

***Westliche Blätter* (May 22, 1877)**

The Shakers.

A Day with the Communists of the Whitewater Valley.

Sketches of the History and Religion of the Shaker Sect.

Celibacy and Communal Life – The World's Cleanest-Living Folk – The Industry of the Shakers – Their Social Life – Some Notable Individuals – The Religious Exercises Of the “People Who Shake”

Shakers? Shakers?? What kind of people are they?

Probably hundreds of our readers may have posed this question, when a few weeks ago they learned about the circumstances relating to the tragic end of Sallie and Ida Dill; especially when the letters exchanged between these unfortunates and the managers of the Shaker community were revealed to the public. These letters were noteworthy for their uncommonly smooth writing style and even an impressive elegance; indeed, they revealed such treasures of the mind that one is forced to consider the previously cited question. Who would have expected that such letters would have been written by people who wear such quaint clothing and seem so coarse and boorish? And yet we Cincinnatians really should have known more about these odd, saintly people, since for half a century they have been our close neighbors. In fact, these letters made such an impression on me that I decided, in the interests of the readers of the *Westliche Blätter*, to visit this strange colony, so that through personal observation I could learn about their life and activities. When I recently related my wishes to one of the leaders of the community (Mr. Geo. B. Amery, usually called Brother George), an invitation was immediately extended to me to visit the place, which I accepted and in recent days made use of. The material I was able to gather was so extensive and rich that I shrank from the thought of how I would cope with it, how I could make use of all the material in the narrow confines of a single feuilleton.

My destination, the community of White-Water, lies on the north-eastern corner of Hamilton County, on the border with Butler County.¹

White-Water is located about six miles from Harrison, which has a train station that serves the Whitewater valley. The trip [by train from Cincinnati] is one that we can be exceedingly thankful for. It takes one through the gardens of Ohio. Near North Bend, a village that more and more is taking on the character of a suburb of Cincinnati, the White-Water valley enfolds, bordered all around by softly ascending hills crowned with forests and cut through by the Great Miami River (in part) and by the two branches of the Whitewater River, Dry Fork and Whitewater itself. At Valley Junction the B. O. line [Baltimore and Ohio] branches off from the main rail line, the I. C. [Indianapolis and Cincinnati], and takes us first of all after eight miles to Harrison, at the foot of the valley and on the border with Indiana. Here a side valley opens up, that of the Dry Fork, and a country road leads northward towards the Shaker settlement. On both sides of the road flowering fields beckon, and every inch of the valley soil has been plowed. The white-washed farm houses shimmer in the background of groves of trees and friendly enclosures, and since one rarely catches sight of monotonous latched fences, the landscape has almost a European aspect. Anyone riding through this valley will have difficulty imagining that just seventy years ago the red men [Native Americans] hunted here, and that it was only at the beginning of this century that our pioneers began the clearing of this valley.

It was near the northern edge of this valley that exactly fifty years ago (in the year 1827) the “United Society of Believers” (the proper name for the Shakers) began to build their cabins.² Those cabins have since been replaced by proud and comfortable houses; the wilderness has become a large, beautiful garden. For what I have said about the splendid cultivation of the soil in the entire Whitewater valley applies doubly so to the areas plowed by “the people who shake.” The fields are three, and often four, times as large as those of typical farms, and the land is bordered for the most part not by slat fencing but mostly by well-maintained green hedges. It is as if one had come upon a great feudal estate that for centuries has been managed by expert agronomists. Everything that the soil offers is extracted: wheat, corn and all varieties of grain, potatoes, and legumes. Fruit orchards and vineyards are to be found here, as well as kitchen and flower gardens. And of the 1500 acres that the Shakers manage, 150 are set aside as pasture land.

The Shakers live together here in three families. What is meant by a Shaker “family” will be further explained below, but for now one can think

of these three families as three different homesteads, one in the South, one in the North, and one in the Center. The latter, which is by far the largest of the three, will be the focus of this report.

