

# **The History of the Shaker Gathering Order**

*By Stephen J. Paterwic*

It is convenient to see the Shakers as a religious movement that developed during the eighteenth century, reaching its full flowering during the “classic” period from 1820 until 1860 and then having a long decline until today when only a remnant of Believers remains. The problem with this neat division of Shaker history is that it has often been accompanied by an equally simplistic view—that once put into place, the Shaker religion was monolithic. It is assumed by some that the early leaders set down a complete and all-encompassing set of rules. In this scheme, any observed deviations from a perceived ideal are seen as examples of how the Shakers became decadent and why they declined.

In fact, the Shakers were ever changing their policies and daily practices. Looking at stereopticon views taken by professional photographers, we may be tempted to fall into the trap of believing that the image we see, Shaker life as it expressed itself in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, was how the Shakers always looked and should still look today. To imagine that the Shakers never changed or did so reluctantly is to rob Shakerism of its dynamism for the sake of obtaining easy characterizations. An excellent example of Shaker willingness to innovate and adapt to changing circumstances may be found in the development of the Shaker Gathering Order. A full treatment of its history provides many ways through which to examine the ever-living, vital Shaker religion.

The first leaders of the Shakers, Mother Ann, Father William and Father James, may not have envisioned Shakers living in well-organized communities. In spite of violent persecution and the great burden on the leadership of constant travel to visit scattered Believers, no attempt to organize Shakers into permanent societies occurred until 1787. In fact, Shaker meetinghouses existed at Watervliet, New York; Enfield, Connecticut; and Turners Falls and Ashfield, Massachusetts, before the meetinghouse was constructed at New Lebanon in 1785, though

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construction of the latter is often seen as a sign that the Shakers were starting to gather together.<sup>1</sup>

Father Joseph Meacham, the first American to head the Shakers, assumed the mantle of leadership after the death of Father James in 1787 and implemented his plan, called Gospel Order, for organizing the widely scattered groups of Believers into permanent societies. It was strongly felt that the temptations of the world were ever present as long as Believers lived outside of communities.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Father Joseph wished New Lebanon to be the “center of union” for all Believers and not have various places serve this purpose. Accordingly, Shaker communities were formed starting at New Lebanon and Watervliet, New York. In turn, cadres of leaders, trained by Father Joseph and Mother Lucy Wright, were sent to gather and organize nine communities in New England. All energy was devoted to this important task. From the death of Mother Ann in 1784 until 1797, public testimony and missionary work ceased as efforts were spent in organizing thousands of people into Gospel Order under the familiar four-square pattern of leadership, including Ministry, elders and deacons.<sup>3</sup> Explaining this withdrawal of the testimony, Elder Rufus Bishop, an early nineteenth-century member of the New Lebanon Ministry, wrote, “The Church or spiritual house of God was then building; therefore it must be a time of peace without, and the external war between the two kingdoms must cease while the Temple is building.”<sup>4</sup>

All Shakers were divided into two groups, the Church Order and the Order of Families. The former was the inner core of Believers, and they lived near the meetinghouse. In 1790 at New Lebanon, the first community to be gathered, the three courts or orders<sup>5</sup> of the Church numbered 183.<sup>6</sup> The Order of Families consisted groups gathered more loosely on peripheral farms. These families were often known by the name of the original owner of the land who was in charge of a group of Shakers gathered there. For example, at New Lebanon, in 1790, groups lived at about a dozen sites including Rufus Clark’s, Samuel Johnson’s, and John Bishop’s. All told, they numbered at least 175.<sup>7</sup>

The number of people gathered to the Church Order at New Lebanon reached a high of 233 in 1789. For the next ten years, “a sifting among the members” in the family, “a clearing out of the unprincipled and untrue had left a solid remnant.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the Church Order declined to just 147 members in 1799.<sup>9</sup> Besides deaths, this decrease of almost 40% was caused by a high rate of apostasy, especially of the youth. Starting

in 1794, the “first apostate went off from the youth’s order, and others in both orders, and in other parts of the Church among the young, rapidly followed for about a year.”<sup>10</sup> Since no children had been taken in for over ten years and so many young people left, in 1795, the youth and children’s orders were combined into one. During the spring of the next year, they were dissolved altogether.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, the Order of Families had 208 members in 1800.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, if the inner core continued to diminish, it would be very small or cease to exist while those living out on the farmsteads in looser association would dominate. It was apparent that the structure of Gospel Order needed to be adapted. The original plan set in place in 1787 was rapidly proving to be inadequate by the time of Father Joseph’s death in 1796 because no way had been developed to integrate converts into the Society. Also, starting in 1797 inquiries about the gospel began to come from “the World.”<sup>13</sup> At the same time religious revivals in many places were calling for Shaker missionaries, and the time seemed right to re-open the testimony.

