence in Harrison, Ohio, a town not far from White Water, although he visited the society often and even went on one occasion to Union Village to plead his case. In neither village did he receive a friendly reception, which was not surprising since he had taken his campaign to a new level by giving a two-part lecture series (May 5-6) in Cincinnati entitled “Mysteries and Cruelties of Degenerative Shakerism.” Here he elaborated on his reform plans and described Shakerism as the “most abominable despotism that ever existed on earth.” The leadership at White Water “was a libel on the human kind.” Those in Mount Lebanon were no better: when Daniel Boler, first elder in the eastern Ministry, “puts on his hat ... it covers all the brains of the society,” and “when he buttoned up his coat all the wisdom of the community was embodied in him.” As currently practiced Shakerism “tended to subdue the reason of man and make him the veriest slave.”⁴⁷

On June 25 Hobart took even more drastic action. He filed a suit with the United States Marshal in Cincinnati in which he accused the White Water elders of having tampered with his mail, a federal offense. As a result, Elders Henry Bear and Stephen Ball were arrested and held in confinement. At the trial, to the consternation of the elders, John Hobart Sr. testified in a way that, according to the White Water elders, was “much prejudiced against believers.” Nonetheless, the elders were found innocent and released, probably because there was no proof that any of Hobart’s mail had actually been opened.⁴⁸

This decision infuriated not only John S. Hobart but perhaps even more so his mother, Naomi, who had convinced herself that the elders, especially Henry Bear, had been persecuting her son. One day early in July she decided to exact her own revenge. She stormed into the Center Family dwelling house, made her way to the top floor, and there accosted Eldress Julia Ann Bear (the wife of Henry Bear). In the resulting struggle Naomi tried to push the eldress out of an open window. This attempted defenestration of White Water failed when Eldress Julia’s cries were heard by Elder Stephen Ball, who raced to the scene and rescued her.⁴⁹

This bizarre incident convinced the leaders of White Water and Union Village that all the Hobarts were, or might soon become, insane. They thus resolved to reach some agreement that would lead to the departure of the obstreperous family.⁵⁰ Acting on a suggestion from the Mount Lebanon Ministry that White Water offer to return all the property that John and Naomi Hobart had earlier consecrated to the society, they persuaded John Hobart Sr. to accept a compromise. Elder Stephen Ball rented a house near Harrison and convinced several of the Hobart children to take their mother there to live, prior to moving to their farm in Indiana once an agreement had been reached to transfer the deed from the trustees back to the Hobart family. Elder Stephen even gave them \$100 for expenses. By October all the Hobarts had left White Water. Surprisingly, John Hobart Sr. and one of the daughters, Eliza, chose not to take up residence on the Hobart farm. Instead, they settled temporarily in Indianapolis, where they were apparently keeping a boarding house. They informed the elders that it was their intention, once the “Hobart case” was fully settled, to separate from their biological family and return to live as Believers at White Water.⁵¹

Even though his family had left White Water Village to live in Indiana, John S. Hobart chose to remain in the Cincinnati area, for he had one final card to play in his campaign for revenge. In June he had filed a suit against

White Water, this time in civil court, and through the summer of 1860 he rigorously pursued it. He was demanding \$15,000 as compensation for the ill treatment he had received from the elders at the time of his incarceration at White Water and when they used force to take him to the Probate Court in Cincinnati. This was a serious matter, for \$15,000 was an enormous sum that could possibly have bankrupted White Water Village. For that reason the Union Village Ministry marshaled all the legal talent they could find in the western societies and engaged a lawyer in Cincinnati. The resulting trial took place in November and lasted a week. It received extensive coverage in the Cincinnati press, for the public seemed to be fascinated by a case that focused on lunacy and offered information about life among the Shakers that had perhaps never before been presented at a public forum in the American West.