THE BUILDINGS

The other farmers in this valley, though they are for the most part very prosperous, live in so-called frame houses, but our Shakers construct their buildings now only of brick. To be sure, the larger dwelling house of the “Central Family” is a frame building, but the newer buildings are three-storied “Bricks.” And now, esteemed reader, join me as we enter such a house. Here all luxury is strictly proscribed, with the exception of the luxury of cleanliness. For the cleanliness that one encounters here can truly be called a luxury. If it is true that the level of civilization of a people can be determined by the amount of soap they use, then the Shakers surely rank at the very highest stage of civilization. It almost seems that the highest level of cleanliness is their first and foremost principle of faith (it’s a shame that other churches don’t proclaim a similar dogma). I have combed through these houses from the basements up to the attics, and found not a speck of dust, let alone any spider webs. One finds no imperfections in the painted woodwork; no cracks in the ceilings; no spots on the outer walls of the houses; no worn out door handles; no ovens that don’t have the most beautiful shine. Whenever I saw a Shaker woman, I could only think of Fru Pastorin in Fritz Reuter’s *Stromtied*, who constantly walks about with her “dust cloth.”³ And how these houses, in their simplicity, are so nicely and comfortably arranged! All the floors are covered by carpets woven on site; before every door lies a mat that has been painstakingly put together from countless small strands of cloth material; the chairs are simply made, but a coating of red paint gives them a friendly appearance, and a wicker-work seat makes them comfortable. The beds are soft and comfortable, and the linen is so snow-white that it appears to have just been bleached in the laundry. The walls are painted in bright colors, and all the steps are carpeted. Yet there are no pictures that might be regarded as luxury items, and when I expressed my surprise about this, I was told that the Shakers aspired to transform their property and environment into one beautiful picture. I cannot do otherwise than freely admit that they have been completely successful in this.

For it is truly a wonderfully delightful scene that greets the eye from the belfry of the main building. From here one can survey the entire settlement, with the exception of the northern section. In the North and the South the higher hills are so grouped that the settlement seems to lie exactly in the center of the valley basin. On all sides one sees forested hills, below them the white farm buildings encircled by ornamental trees, surrounded by flourishing fields and green meadows. Dusk is falling now. Cows and sheep are being driven home and people are returning from the fields. As a result this extremely attractive picture is enhanced with color and life. I have to agree with the Shakers. Here a charming picture has been created that seems to have an effect even on those who see it on a daily basis. And if those people truly have an eye for such pictures, they can then easily endure the deadening wall decorations.

I spoke above about the cleanliness of the dwellings. The same applies to the workplaces, gardens, and even the stables. Everywhere one gains the same comfortable impression of the most painstaking cleanliness and order.

HISTORY AND RELIGION OF THE SECT

Before I proceed to a description of the social life and industry of the Shakers, I want first to offer a sketch of the history of this community, while at the same time conveying the most important of their religious beliefs. The beginnings of this curious sect can be traced to England. Around the year 1750 a certain James Wardley together with several of his friends separated from their Quaker church and united with a certain Ann Lee (Mother Ann, the true founder of the sect). She was unable to read or write, yet exercised an enormous influence on those who joined her. The Shakers believe that they have been enlightened by God, and they see in Mother Ann the second appearance of Christ. They do not think of the term "Christ" in personal terms; rather, for them Christ ("the Christ") is the spirit of human love that manifests itself in all truly good and believing people. This reaches its fullest consummation in Jesus and Mother Ann. The Shakers equate Jesus and Mother Ann, but they attribute divinity to neither of them. They therefore do not believe in the trinity, and they have no sacraments. The Shakers are in many ways related to the spiritualists. They believe in the immortality of the soul after death, and in favorable circumstance its appearance or manifestation to mortals. The fundamental

principle of their religious outlook is celibacy. Marriage is strictly prohibited, and the only kind of love that is permitted is that between a brother and sister. So they address each other as siblings. Adherents of other religions who pay homage to the honest views of the Vicar of Wakefield⁴ and follow natural law are not regarded as sinners because of what they do. However, the Shakers believe that only the complete elimination of animal instincts will allow one to lead a pure life that is pleasing to God. For this reason they, unlike other sects, do not reproduce in the natural way, but have to rely entirely on proselytes.

The first appearance of the Shakers was accompanied by remarkable manifestations. During their worship or prayer service, the devout were seized by trembling and shaking, often to such an extent that they leaped up, danced, or rolled around the floor. Because of these remarkable manifestations believers of other churches mocked them as “Shakers.” (or rather, people who agitate themselves), and this name became so widespread that eventually the Shakers adopted it too.