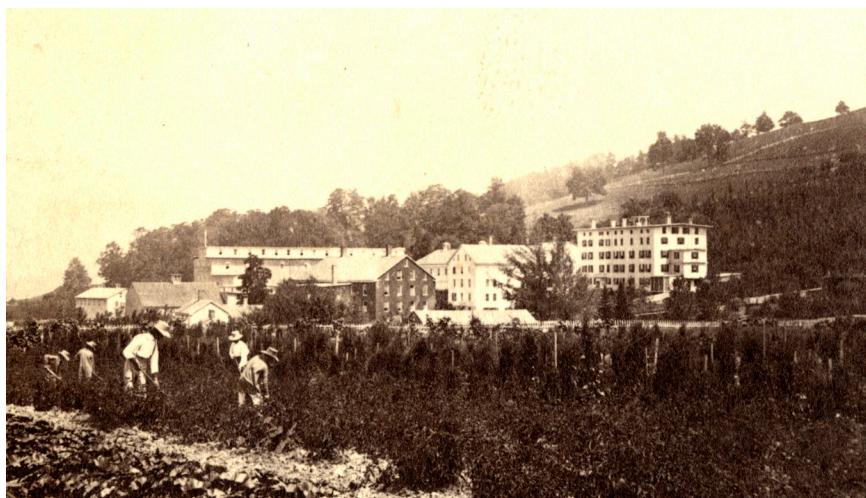
These factors caused an insurmountable pressure on the leadership to begin accepting new members. Making the needed changes fell to the next set of Shaker leaders under Mother Lucy Wright. They were the ones who would bring Shakerism into the nineteenth century. First they needed to fill an obvious, but unanticipated, gap in the system of Gospel Order set up by Father Joseph. When this was done, they would be in a position to further re-structure the Order of Families system.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, a new Shaker order was created called the Order of Young Believers.<sup>15</sup> This order was also called the Gathering or Novitiate Order. Guided by elders and eldresses specially chosen for the task, adult converts would now have a way to integrate themselves into Shaker life. In December 1799, the Lebanon Ministry chose Ebenezer Cooley, Philip Bartlett, Elizabeth Chauncy and Lydia Mathewson, Sr., from the Church Order to be the first elders of the Order of Young Believers.<sup>16</sup> In every way, however, the development of the Gathering Order was a work in progress. The North Spin Shop, located at the Church Family at New Lebanon was chosen as the site for the new order. It was envisioned that inquirers at Hancock and Tyringham, Massachusetts as well as New Lebanon and Watervliet, New York, would either go there and be instructed in the tenets of Shakerism or be visited and guided by the elders of the Gathering Order. When sufficiently trained, these converts could take their places where needed. The first aspect of this arrangement to change

was location. Almost at once, the North Spin Shop proved to be too small to accommodate the Gathering Order, and it was thought to be too near the Church Family.<sup>17</sup> By the end of winter in 1800, the Gathering Order moved to the farm of Amos Hammond, who had joined the Shakers at the first gathering. This land was once owned by David Darrow and the Hammond home called the North House.<sup>18</sup> Re-named the North Family, it became the best known and the longest lasting Shaker family at New Lebanon.

For many years, especially when Frederick Evans was the elder, Shaker public meeting on Sunday at New Lebanon was conducted by the elders of the Gathering Order. This was not so at the beginning. In 1807, when Calvin Green was appointed as second elder of the North Family, he described the distant place the North Family played in the scheme of Sabbath services at New Lebanon. He said, “Young Believers from Hancock and some out families around here would attend meeting on the Sabbath at the North House when weather was suitable.” They did not attend the public meeting with the Order of Families. In fact there was little preaching to the world at the public meeting though many from the world attended. They were told that there was a meeting in the afternoon at the North House where inquirers could get information.<sup>19</sup>

Within a short time, it was clear that the idea of a regional Gathering Order was not practical. Many families were seeking membership and the



North Family, Mount Lebanon, New York

number of admissions to the Shakers was steadily increasing. By 1803, for example, there were 103 people enrolled in the Gathering Order. Just twenty-one of them, however, lived at New Lebanon.<sup>20</sup> The rest had to write to, visit or be visited by the elders from the New Lebanon Gathering Order. Also, in 1805, the Shakers began sending missionaries to Ohio and Kentucky. Resources at New Lebanon were not sufficient to allow the continuance of a regionally based Gathering Order and at the same time send men and women west to preach and gather Believers. To adapt, each Shaker community was directed to develop its own Gathering Order. Once again, as the “center of union” for all Shakers, the pattern begun at New Lebanon was duplicated elsewhere.