John S. Hobart was assiduous in searching for evidence to support his case, even making a visit to Union Village—enemy territory—to see if he could find anyone who sympathized with him and would testify on his behalf. In this he had no success, for the Believers there seemed unanimous in believing that he was a lunatic and that his civil suit was “a bad business.”⁵² For the trial Hobart retained the same lawyer who had defended him at the insanity hearing in April.⁵³ In his introductory and concluding remarks this lawyer made many disparaging comments about Shakerism, which, he insisted, proclaimed the “most devilish heresies.” Orphans who were taken in by the Shakers were subjected to “an infernal system.” They would be better off, he declared, if they were left in the “lanes and gutters” where they were found. The lawyer repeated the strategy he had employed at the lunacy hearing in April. He got the defendants to admit that in the past many Believers at White Water had had revelations and that these had never before been challenged directly by the elders. Further, there had been instances in which Believers at White Water were thought to possess healing powers.

To support Hobart’s case a string of witnesses was called to testify. Most of them were former Shakers, including some of Hobart’s siblings, but there were a few who were still living at White Water Village and also two non-Shaker residents of Crosby Township. All of them declared that they believed Hobart to be sane and that he had been persecuted by the elders at White Water. Hobart’s two most stalwart supporters, J. B. Walker and John Sharp, related how they had been hounded by the elders, imprisoned in the hen house, accused of being in league with the devil, and eventually

expelled. Particularly poignant testimony was given by a young woman, Rebecca McBride, who testified that she had been attracted to White Water because of the Shakers' reputation as a community where pure love was the guiding principle. She found, however, that when, as an expression of this pure love, she showed sympathy for Hobart, she was denounced by the elders and accused of giving support to a lunatic who was doing the work of the devil. Greatly disappointed by the "lack of brotherly love" that she observed at White Water, she decided to withdraw from the society.

One of the witnesses called by Hobart's lawyer was John Huber, who at the time was still residing at White Water. Some of Huber's testimony seemed quite damaging to the defense. He admitted, for example, that Elder Henry Bear had advised him not to give any testimony on the incident involving the surveillance of Hobart's mail during his confinement in the nursing house. Hobart's lawyer immediately declared this to be evidence of tampering with a witness. Huber, who was still a member of the society but was not dressed in Shaker garb, was asked why this was the case. He explained that despite the fact that he had been at White Water for over four years, he still had not been provided with a regulation Shaker jacket.

Testifying on his own behalf, John Hobart endeavored to prove his claim that the White Water leadership was corrupt, dishonest, and, as he darkly hinted, "morally depraved." One specific allegation threw an unflattering light on Shaker economic practices. He asserted that White Water had at times sold garden seed to the public that had been adulterated by cheap seed obtained from European sources. By means of this fraudulent practice the society had supposedly made a 700 percent profit. A spokesman for White Water conceded that sometimes the Shakers did mix seeds from different sources, but he insisted that the seeds in Shaker packets were guaranteed to "vegetate." He also insisted that Hobart was greatly exaggerating the profit that had been made.

The leading figures from White Water and Union Village who spoke for the defense insisted that the Shakers led "peaceable lives" and were people of "kind hearts." Because they had genuinely believed that Hobart was a "deluded person," they did "what any benevolent man would have done for his friend." Perhaps the most persuasive witness for the defense was Joseph Agnew, one of the founders of White Water, who projected the image of a wise and benevolent elder statesman. Agnew calmly expressed his belief that Hobart had been insane while living among the Shakers early in 1860, and "he scarcely thought he was sane now." But he also

showed compassion for Hobart, declaring that he regarded him as “honest and conscientious.” He even suggested that he would welcome Hobart back to White Water if he showed contrition, although when asked by Hobart’s lawyer if the Bears and Rubushes shared this sentiment, he chuckled and said he had some doubts about that. This brought laughter to the courtroom and considerably lightened the atmosphere, which previously had been quite tense and acrimonious. Persuasive testimony for the defense was also given by Elizabeth Gass, a highly educated and refined woman from England who had joined White Water in 1849. She agreed with Agnew that Hobart had shown signs of insanity during the period in question early in 1860.