In brutally fanatic England religious sects had to endure the worst persecution. Members were mocked and imprisoned, and, according to a very thorough history of the Shakers that was made available to me, two assassination attempts were made on Mother Ann by fanatical opponents. However, both attempts were thwarted, naturally through the special grace of God. In 1774 Mother Ann and eight members of her small family migrated to the United States of America, where, in the words of Frederick the Great, “each person can gain God’s blessing in his own way.” Thus it is in this country that the mission of the Shakers is being realized. Mother Ann’s husband was one of the immigrants, but for some time Ann had regarded him not as a husband but a brother. Since Mother Ann was the person responsible for establishing celibacy as the guiding principle of the Shakers, she set an example by separating from her husband (according to the Shaker history he later became dissolute). Several years after their arrival the Shakers settled in an area near Albany, N. Y., and after a religious “revival” that soon sprang up the young sect gained a number of young proselytes. The aforementioned Shaker history tells of Mother Ann’s marvelous abilities, including her eloquence, revelations, visions, moral conduct pleasing to God, etc. She died in 1784, although (according to Brockhaus) she had declared herself to be immortal.⁵ Soon thereafter the sect experienced a great increase in members, and by the 1840s the membership is thought to have been around 6000. Today the Shakers

(who are to be found only in the United States) have fifteen communities and 58 of what they call families. According to Appleton the number of souls is 4000; according to Nordhoff the figure is 2600;⁶

The true number, according to the information provided to me by the Shakers, lies halfway between these two estimates. I am giving here only the barest outline of the history and religious dogmas of this sect because the readers of these pages will take more interest in the life and activities of this strange group of saints than in a presentation of their strange religious beliefs. Anyone seeking more information on the latter will find the fullest treatment of the topic in the *Conversation Lexicon*.⁷

The Communism of the Shakers

Going hand in hand with Shaker celibacy is the principle of joint ownership of property. The truth is that the Shakers have in practice answered the great question of whether a communal system can endure in the long run, indeed they have solved the problem in a far more decisive way than any other theocratic, communal society in the United States. Oneida (free love, etc.), Economy, Aurora, Zoar, Bethel and Amana, and other (mostly pure German) communities organized according to communal principles have mostly not existed long enough to have proven their durability. Also, most of these communities are still presided over by their original founders or their first disciples, while the founders of Shakerism and their first disciples have gone to their graves. The Shaker movement has existed now for exactly 100 years on a communal basis, and not even the smallest signs of decay can be detected. To be sure, the communal system of the Shakers has been very intelligently conceived and wisely implemented. The powerful linchpin of the system is celibacy. Because they have no children of their own, they achieve the goal of being free from parental responsibilities. This removes from the individual one of the chief motives for self-aggrandizement. Furthermore, the system of cooperation is so productive that the Shakers always have abundant and good food to eat, good clothing, and comfortable and pleasant houses. Incidentally, the Shakers are extraordinarily careful in their selection and admission of members, and they understand the need to avoid taking in unsuitable elements. This allows the families (Shakers who live together in one house are called a family) complete scope to purchase things and make use of these purchases, with the proviso that the original property cannot

be sold or squandered by members of the family. In any case the strict church discipline of the Shakers would never allow for the squandering of property. Otherwise the communities are organized along strictly democratic principles. There is complete equality among the members, and no one has personal possessions, not even the highest level elders. The spiritual head of the community is a “ministry” consisting of four elders (two men and two women). Before their death they designate their successors. Mother Ann named the original elders, and in the same way each named his successor before his death. The highest-level ministry has its seat in New Lebanon, N. Y. It appoints the elders of each individual family. – That is the inner organization of the entire Shaker sect. There are no ordained clergy. Every individual who has a gift for preaching can make use of it in their meetings. The elders have no special privileges. They must work, like all the other brothers and sisters. They are in fact only the confessors of the others. That is to say, the Shakers introduced auricular confession, and they are diligent in their confessions, although not the least bit of pressure is placed on them to do so, and no church penalties are imposed.

The Shakers eat their meals communally at a large table. Before the meal each person kneels and says a short prayer.