Consequently, between 1807 and 1819, all Eastern Shaker communities started gathering families. The first of these was at Watervliet. It commenced July 1, 1807, at the South Family. Seth Y. Wells was the leading elder.<sup>21</sup> In the newly opened Shaker West, gathering orders were begun as the communities were formed. Generally in the East, in each community one particular family in the Order of Families was designated to be a Gathering Order and Shakers who lived there were moved to other families. For example, the Shaker community at Enfield, Connecticut, was organized into Gospel Order in 1792. In 1795, the natural families of Elijah Billings, Samuel Eaton, Lot Pease, Samuel Parker and others began to gather as one Shaker family, south of the Meetinghouse. Elias Pease served as first elder and trustee. In 1810, this family was broken up and its members moved to other Shaker families at Enfield. A Gathering Order was begun at the vacated farm, now called the South Family, on September 5, 1810. Ultimately, the only Shaker society that did not develop a distinct family as a gathering order was Tyringham, Massachusetts. That community was so small and remote that the Second Family (North Family) doubled as a gathering order for prospective adult converts. In the case of Harvard, Massachusetts, additional land needed to be purchased for a new Shaker family that would serve as a gathering order. In 1813, the property once owned by Jeremiah Willard was bought for the purpose of creating the South Family.<sup>22</sup> At New Gloucester, Maine, two adjoining farms in the nearby town of Poland were bought in 1818, and the next year the Gorham, Maine society was broken up and moved to Poland Hill, which became the Gathering Order for New Gloucester.

The growth in the number of Shakers during this time was remarkable, since it was **before** the development of the Shaker policy to take in large





South Family, Enfield, Connecticut

numbers of children without their parents. For example, the original group of five at the North Family, New Lebanon, in 1800 had grown to forty-three people by September 1819.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to numerical growth, as time passed it became necessary to refine the Order of Young Believers to include levels of new membership. Not every one who joined the Shakers could make a clean break with the world. Some had debts to be paid, others had spouses who would not consent to joining the Shakers; still others had financial matters and business obligations that could not easily be terminated. In addition, there were some potential converts whose religious faith was weak. These factors caused a general expansion of the numbers in the Gathering Order families themselves and nearby farms were bought to accommodate people on various stages of their journey to be Shakers. Where numbers were sufficient, branches or new Gathering Order families were created at five of the Eastern villages. Some of the largest villages not only had multiple Novitiate Order families, they also had out farms to house whole families who wished to join. For a number of years, New Lebanon also offered those who had left the Shakers or either could not or did not wish to join

fully, membership in a Back Order. Located near the West House, residents enjoyed association with the Shakers without taking on full membership responsibilities.

At its full extent, not counting farmsteads where whole families could live for a time after joining the Shakers, there were twenty-one Gathering Order families out of fifty-one total Shaker families in the East.<sup>24</sup>

### **Name of Society**

### **Name of Gathering Order**

NEW LEBANON

NORTH FAMILY; subsequent branches in Canaan, New York called the UPPER AND LOWER FAMILIES

WATERVLIET

SOUTH FAMILY

GROVELAND

WEST FAMILY

SODUS

EAST FAMILY

HANCOCK

EAST FAMILY located in Pittsfield, Massachusetts; subsequent branch at the SOUTH FAMILY also in Pittsfield

TYRINGHAM

NORTH FAMILY (also the SECOND FAMILY of the Church)

ENFIELD, CONN.

SOUTH FAMILY; subsequent branch at the WEST FAMILY

SHIRLEY

SOUTH FAMILY located in Lancaster, Massachusetts; after 1827 the NORTH FAMILY in Shirley was the Gathering Order

HARVARD

SOUTH FAMILY; subsequent branch at the EAST FAMILY

CANTERBURY

NORTH FAMILY; subsequent branch at the WEST FAMILY

ENFIELD, N.H.

NORTH FAMILY

ALFRED

NORTH FAMILY

NEW GLOUCESTER

NORTH FAMILY located at Poland Hill, Maine; a year after this family was founded, the SQUARE HOUSE FAMILY was founded to house natural families who wished to gather directly into the Church.