Inasmuch as the testimony at this trial for the most part repeated what had been given at the previous hearing in April, and the court-appointed doctor at that trial repeated his conclusion that he regarded the John Hobart as sane, no doubt many observers expected that Hobart would win this case as well. But this was not to be, in large part because of the role played at the November trial by the presiding judge, Bellamy Storer, one of Cincinnati’s most distinguished jurists of the nineteenth century. By a remarkable historical coincidence this was not Storer’s first encounter with the Shakers, for in 1840 he had played a key role in a trial in Cincinnati in which six of the White Water brethren were accused of having castrated two boys.⁵⁴ In that case Storer helped organize an unofficial defense team that succeeded in exonerating the Shakers. As a result of his interactions with the defendants, Storer came to admire the Shakers and rejoiced with them when they were declared innocent and released from prison.

Judge Storer’s influence in the Hobart trial can be seen in the instructions he gave to the jury, which framed the issues in the case in a way that was favorable to the defendants. He told the jurors that was not their responsibility to determine if Hobart was indeed a lunatic, for that had been decided at the Probate Court hearing in April. Rather, they had to decide whether the defendants had had good grounds for thinking Hobart might be insane. Was it reasonable for them to suspect that Hobart shared a hereditary inclination to insanity, given that several of his family members had recently been confined to a lunatic asylum? Further, were the defendants justified in thinking Hobart was suffering from a mental aberration that might make him dangerous to himself or others, especially in light of the butcher knife incident? In short, when they took Hobart before the Probate Court judge, did they have “reasonable ground to

believe that they were doing right?”

The trial ended in bitter disappointment for Hobart, for the jury, no doubt influenced by the judge's remarks, rejected his claim for damages. Yet it was hardly a clear-cut victory for the Shakers, for some of the testimony at the trial had presented White Water Village in a very unflattering light. This was noticed by a sister at Union Village who had been following the proceedings in newspaper accounts. At the end of the trial she noted in her diary that the lawsuit had been decided in favor of the Believers, but “a tight squeeze at that.” She then offered a trenchant comment about trials in general: “Expensive and troublesome, giving to the lawyers and spectators a rich overhauling of the private manners, habits, and peculiarities of the Shakers, which by the by is not specially desirable. Law suits are generally an unpaying curse, suffered to be instituted by Devils, to learn us Wisdom.”⁵⁵

At this point Hobart resigned himself to the fact that his campaign for revenge had ended in defeat. He thus prepared to leave Cincinnati and join his family in Indiana, although before his departure he did leave word with the White Water elders that he wished to meet with the Mount Lebanon Ministry the next time it visited Ohio. Probably, however, he realized that this was a futile hope. From the time he arrived in Indiana in late 1860 until his death in 1910, there is no evidence suggesting that he retained any further interest in Shaker affairs or in the “mission” about which he had been so passionate in 1860. Nonetheless, by a remarkable historical coincidence, he was in fact to return one more time to White Water Village and gain a form of revenge.

For the most part White Water Village was not directly affected by the Civil War. However in mid-July 1863, a Union cavalry force from Indiana, which was pursuing a Confederate detachment known as the Morgan Raiders, appeared at the Shaker Village, where the Raiders had briefly stopped the previous day. To the great astonishment and chagrin of the Believers, the commander of the Union force was none other than First Lieutenant John Strange Hobart. Here, finally, was Hobart's opportunity to gain his revenge. On the previous day the elders had been able to hide their best horses in a remote part of the farmstead and convince the commander of the Morgan Raiders detachment that they had no suitable horses for requisition. But Lt. Hobart, who had been a trustee and knew every nook and cranny of the Shaker farmstead, was not so easily misled. No doubt playing on his reputation among the Shakers as a madman,

he stuck his gun into the chest of Elder George Rubush and demanded he bring forth the horses that had been hidden away. If they failed to do so, he would be forced to shoot the elder and burn down the meeting house. If they cooperated, he would take only two horses. His demand was immediately complied with and Hobart promptly left with two of the Shakers' finest steeds.⁵⁶ This was the last contact the Believers of White Water were to have with Hobart, although many decades later some residents still told stories of the "lunatic" who had once created havoc in the society and commanded a "gang of horse thieves" during the Civil War.