Anyone who becomes a Shaker gives all of his property and possessions to the “family” that takes him in. He enters into a contract that stipulates that he will never attempt to reclaim this property. If he joins with a wife and children, he divides his property and assets beforehand into as many parts as there are family members, and husband, wife, and children enter into separate contracts with the society. However, when the children grow older and decide they do not want to remain with the sect, they can retrieve the portion allotted to them earlier and leave. This happens quite often. For example, Henry Bear, the oldest elder, joined the society thirty years ago with his wife and two sons. However, when the sons reached the age of majority, they left the society and accordingly each received one quarter of the amount that their father had handed over at the time he entered the society. When a married couple enter the society, they must, like all other members, obey the law of celibacy. The husband must see in his wife only a sister. So, for example, elder Henry Bear has lived for the last thirty years in the same family as his former wife, whom he now calls Sister Julia. It makes no difference how much a candidate for admission to the society possesses or how rich or poor he is. He will only be fully accepted into the

society when he gains acceptance from the elders and members of the family and, over a period of years, proves to be faithful and trustworthy.

The Blessings of Communal Life

are immediately evident to every visitor to a Shaker settlement. The living arrangements of the Shakers are not only better, more comfortable, and more pleasant than that of most farmers, but they also have a more healthy life style. Their tables are always well-laid; to be sure, the food is simple, but nourishing and well prepared. Their clothing is a model of simplicity, but it is warm and comfortable, and every single Shaker has enough clothes so that he can have a complete and trim appearance. Therefore, the Shakers have no worries: they eat well, they drink well, they dress well, and they live in splendidly constructed houses. If they get sick, the best nursing is made available, and it is really heartwarming to see the care that the Shakers provide to their older and feeble brothers and sisters. "You must not laze about!" is one of the main commandments of the Shakers. For them idleness is just as serious a sin as uncleanness — but a Shaker will nonetheless, on average, not have as heavy a work load as the typical farmer, who has to rely only on himself and his own work.

From what has been stated above, one can perceive that the life of a Shaker is vastly more comfortable and pleasant than that of a typical farmer or artisan, if one is willing to renounce the joys of family life. For the Shaker religious faith completely replaces these joys. The Shaker must give up the genuine joy of a man over the success of his family, his own advancement in the world, and the fruits of his industry and thoughts, exchanging those things for a carefree, comfortable life.

Given all this, one could well assume that the Shakers must be a sinister, ascetic sect, open to nothing but their own rules and regulations. And for the most part this is the way Shakers have normally been viewed. But nothing could be more mistaken. I have seldom met such cheerful folk as the inhabitants of this community in the White-Water valley. When their work and religious services are finished, they gather together in light-hearted conversation. The tone of these conversations is quite lively and sociable. They laugh and joke, and even tease each other. I was astounded by the intelligence and erudition of the Shakers, in particular the women among them. They were conversant with all possible subjects, and one would have to search for a long time among the wives of farmers in Ohio before finding

one whose intelligence and knowledge were comparable to that of the ten or twelve Shaker women with whom I spent a few hours in the evening. Almost all of them were musically inclined, most were interested in world literature, and on the tables I found piles of well-read books of the kind that seldom make their way into the boudoirs of educated women of our world. Most of these women had lived for many years in this community, and they had the Shaker school to thank for their education and culture. I became acquainted with the teacher, Eldress Amerlia,⁸ an exceptionally well-read and educated woman who would put to shame very many of our local female school teachers. By the way, the letters that the Dills [Sally Dill and her daughter Ida] wrote during the recent tragic events clearly demonstrate the fruits of a Shaker education. As the handwriting shows, these letters were namely all composed by the seventeen year old Ida May Dill, who spent almost her entire life at the Shaker settlement and enjoyed no other education than that which she received there.

What particularly surprised me was the eagerness with which these twelve or so women (there may be about 60 females in the community, 12 of whom are young girls) threw themselves into the study of the German language. Their teacher is my Cicerone,⁹ Brother George, whom I have mentioned before. This George, a young man of about 30 years and a home-bred American [Stockamerikaner], has acquired a truly rare proficiency in German. Many Germans today would be able to flatter themselves if they had such a good command of German grammar as Brother George does. I have read many pages of translations he has made into German, without finding a single grammatical error.