PHILADELPHIA

One Shaker family, no Gathering Order

FLORIDA

One Shaker family, no Gathering Order

Of the thirty-five Shaker families that ever existed in the Shaker West, thirteen served as gathering orders.<sup>25</sup>

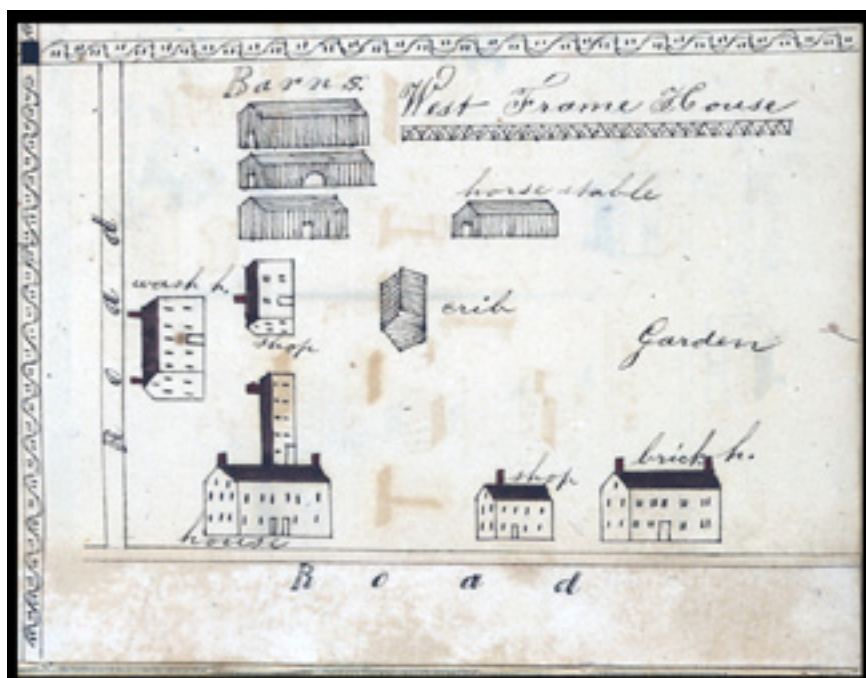
<b>Name of Society</b>	<b>Name of Gathering Order</b>
UNION VILLAGE	EAST FAMILY subsequently moved to the NORTH LOT FAMILY and the WEST LOT FAMILY. In turn the Gathering Order moved to the WEST BRICK FAMILY and WEST FRAME FAMILY.
WATERVLIET	WEST FAMILY, also called the WEST LOT FAMILY
WHITE WATER	NORTH FAMILY until 1855, then the SOUTH FAMILY until 1862, then the NORTH FAMILY
NORTH UNION	EAST FAMILY
PLEASANT HILL	NORTH LOT FAMILY, subsequent branch at the WEST LOT
SOUTH UNION	EAST FAMILY
WEST UNION	NORTH FAMILY
GEORGIA	One Shaker family, no Gathering Order

Of the eighty-six Shaker families that ever existed, thirty-four served as gathering orders at one time or another. This is about 40% of the whole. This does not mean, of course, that 40% of all Shakers lived in the gathering orders. In fact, the gathering orders were among the smaller Shaker families in a society. In addition, not everyone who lived in the gathering orders was a new convert. There always was a core of long-standing members who lived there. Serving as elders, trustees and deacons, many of these Believers lived out their lives as role models for new recruits. That is why it is virtually impossible to count the number of new adult converts just by looking at the numbers living in the gathering orders before 1850. Federal census enumerations before that date do not list individuals and journal records, even from the gathering orders themselves, often do not have complete lists of individual converts. Yet, the number of adult



converts to Shakerism must have been very high between 1800 and 1820. Since few children were taken without at least one parent during these decades, the growth in the percentage of “young believers” must include a significantly high percentage of adults. For example, the Gathering Order at New Lebanon had twenty-one members in 1803. This was out of a total population of 351 Shakers. This is just under 6% of the whole. By 1819, “Young Believers” accounted for 220 of the 469 Shakers at New Lebanon. As older members died or left, new converts made up almost 47% of all Shakers in that community. By 1819, “Young Believers” made up over 70% of the 189 Shakers at Watervliet and 45% of the 222 Shakers at Hancock.<sup>26</sup>

In theory, all adults coming into the Shakers from 1800 until the 1870s were supposed to have entered by way of a gathering order family. The typical adult joined after a period of initial contact through visits or letters. After arriving at the family, generally a day or two was spent preparing for confession. After this “opening of the mind” to one of the elders, the person was considered to be a novitiate or probationary member and “came to the



West Frame House, Union Village, Ohio  
(Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division)