What conclusions might be drawn from this case study? One thing seems clear: like many Americans, the Shakers at White Water had by 1860 come to accept the profound changes that had been occurring in the treatment of the insane. They had abandoned their former hostility to asylums and reluctance to employ physicians in the "world." They did what the medical experts in the "world" were recommending when a person showed signs of mental derangement. In the cases of Naomi and James Hobart they moved promptly to take the person to a judge to be committed to an asylum. Family members showed confidence in the physicians at the asylum, and looked forward to a relatively quick release of the patient. Significantly, the elders at White Water shared this general view. They approved the action taken in the cases of Naomi and James Hobart, and welcomed them back when they were declared cured and released from the asylum. When they discovered that they could not persuade John S. Hobart simply to leave the society, they decided the best course was to take him to the Probate Court in Cincinnati and have him committed to an asylum. It is notable that the surviving evidence suggests that no Believer at White Water objected to these procedures. Apparently no one tried to argue that consorting with judges and doctors in this way was a violation of the Millennial Laws.

Yet the story of the Hobart family at White Water also suggests that there remained a divide between Believers and the "world" in defining insanity, at least in those cases that also involved dissent. The elders and many covenanted Believers at White Water were so shocked by John Hobart's behavior that they immediately concluded he was a lunatic, just like his mother and brother. That he had suddenly become a dissenter was troubling enough, but not necessarily a sign of insanity. What seemed to clinch the matter was Hobart's refusal to leave and carry out his dissent

in the “world,” which all other dissenters in the past had done. Such abominable behavior surely was a sign that the devil had seized control of his mind and turned him into a lunatic. Had Hobart taken the elders’ advice and departed from White Water, he probably would have been regarded as an evil man, but not a lunatic. The butcher knife incident was seized on as proof of something the elders had already convinced themselves of.

This view, however, was not shared by some others at White Water, including members of the Hobart family. They may not have approved his scheme for the reform of Shakerism, but they did not regard his dissent as the work of a lunatic. They reached this conclusion because they observed that in his behavior that was unrelated to his plan for religious reform, he acted in a normal way and showed no signs of mental derangement. This was also the view of doctors, judges, and journalists in the “world” who had the occasion to comment on the Hobart case. In their view John Hobart’s religious views were tinged with fanaticism, but he seemed no different in this respect from other Shakers, including the leadership at White Water. If he was insane, so too were most Shakers.

In their attitudes about insanity the Shaker leaders at White Water and Union Village were thus of two minds. In ordinary cases they embraced the new ideas that were being propagated by the early psychiatrists. But in a case of persistent dissent, like that of John S. Hobart, they reverted to a traditional view of insanity that was based on supernatural explanations. Hobart and those who sympathized with him and were open to his reform plans were all pronounced to be lunatics whose minds were being manipulated by the devil. For this reason the revelation that Hobart claimed to have had was not to be trusted, for clearly his plan for the reform of Shakerism could not have God’s approval.

Another question worth considering is how John S. Hobart’s conduct would be interpreted in terms of modern medical knowledge? Was he in fact insane, and if not, what prompted him to act as he did? Certain facts seem clear. In his behavior in 1860 that was unrelated to his reform plans, and for the remainder of his life after he left White Water, there are no indications that he suffered from any mental disorders. One is led to the conclusion that his strange behavior in 1860 was related to his bout with typhoid fever. The delirium he apparently experienced is known to be a frequent symptom of those who contract typhoid fever.⁵⁷ Victims often have hallucinations that seem quite vivid and real to them. Only

after doctors and loved ones have explained the situation to them do these individuals gradually come to understand that what they experienced was not reality. Some take a while to reach this point, and cases are known even in modern times when such individuals were initially deemed mentally disturbed and sent to psychiatric wards.⁵⁸