The approximately 70 members of the current Center Family spend their weekday evenings as follows:

Mondays and Thursdays: German lessons

Tuesdays and Fridays: Union meeting, a social gathering of men and women. On one night a week the women visit the men, on the other the men visit the women, in the so-called sitting-rooms of the two groups. In order best to understand this, one must imagine the Shaker house as a wide hall that is divided into two parts. On one side of the hall the men live, on the other side the women. On each side of the hall there is a sitting room. I was present at one of these evenings of conversation, and I was convinced that the rumors of a cloister-like separation of the sexes are completely groundless.

On Wednesday and Saturday evening, as well as in the afternoon and evening on Sunday, there are religious exercises.

The Religious Exercises

I did not have the opportunity to witness a devotional exercise of the Shakers, but at my request several of them performed the religious dance, which is the most striking feature of the sect. Their entire church service is comprised of dancing, preaching, and prayer. I will attempt here to offer a description.

The devotional exercise (meeting) takes place in a large, completely unadorned, room in the shape of an elongated quadrangle. The Shakers arrange themselves two by two at the four corners of the hall, the brothers and sisters in separate groups. The resulting arrangement resembles a polonaise dance formation. In the middle of the hall stand four or six singers (both male and female) who sing a song a capella. In accord with the beat of this song the arranged columns begin to move forward. As they march the Shakers stretch their hands forward and backwards in a regular swinging motion. Suddenly the singers change the tempo of their song and the marchers begin to scuttle and hop (Shuffle). Finally the singers begin a monotone galop,¹⁰ whereupon the others begin a dance that is remarkably similar to our quick step waltz. This dancing is said to transition often into wild jumping combined with lamentations of all kinds. Then one of the brothers or sisters begins to speak. During this talk all stop and listen, the brothers standing on one side of the hall, the sisters on the other side. After another dance and a hymn the service comes to an end. This is the program of exercises that only Shakers, and those who want to become Shakers, can take part in.

The Shakers offer the beautiful illustration of Heine's brilliant verse:¹¹

"Dancing is a worship service,
A way to pray with one's legs."

At the very frequent Shaker public meetings, which often attract from 30 to 400 local farmers, there is much more preaching than dancing.

The Shaker melodies that I heard strike me as too cloying and uninflected; above all, the melodies during the dance were completely nondescript, and the result was a kind of baleful chant.

In the realm of politics

the Shakers are completely passive. Because as a matter of principle they are opposed to war, they do not feel justified in taking an active part in political life, and for that reason none of them vote.¹² They pay their taxes, although as a religious sect they could claim tax-free status for at least a portion of their assets. Each year the community pays about \$1000 in county and state taxes.

The Clothing

of the Shakers is reminiscent of that found at the end of the previous century. It would be easy to make the mistake of thinking that the Shakers have created for themselves this distinctive garb, but in fact they have simply retained the simple and therefore very practical and durable garb of that time. In particular the clothing worn by the women is downright comely. The snow-white tulle bonnets are becoming to both the women and the girls, as is the tucker¹³ (a la Martha Washington). The complete absence of a bustle, lace-up corset, and other secrets of a lady's toilette allows them to have a more natural appearance. Shaker women in their work clothes, in broom or basket making, appear trim and nice. When outdoors the women always wear large straw hats that overshadow the face.

The industry of the Shakers

Broommaking, the brewing of vinegar, fruit crops, livestock raising, agriculture, market gardening etc., etc.; these constitute the industry of the Shakers. Shaker chairs are famous everywhere. At the settlement of Whitewater willow trees are grown, the branches of which are stripped by the women and children and then sold to basket makers. I encountered the women as they were completely engaged in this activity. Eldress Lucy¹⁴ and the teacher Amelia, to whom I referred earlier, were hard at work. Overall the Shakers have a splendid system of work. All must apply themselves to the work at hand, regardless of whether they are scribes or elders; no one is given preference over others. The deacon (Brother George) sets out the work to be done, and presides over the sale of the finished products. Otherwise he has no advantages or privileges. Brother George is likewise the superintendent, so to speak, of the 70 members of the community's

center family. Even the children must work; in fact, sturdy seven year old girls were set to work stripping willow branches.