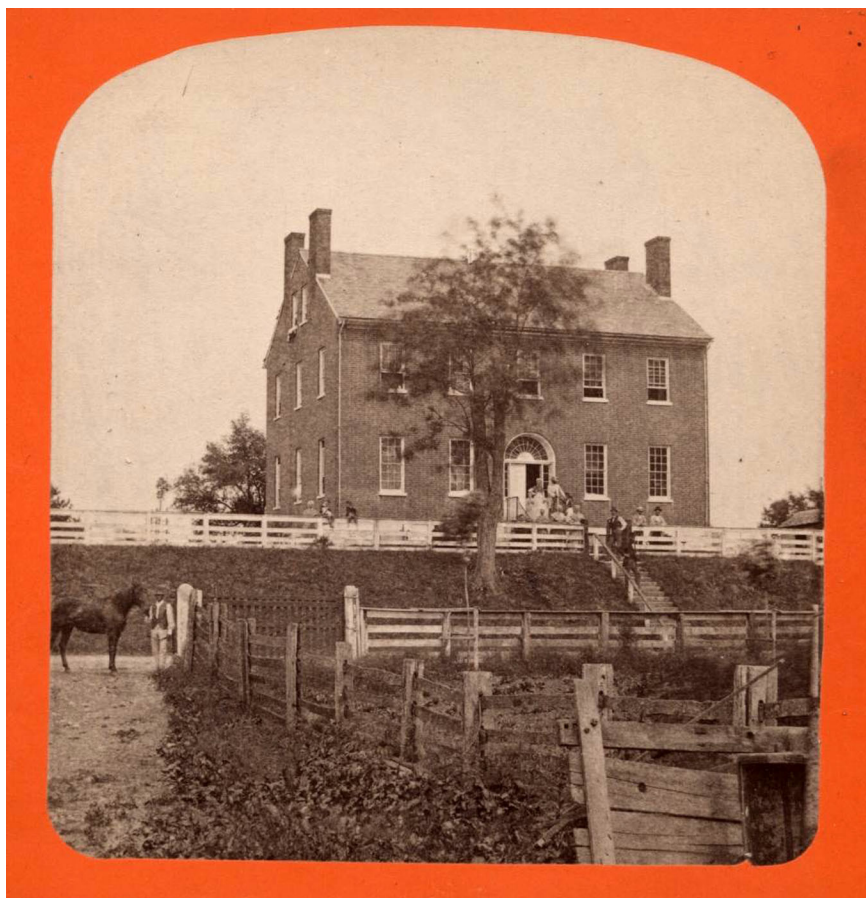
table.” Those twenty-one years or older signed a probationary covenant or articles of agreement specifically waiving the right to any compensation for work done while a member of the society. In the earliest years these had been verbal agreements, but subsequent lawsuits for back wages forced the Shakers to revise covenants to deal with that issue.

No specific time was ever made into a rule, but when the elders thought that the person had been sufficiently prepared, the individual would be assigned to a place in another Shaker family. For a time, adult converts who had been married were sent to families that made up the Second Family of the Church. It was thought that children brought up in the Society and unmarried adults would be the best members for the First Family of the Church. In this way, it was hoped that there would always be a steady supply of new Shakers in all branches of the Church.

If a married couple with offspring joined, or a person brought children into the society, these young people became part of the Children’s Order, located at the Church Family. Though all Shaker families had children, in general, the gathering orders had relatively few. For example, in 1860, the North Family at New Lebanon had five children under fifteen years of age out of a family of fifty-three members. This was 9% of the whole. By contrast, the Church Order had fifty-eight children out of a membership of 212 or 27% of the whole. That year, the remaining five families at New Lebanon collectively had eighty-one children. Thus the society at New Lebanon had 143 children out of a total population of 550 or 26% of the whole.<sup>27</sup> As noted previously, when entire families joined, they were sometimes sent to live for a time at nearby out-families in order to “gather their union.” Guided by elders from the gathering order, they could prepare themselves gradually for Shaker life.