It is known, however, that delirium as a symptom of typhoid fever is not at all related to insanity. Patients always recover their normal mental health. Yet cases are known of individuals who nonetheless remained influenced by their hallucinations in a positive way. Artists have been inspired in their work. Some have claimed to gain religious insight and even a sense of revelation. So John S. Hobart's conduct becomes more understandable in this context. Because his life revolved around his religion, as was the case with Shakers in general, it is not surprising that the hallucinations he experienced while suffering from typhoid fever were religious in nature and that he would interpret them as divine revelations. Before his struggle with typhoid fever, perhaps Hobart had even had, if only subconsciously, doubts about Shakerism. If so, this would explain why the idea of reform of Shakerism featured in the revelations he felt he had experienced.

Finally, how can we explain the fact that Believers at White Water were, for the most part, willing to embrace modern views about insanity and engage with doctors, judges, and lawyers in the "world" in a way that seemed to violate the spirit of the Millennial Laws? Later in the nineteenth century at least one other Shaker society in the West, Pleasant Hill, following the precedent that had been set at White Water, began to take members who were suspected of being mentally unstable to a judge in order to be committed to a lunatic asylum. That White Water was apparently the first Shaker society to adopt this procedure can perhaps be explained by the presence of so many former Adventists among its members. Almost all of the Believers involved in the "Hobart case" were former Adventists: the Hobarts, George Rubush, Henry and Julia Ann Bear, and others. Before their conversion to Shakerism as adults, these individuals had lived in the "world." Because they were literate and often well educated, they would have learned of medical advances and, like many Americans, would likely have been won over by the arguments of the early psychiatrists. They thus brought with them to White Water ideas about medicine that Believers who had spent most of their lives in a Shaker society would not necessarily have shared. There is one other way that Adventism seems to have had an influence in this story of lunacy and dissent at White Water Village.

Perhaps the most striking element in John S. Hobart's reform program was his suggestion that worthy Shakers be permitted, indeed encouraged, to marry and have children. In the second half of the nineteenth century this concept of "spiritual marriage" was propagated at several eastern Shaker societies by former Adventists. Although there is no evidence that Hobart collaborated with others in formulating his ideas, it seems, as Stephen Paterwic has suggested, that Shakers who came from the Adventist tradition were more willing to question the necessity of celibacy and search for innovative solutions to the problem of a rapidly declining membership.⁵⁹

Notes

1. Glendyne R. Wergland, *One Shaker Life: Isaac Newton Youngs, 1793-1865* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press), 187-89.
2. For example, when in 1851 Moritz Busch visited the Shaker society of Watervliet (Ohio), the first person he encountered when he entered the village was one who seemed to be mentally unstable. Moritz Busch, *Travels Between the Hudson and the Mississippi, 1851-1852* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971), 59-60.
3. E. Fuller Torrey and Judy Miller, *The Invisible Plague: The Rise of Mental Illness from 1750 to the Present* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 19, 24-25, 194.
4. Theodore Millon, *Masters of the Mind: Exploring the Story of Mental Illness from Ancient Times to the New Millennium* (New York: John Wiley, 2004), 82.
5. Angela Matysiak, "Explaining the Shift: From Optimism to Pessimism in the American Treatment of Insanity" (M.A. thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1998), 9-10, 37; Leland V. Bell, *Treating the Mentally Ill: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Praeger, 1980), 15; Torrey and Miller, 223-24.
6. Bell, 18-19.
7. Gerald N. Grob, *The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 99, 182; Torrey and Miller, 227-28.
8. Bell, 22; Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *Religion, Deviance and Social Control* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 136-37, 143; Norman Dain, *Concepts of Insanity in the United States, 1789-1865* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1964), 94, 187-91.
9. Stark and Bainbridge, 143.
10. "The Shakers," *New England Galaxy and United States Literary Advertiser*,