The Children

I have several times mentioned children here, and this may have sounded strange to many, since celibacy is the main principle of Shakerism. And yet of the 103 people in the Shaker community of Whitewater, about 20 are under 14 years of age. Although many of these children came to the Shaker colony with their parents, most of them were given to the Shakers. Some of them are children of the streets, who never came to know their father and are probably better off from never having known their mother. These children are raised here and when they reach the age of consent they are free to leave if they so decide. Most of these grown-up children are either claimed by their parents or soon leave for the wide world. Only rarely will one of them actually join the sect and comply with its rules. One simply can't raise children for a cloister, especially in this kind of commune that conducts so much business with the outer world. The children, in observing their neighbors, will become acquainted with the delights of childhood that are strictly forbidden to them. A girl like Ida May Dill can easily emerge from such a commune, especially when associating with other frivolous novices.—Here there surely is material for dramatic treatment by a skillful poet.

I have been told that out of every twenty children who are taken into the commune, hardly one remains loyal to the sect, and that's not at all surprising. There are very few people who, in the full prime of youth, at a time when a fiery heart and pulsing blood tend to win out over other impulses, can permanently silence these kinds of desires. For it is in the satisfaction of these desires that the poetry of life seems to lie: sexual desire and a man's urge to harvest for himself the fruits of his manly pursuits. Here religious faith must have a mountain-moving power to be able to stifle the powerful stirring of the human breast.—Here we do not find the beneficial and distinguished position that beckons boys who are ordained in the Catholic priesthood; here one cannot gain honor, prestige, and respect, but rather ridicule and pity. Here in support of such boys there is no large, mighty organization with a vast history and a tradition stretching back for thousands of years, like the Catholic Church; instead there is a small society of simple people, without a history, without a name

and reputation. There is truly an enormous difference, then, in dedicating oneself to a life of celibacy in these two differing situations! – So we come to the fact that only a few men, and precious few women, have remained with the Shakers since childhood, and those who have are, almost without exception, remarkable characters. In conclusion I will offer a sketch of some of them.

Brother Ezra

Ezra is one of the most remarkable men of this commune.¹⁵ He is now 72 years old, and for fifty years, since the founding of the commune, he has lived in this place. He is a son of the wilderness; as a child he lived for years in a fort. His father belonged to the Ohio Company,¹⁶ and he was one of the more famous of the so-called Indian hunters. Ezra had no formal schooling, and can barely read and only write with difficulty. But he is truly a man with a full head and heart. For over 40 years he has been the accountant of the community. His hands are as hard as the hickory of the forest. They reflect the precept of the Shaker faith: idleness is a sin. The old man is said at times to deliver absolutely inspiring orations.

Another character worthy of note is Brother Ebenezer.¹⁷ He is 86 years old, and he too helped found the colony. He remains an alert and active man who doesn't want to just sit in an easy chair. I encountered him digging trenches in the field.

Elder Henry Bear (Bär) is of Pennsylvania-Dutch origin.¹⁸ The spiritual head of the family I visited, he is the prototype of a German farmer: modest, simple, and thereby friendly and courteous. Overall one must say that the Shakers are a hearty and robust people, industrious and reliable, true and open.

A Fellow Countryman

In the cow shed I met a fellow countryman [Landsmann] (there are four Germans in the settlement), Brother Lorenz,¹⁹ an old man from Baden. I very much liked him. He showed almost a fatherly affection for his calves. He carried the youngest in his arms and its mother was able to give more attention to her other offspring. And how the old man's eyes glowed when his livestock were praised. His greatest pride is a wild bull that he's named "Hans," and who follows him, and only him, around like a

lamb. I can scarcely believe that he has embraced the mysteries of Shaker doctrine, but he adheres to the dictum to “always be faithful and honest.”²⁰ This is evident when one observes the old man in his work and the words that he speaks. And on this basis he can indeed be a good Shaker, as in the same way he could be a good Catholic, Protestant, or Jew.

Shaker Women

After a visit to the Shaker society of New Lebanon, the witty Charlotte Cushman wrote a tendentious poem that concludes with a verse directed to Shaker women:

Yet seem ye not as those,
Within whose bosoms memories vigils keep,
Beneath your drooping lids no passions sleep,
And your pale brows
Bear not the tracery of emotions deep –
Ye seem too cold and passionless to weep!²¹

True, and a faithful pen and ink sketch of the impression the Shaker women made on a perceptive observer. But what about the thousands of women and girls in our own society for whom the flame of life flickers in an unsatisfactory, long, and hopeless way, those who are unable to find a grave for themselves,²² and who are often exhausted by their efforts to cope?