In reality, the gathering order never really worked as intended. Not long after they were set up, a change in the Shaker policy of taking in children made novitiate families lose some of their importance. Mother Lucy Wright did not favor taking in children without their parents; therefore few young people in this category were accepted. Starting within two years of her death in 1821, however, thousands of children were brought to the Shakers to raise, and Believers, in turn, contacted orphan asylums and poorhouses to get children. The emphasis shifted from trying to attract adults to raising large numbers of children with the hope that they would join when they came of age. Shakerism continued to attract adult converts but these were a small number compared to the number of children who

were accepted. Starting in the 1840s this became a very serious problem since few children remained Shakers into adulthood. For example, of the 143 children at New Lebanon in 1860, only eighteen or 12.5% persevered till death as Shakers. The situation was similar elsewhere. During the entire history of Sabbathday Lake (New Gloucester), Maine, from 1794 to the present, Brother Delmer C. Wilson (1873-1961) was the only boy who stayed his whole life as a Shaker who joined the Church Family without parents. By 1850 there were ominous gaps in membership, most notably in adults between the ages of twenty and fifty. By the 1860s, the overall decline in adults could no longer be masked by taking in children, though



North Lot Family, Pleasant Hill, Kentucky  
(Collection of the United Society of Shakers, Sabbathday Lake, Maine)

that policy continued. The crisis in membership brought a final adaptation of the Gathering Order.

By the 1860s, even the most optimistic Shakers were feeling deep concern over a serious decline in adult membership. In 1870, the Lebanon Ministry directed all of the societies to set aside a certain time each week to pray for more converts.<sup>28</sup> The next year, a newspaper (*The Shaker*) out of the Gathering Order at Watervliet, New York, was begun as a means to reach out to the world. Shakers from the gathering orders started going out to friendly churches and city concert halls to preach and conduct Shaker meetings. Meanwhile, since the gathering orders had not been able to fill up the ranks with members, there was some agitation for all Shaker families to recruit and directly take in new members. This feeling was very strong at New Lebanon since many Shakers in the other families disagreed with the preaching and writings of North Family Elder Frederick Evans. This frustration may also have been fueled by the failure of Daniel Fraser



East Family, South Union, Kentucky  
(Library Collection, Shaker Museum at South Union, Kentucky)

at Shirley. Fraser, a stalwart member, had been sent to the North Family at Shirley from New Lebanon to try to build up the Gathering Order. In spite of all of his efforts of preaching, welcoming visitors, and the publication of two works extolling the Shaker religion, his efforts came to nothing.<sup>29</sup> He decided to return to New Lebanon in 1877, a very disappointed man. If the gathering orders seemed unable to attract and keep members, what would be lost if every family tried its best to gather people? Accordingly, on December 28, 1879, the Lebanon Ministry gave permission for "the experiment of making both the Church and other families gathering families where there is ability to care for young converts."<sup>30</sup> For those at New Lebanon, this may have been a major change, but there is evidence that in some Shaker societies, Shaker families outside of the gathering order always accepted a few adult members directly from the world.<sup>31</sup> By the 1850s, for example, at Watervliet, Ohio, there was just a single Shaker family, so all of the converts would have had to come into the Center (Church) Family. At Alfred, Maine, the North or Gathering Order was closed in 1863. The Second Family is said have then become the Gathering Order.<sup>32</sup> This may not be true, however, since that family was used as the residence of older members, and manuscripts records indicate that specific missions were made to attract adults into the Church Family at Alfred.<sup>33</sup> Finally, probationary covenants indicate that other societies did not wait for the Ministry to give permission before extending the Gathering Order to all families. For example, at South Union, Kentucky, the Church Family took in 310 adults between 1876 and 1917. Meanwhile at the North Family of South Union, between 1875 and 1898, 237 adults joined. At the East Family there, which was the official Gathering Order for the society, 237 adults joined between 1875 and 1915. It has been said that no adults joined the Shakers after the Civil War. Clearly, this can be seen as false since 775 people came into the community from 1875 until 1917 just at South Union alone.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile at Canterbury, 867 people joined the society between 1860 and 1920, though the majority of these were children.<sup>35</sup> The gathering orders in almost all of the societies still existed, but they functioned in a new context. The blurring of the purpose of the gathering orders by extending their function to all other families and the long-held emphasis on taking children, helped transform the gathering orders to be much like any other family. This is especially true since as time went on more and more Shakers were living at the novitiate families for their entire lives.



It would seem that with the influx of new arrivals, Shaker membership problems should have eased. Sadly for the Believers, very few adults that came in stayed any length of time. As the Shakers continued to plummet in membership, families were consolidated. By 1890 although there were sixteen Shaker societies, only twelve still had gathering order families, though it cannot be assumed that each was still functioning as such:

<b>Name of Society</b>	<b>Name of Gathering Family in 1890</b>
NEW LEBANON	NORTH FAMILY AND UPPER CANAAN
WATERVLIET	SOUTH FAMILY
HANCOCK	EAST FAMILY
HARVARD	SOUTH FAMILY
ENFIELD, CONN.	SOUTH FAMILY
ENFIELD, N.H.	NORTH FAMILY
CANTERBURY	NORTH FAMILY
UNION VILLAGE	WEST FRAME FAMILY
WHITE WATER	NORTH FAMILY
SOUTH UNION	EAST FAMILY
PLEASANT HILL	NORTH LOT FAMILY