- September 28, 1825, 8, 415; "Religious Experience," *Episcopal Recorder*, June 27, 1840, 18; *Western Law Journal* (1843-1853), May 1848, 5, 8.
11. Richard Francis, *Ann the Word: The Story of Ann Lee* (New York: Arcade, 2001), 40-41.
 12. Theodore E. Johnson, ed., "The 'Millennial Laws' of 1821," *Shaker Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1967): 35-58; "Rules and Orders for the Church of Christ's Second Appearing," *Shaker Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1971): 147.
 13. Wergland, 189, 239.
 14. Suzanne R. Thurman, *O Sisters Ain't You Happy: Gender, Family, and Community among the Harvard and Shirley Shakers, 1781-1918* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 85-88; Mary M. Dyer, *The Rise and Progress of the Serpent from the Garden of Eden to the Present Day* (Concord, N.H.: privately printed, 1847), 67-71
 15. Stephen J. Stein, "The 'Not-So-Faithful' Believers: Conversion, Deconversion, and Reconversion Among the Shakers," *American Studies* 38, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 14-15; Pricilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1986), 89-90; Wergland, 187.
 16. Thurman, 85-86; "Supreme Judicial Court," *National Aegis* (Worcester, Mass.), April 26, 1826.
 17. The possible exception occurred at Hancock village in the mid-1840s, when a member of the Gathering Order was determined to be insane. According to the testimony of a member who later became an apostate, the Shakers "lost no time, but went immediately and cast him upon the town as a pauper, and thus got rid of him." David R. Lamson, *Shakerism as It Is* (West Boylston, Mass.: self-published, 1848), 23.
 18. Testimony of Drs. John Clough, R. P. J. Jenney, and Joseph M. Harper, *Report of the Examination of the Shakers of Canterbury and Enfield before the New Hampshire Legislature* (Concord: Ervin. B. Tripp, 1849), 46-52.
 19. Brewer, 175. At Mount Lebanon between 1833 and 1880 there were apparently seventeen cases of insanity, suicide, or attempted suicide. Men were more susceptible to this condition than women. However, most contemporary psychiatrists believe that those who attempt suicide are not necessarily insane. Louis J. Kern, *An Ordered Love. Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 104.
 20. At Pleasant Hill Village several cases are known of Believers being taken to "the civil authorities" for committal to a lunatic asylum. See *East Family Journal*, February 9, 1866 and October 30, 1868, Pleasant Hill Village Archive; *Ministerial Journal*, October 7, 1879, October 20, 1881, and October 31, 1881, Filson Library Shaker Collection, volumes 17 and 18; and Henry Daily diary, April 19, September 16, November 4, 1887 and September 28 and 29, 1888, Filson Library Shaker Collection, volume 21. I am grateful to Aaron Genton for calling my attention to these diary entries.