Doesn't the tragic fate of the former Shaker woman, Sallie Dill, offer us an example of this? The Shaker women have overcome and in that way have gained a victory. – “Your faith is your portion of happiness.”²³ Are they then really so pitiable, when in their very nature and appearance they show that they have reconciled themselves to their fate and indeed have found fulfillment and, yes, even rapture? For the words of Goethe seem relevant here:

“Oh how enchanted people can become by a false concept.”²⁴

May the above lines lead readers to a clearer image of these strange people and dispel the prejudices that many have against them. I have not found them to be a dark, ascetic people who want to barricade themselves from the world and its activity by erecting a Wall of China ... [indecipherable

words] To the contrary, they are a harmless, hardworking, industrious and, what's more, an intelligent and aroused community whose adherents are just as useful to society as we, the "enlightened," claim to be.

Let's hope that their religious strivings will no longer sound so strange to us—we have no right to brag about our tolerance if we regard them as inferior and withhold from them our interest and good wishes.

Kim

Notes

1. The author was in error here. He must have intended to write "the north-western corner."
2. In fact, White Water was established in 1823. The meeting house was constructed in 1827.
3. Fritz Reuter was a nineteenth century German writer known for his stories of village and farm life. The reference here is to *Ut Mine Stromtid* (1862), Reuter's most popular and acclaimed work.
4. *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1776), a novel by the British writer Oliver Goldsmith, is a portrait of village life that deals with the vagaries of married life.
5. Brockhaus was a German encyclopedia that had a reputation for accuracy in the German-speaking world in the nineteenth century. There is little evidence to support the assertion that Ann Lee proclaimed herself to be immortal.
6. The reference is to Charles Nordhoff, *Communitistic Societies of the United States* (New York: Harper, 1875). "Appleton" is a reference to D. Appleton's *American Cyclopedia*, a popular reference work in the 1870s.
7. The *Conversations Lexicon* was a nineteenth century British encyclopedia.
8. Amerlia Dobson (1841-1919) joined White Water at some point in the 1850s. She left the society in October, 1878.
9. Cicerone is a term that refers to a guide who leads visitors through sites of historical, cultural, or scientific interest.
10. Galop was a lively dance, or the accompanying music, in duple time that was popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
11. From Heinrich Heine's epic poem *Atta Troll. Ein Sommernachtstraum* (Atta Troll. A Midsummer Night's Dream).
12. In fact, a number of White Water brothers did vote in elections in the 1870s.
13. A tucker was a piece of lace or linen worn around the top of a dress.
14. Lucy Woodward (1820-1881) lived most of her life at White Water, and served as eldress in the Center Family for nineteen years. She left White Water in 1878.

15. Ezra Sherman (1805-1882) arrived at White Water in 1826 as a transfer from the failed Shaker society of West Union, Indiana. He served at various times as elder, trustee, and deacon, and he enjoyed a high reputation among non-Shakers in the area.
16. The Ohio Company was formed in Virginia in the late eighteenth century to acquire land and facilitate settlement in that part of the Northwest Territories that would become the state of Ohio.
17. Ebenezer Rice (1793-1885) came to Whitewater in 1824 as part of a group from the failing Shaker settlement of Darby Plains. He had long tenures as elder and trustee.
18. Henry Bear (1812-1907) was an Adventist who joined White Water in 1846. He served as elder and trustee, and wrote several pamphlets on theological issues.
19. No one by this name could be identified at White Water in this time period.
20. "Üb immer Treu' und Redlichkeit" is a line from a well-known German folk song.
21. The full text of Cushman's poem, as well as a Shaker reply, "A Shaker Girl," can be found in Nordhoff, *Communitic Societies*, 251-55.
22. This may be an allusion to the fact that at first no one took responsibility for the burial of Sallie and Ida Dill.
23. From Friedrich Schiller's poem, "Resignation."
24. An oft-quoted maxim from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Venezianische Epigramme* (Venetian Epigrams) (1796).