By 1910, only seven of the twelve societies still had families that had once been gathering orders: New Lebanon, Watervliet, Hancock, Enfield (New Hampshire), Canterbury, White Water and South Union. At this point in Shaker history almost total emphasis was being placed on raising children who might become Shakers when they came of age. Many of the societies were so small and had so few men, that this seemed like the only alternative even to those Shakers who thought that the religion could survive. Very few attempts were being made to attract adults into the society. Interested adults had to come to the Shakers and virtually none of them stayed. Ten years later, only New Lebanon and Watervliet had families that once had been gathering orders and these were to become the final families to close in those societies.

After 1920, Leila Taylor, second eldress of the North Family at New Lebanon, was the only Shaker still actively working to welcome adults into the society. With her unexpected death in 1923, the North Family no longer had its own distinct set of elders. Until it closed in 1947, the North Family was supervised by members of the Lebanon Ministry, who also had other families at New Lebanon under their care. After 1925, the family became the final home for Shakers who had come from other communities that had closed. In this way, the original gathering order of the Shakers had



been transformed into a microcosm of the Shakerism that once was. The gathering order had faded away long before the surviving communities were dissolved. Its existence has been almost completely obscured by the passage of time and other Shaker issues of survival.

## Notes

1. Elizabeth Shaver and Ned Pratt, *The Watervliet Shakers and their 1848 Shaker Meeting House* (Albany: The Shaker Heritage Society), 3; The meetinghouse at Ashfield and Enfield are mentioned in *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Mother Ann Lee and The Elders with Her*, 191, 282. Brother Arnold Hadd of the Shaker society at Sabbathday Lake is the source for the information on the meetinghouse at Turners Falls, Massachusetts.
2. Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells, *A Summary View of the Millennial Church* (Albany: C. Van Benthuysen, 1848), 58-59.
3. The term four-square refers to the appointment of two men and two women to hold positions of trust and care.
4. Rufus Bishop, "Book of records, with copies of the covenant, transfers, and appointments," 1802-1824, Western Reserve Historical Society (I:B-30), 64.
5. The three orders were called the First Family, Second Family, and Third Family of the Church.
6. *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790*; New York (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1908), p. 60.
7. In addition to members listed in *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States*; New York, p. 60, numbers must be included from "the Hill" which was actually in the town of Hancock, Massachusetts. The Shakers living there were part of the New Lebanon community not the Hancock society. Most notable among this group was the family of John Spiers which numbered 24 in 1790.
8. The North Family Established 105 years Ago," *Chatham Courier*, in newspaper clipping file, Emma B. King Library, the Shaker Museum, Old Chatham, New York.
9. Isaac Newton Youngs, "Names and ages of those who have been gathered into the church: with the place of their birth and time of admittance, departures, death, etc." Winterthur Library. Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Edward Deming Andrews Shaker Collection, 1078, pp. 4-5.
10. *Biographic Memoir of Calvin Green*, Vol. 1, manuscript copy made starting November 22, 1868 by Otis Sawyer. Shaker Library, Sabbathday Lake, Maine, p. 50.
11. Ibid.
12. These figures are from the *Second Census of the United States* taken in 1800.
13. "Records Kept by Order of the Church," 1780-1855, New York Public Library, 7, p. 16.