21. Board of Trustees, *First Half Century of Franklin College* (Cincinnati: Journal and Messenger, 1864), 12-13.
22. Joseph Agnew to Freegift Wells, May 2, 1849, Shaker Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society (Cleveland, Ohio) (cited hereafter as WRHS), IV.A.86.
23. John Hobart diary entries, 1854-1857, John Hobart Collection, Cincinnati Historical Library and Archives.
24. Ibid., diary entry of December 22, 1857.
25. Patrick Young, *Schizophrenia* (New York: Chelsea House, 1988), 34-35.
26. Watervliet (Ohio) Diary, August 31, 1857 and February 24, 1858, Shaker Collection, Library of Congress, File #263 (cited hereafter as LOC).
27. According to a Union Village diarist in November 1858, another son in the Hobart family, Horace, had become "entirely insane." However, no other source confirms this. Diary entry of November 5, 1858, WRHS, V.B.246.
28. "Insane From Religious Excitement," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Aug. 31, 1859, 2.
29. Union Village diary, September 1, 1859 and Jan. 10, 1860, WRHS, V.B.254; Watervliet diary, Jan. 13, 1860, LOC, #263.
30. *Cincinnati Gazette*, November 20, 1860, 6.
31. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 17, 1860, 1; *Cincinnati Daily Times*, Nov. 20, 1860, 3.
32. Giles Avery Diary, December 7, 1860, Shaker Manuscript Collection, reel 1, #4, New York City Public Library. On the basis of this somewhat misleading report sent to Avery, one historian, Louis Kearns, has suggested that Hobart considered himself an angel with miraculous powers of healing and that he suffered from "monomaniac perfectionist dementia." Kern, 104.
33. *Cincinnati Daily Times*, November 18, 1860, 3.
34. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Nov. 18, 1860, 3.
35. *Cincinnati Daily Times*, Nov. 20, 1860, 3.
36. *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, April 30, 1860, 5.
37. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Nov. 21, 1860, 1.
38. Testimony of Polly Maclean, *Cincinnati Gazette*, Nov. 21, 1860, 1.
39. *Cincinnati Daily Times*, Nov. 20, 1860, 3; Union Village diaries, March 22, 1860, WRHS, V.B.254 and V.B.247; and March 27, 1860, WRHS, V.B.254.
40. Testimony of Lucretia Hobart, *Cincinnati Gazette*, November 19, 1860, 21.
41. Testimony of J. B. Walker, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Nov. 18, 1860, 2.
42. *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, April 30, 1860, 1. Hobart termed other confrontations he had with the elders the Battles of Lexington and Concord.
43. J. P. (John Patterson) MacLean, *Shakers of Ohio. Fugitive Papers Concerning the Shakers of Ohio, With Unpublished Manuscripts* (Columbus: F.J. Heer, 1907), 261-62.
44. *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, April 30, 1860, 1.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., May 7, 1860, 2; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 6, 1860, 2.
48. Union Village Ministry to Mount Lebanon Ministry, July 6, 1860, WRHS, V.B.29; MacLean, 261-62.
49. Union Village Ministry to Mount Lebanon Ministry, July 6, 1860, WRHS, V.B.29.
50. The Believers at Union Village were so upset by news of the disturbances at White Water and the “machinations” of John Hobart that they sought to “conquer” him through intense prayer and spiritualist exercises at their church meetings. Union Village diary, June 1860, WRHS, V.B.247.
51. Union Village Ministry to Mount Lebanon Ministry, Sept. 19, 1860, WRHS, IV.B.29; Joseph Agnew’s letter to his son, Oct. 11, 1860, White Water Village Archive. John Hobart, Sr. returned to White Water in February 1861 and remained there until his death in 1866. His daughter Eliza, who had returned to White Water with him, left the Society at that time or shortly thereafter. Union Village diary, February, 26, 1861, WRHS, V.B.254.
52. During a visit in July, Hobart had hinted to the Union Village elders that he might be open to “some honorable arrangements” concerning his suit, but he received a cold response. Union Village diary, July 9, 1860, WRHS, V.B.247 and V.B.254.
53. The following account of the trial is drawn from contemporary newspaper accounts: *Cincinnati Enquirer*, November 18, 20, 21, and 22; *Cincinnati Daily Times*, November 18, 19, 21, and 22; *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, November 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23; and the *Cincinnati Gazette*, November 19, 20, and 22.
54. On this trial see Thomas Sakmyster, “A Time of Tribulation for the White Water Shakers: The Child Molestation Trial of 1840,” *American Communal Societies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (October 2011): 204-23.
55. Union Village diary, November 23, 1860, WRHS, V.B.230.)
56. Interview of Stephen Ball, “Among the Shakers,” *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, March 28, 1886; affidavit of Andrew Smith and William Jessup, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 6, 1863; Union Village diary, July 23, 1863, WRHS, V.B.255; and MacLean, 263-64.
57. S. N. Khosla, *Typhoid Fever. Its Causes, Transmission and Prevention* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2008), 115, 122.
58. Zbigniew J. Lipowski, *Delirium* (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1980), 101-2.
59. Stephen J. Paterwic, *The A to Z of the Shakers* (Lahnam, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 203.