14. Although outside the scope of this study, it may be interesting for some to learn that after starting the Gathering Order, the Ministry took on the re-organization of the Order of Families. Starting in 1811 at New Lebanon, the Order of Families was dissolved. All of the small families headed by prominent Shaker farmers were consolidated into the Second Family of the Church with branches at the East House and the South House. Thus all of the Shakers not in the Gathering Order were brought into the Church Order. The East Family and the South Family eventually were developed out of this extended Second Family. At that time, the courts or orders of the Church at New Lebanon were reduced to two orders of the Church, and collectively called the First Family of the Church or simply the Church Family. These two orders of the Church shared the same trustees but lived on two separate farms. This continued until 1896 when the Second Order of the Church was dissolved. Other Shaker villages eventually dissolved the Order of Families and substituted a Second Family instead. Sometimes this Second Family also had a name from the direction of the compass from the Meetinghouse. For example, at Tyringham, Enfield, (Connecticut), Shirley, and Harvard the Second Family was called the North Family. At Enfield, New Hampshire, it was the South Family while at Watervliet, New York it was the West Family.
15. The term “young believer” had nothing to do with chronological age, but rather it described all those who joined the Shakers after the first in-gathering of 1787. A person who had joined at the time or before the start of the communities was known as an “old believer.” This appellation was cherished as the nineteenth-century progressed and fewer and fewer could claim the distinction. Another commonly used term, “Mother’s First Born” or “Mother’s First Born Children” referred to those who were grown up when the Gospel was opened in 1780.
16. The Ministry of New Lebanon had many names over the years. After 1861, it was called the Ministry of Mount Lebanon. After 1893, it was also called the Central Ministry. Starting in 1918 until its dissolution in 1957, it was known as the Parent Ministry. After its reconstitution in 1957 till its end in 1988 it was also known as the Parent Ministry. For the purpose of simplicity, the term Lebanon Ministry will be used.
17. In those times, the orders of the Church were considered the elite and no mixing with the Shakers from other families was deemed acceptable. At Watervliet and New Lebanon, and possibly Hancock, the Church even worshipped separately from the Families.
18. “Records Kept by Order of the Church,” 17
19. *Biographic Memoir of Calvin Green*, 82.
20. From *Daniel Goodrich’s Journal* “*The Number of Believer’s in America.*” Though not dated, this page in the journal was almost certainly written on October 10, 1803. This journal is located in the library of Hancock Shaker Village.
21. *Biographic Memoir of Calvin Green*, 82.
22. *Journal (copy) of the “important transactions” of the South and East Families*, WRHS V.B.35.
23. *A Collection of the Names and Ages of the Believers at Lebanon and Watervliet ... including all that belong to Mother’s Bishopric, and other places, 1819*, WRHS III.A.17.
24. The number fifty-one represents the collective total all the societies in the East ever attained. There never were fifty-one Shaker families in the East at any one time. For

example, in 1819, the West Family at Canterbury closed, but in 1820, the Square House Family in New Gloucester opened. In 1863, the South Family was begun at New Lebanon while that same year the North Family at Alfred was closed. In addition, the two families at Sodus were closed in 1836 when that society moved to Groveland. The Florida community was not even founded until 1895. By that time Tyringham had been closed for 20 years.

25. The number thirty-five represents the full extent of the number of families that each village attained. There never were thirty-five at any one time. For example, Union Village had consolidated into five families by 1852. The South Family was not even purchased for a Gathering Order at White Water until 1855. By that time Watervliet, Ohio, had just one family. West Union closed in 1827 and Georgia did not open until 1897.
26. *A Collection of the Names and Ages of the Believers at New Lebanon and Watervliet ... including all that belong to Mother's Bishopric, September 1819*, WRHS III.A.17. The high percentage of Young Believers at Watervliet may be accounted for in two ways. After New Lebanon became the "Center of Union" in 1787, emphasis shifted away from Watervliet. In 1803 there were only sixty-one Shakers there. Around this time and for many years after, very large families such as the Buckinghams and the Wellses joined. These families had a high perseverance rate so the ranks at Watervliet swelled significantly.
27. United States Census of Population: 1860 4 July, New Lebanon, New York
28. *A Register of Incidents and Events ... kept by Giles B. Avery. 1859 October 20-1874 Dec. 2*. New York Public Library Shaker Manuscript Collection.
29. Fraser's pamphlet and booklet published while he was at Shirley are *The Divinity of Humanity the Cornerstone of the Temple of the Future* and *The Divine Afflatus*.
30. *Ministries Journal*, kept by Giles B. Avery, Mount Lebanon, Columbia County, N.Y. 1874 Jan 1-1890 Jan. 1, New York Public Library, Shaker Manuscript Collection, item 5.
31. This was especially true at New Gloucester, Maine. Until, 1819, there was no gathering order in that society. When the Poland Hill Family was created as a gathering order that year, it was populated with people from the newly closed Gorham, Maine, society. As time went on, except for children, there was little movement of personnel between Poland and New Gloucester.
32. Harland H. Eastman, *Alfred, Maine The Shakers and The Village* (Sanford, Me.: Wilson's Printers, 1986), 14.
33. Conversation with Brother Arnold Hadd of the Church Family of Shakers at Sabbathday Lake, April 20, 2010. Brother Arnold lived with the last survivors from Alfred and has done extensive oral histories with them.
34. Covenant Book [East Family], Covenant Book [North Family], Covenant Book [Center Family], Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham and Mt. Lebanon, N.Y., items 15057-15059
34. Richard C. Borges, "The Canterbury Shakers: A Demographic Study," *Historical New Hampshire* 48, nos. 2 & 3 (Summer/Fall 1993): 166.