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Communion in the South Union: An Archaeological Analysis of a Shaker Colony

Daniel Tallent
Western Kentucky University

COMMUNION IN THE SOUTH UNION:

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF A SHAKER COLONY

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By

Daniel Tallent

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Western Kentucky University
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CE/T Committee:

Darlene Applegate, Advisor

Larry Snyder

Jerry Daday

Approved by

_____

Advisor
Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There are few constants when examining the historical record. Empires rise and fall, intellectual trends go out of favor. Economic well-being climbs and then plummets, and the populace goes from satiation to starvation. An ideology that is held as noble in one decade is decried as abhorrent in the next; a century later, it is once again the pinnacle of conduct.

One of the few things a historian can be assured of when examining a given era – no matter when, and no matter where – is that someone believes the world is ending.

This belief – that the present is only a fleeting moment before a final, spectacular apocalypse – exists in some form in nearly every society that has ever been examined. A society's eschatology is often a part of its religious landscape, and most beliefs concerning the end of the world are rooted in that society's religion. However, even the most secular society often finds an eschatological outlet if faith is on the wane. We need only examine the language used to describe potential nuclear war in our own society, especially during the cold war years. Only a few years ago it was not at all uncommon to hear discussion of a "nuclear apocalypse" or "nuclear Armageddon". And, while such threats were serious and very real, it is telling that this destructive potentiality – wrought

by the hands of man alone – was so often described in terms that were explicitly supernatural. Clearly, if a group does not have a shared apocalypse they can find one.

1. People choose to react to this idea of the end of the world in many different ways. Most merely choose not to think about it and continue to live their lives without it as a

concern. Others, however, feel the need to prepare for this coming end, and begin to live in such a way as to make themselves ready for what that end entails. These ideas and the movements that arise from those ideas – known as millenarian movements – can take many different forms. Some movements actually set out to fulfill the conditions for the end of time themselves. For instance, in the early modern period, many Eastern European Jews embraced a millenarian movement led by Shabbatai Tzvi and began to emigrate to what is now Israel, in order to fulfill one of the tenets of their eschatological beliefs. Other millenarian groups have reacted violently against the world they believe is at an end, and the history of the past century is filled with such bloody events. These tragedies – from Jonestown and Waco to the murderous rampage of the Manson family or the mass suicides of the Heaven's Gate cult – stand as testimony to the power of this idea.

At other times, however, millenarian groups are more benign. Believers instead try to make the world ready for the end through changing their behavior in what they see as a positive way. In other words, they try to ready the world for its final transition through being good and living just lives according to their own standards. The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing – commonly and colloquially known as the Shakers – were one such millenarian group. From the end of the 18th century to the present day, the Shakers have been a part of the American religious and cultural landscape in the eastern United States (Stein 1992).

Today, there are fewer than ten Shakers left in the world, living in the last active Shaker colony in Maine (Stein 1992). However, at the height of its influence the Shakers were a well-known and influential sect. From their first successful village in colonial New York they sent missionaries to set up colonies as far away as the Ohio Valley and Kentucky. One such colony was located just outside of Bowling Green. Known as South Union, it was the last remaining Shaker village in the west before its closing in the 1920s. It was subsequently purchased by private investors, who demolished most of the original buildings and converted the rest into private residences. The village was eventually purchased again by a nonprofit organization called the Friends of South Union. Their goal is to reconstruct South Union as it existed during its prime in the mid-nineteenth century. Since archaeological evidence is required to do so, several excavations have taken place there over the years. The most extensive was carried out by Dr. Jack M. Schock of Western Kentucky University; however, the artifacts recovered during these excavations have never been fully analyzed, nor the results published.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, I will begin with a brief explanation of the Shakers, their history, and their beliefs. The purpose in this is not to provide a detailed discussion of these topics; such information can easily be found elsewhere, such as in Stein's *The Shaker Experience in America* (1992). However, despite the fact that Shakers made their livelihood in much the same way as their non-Shaker neighbors – through agriculture, light industry and small goods production – the Shaker lifestyle was, at the same time, fundamentally different from that of their peers. Their unique beliefs – among them the doctrines of celibacy, communal ownership, and pacifism, as well as a general spirit of industry and innovation – mean that to truly understand a Shaker

archaeological site the researcher must have an understanding of the ways that the Shakers set themselves apart.

The second part of this paper is the analysis and interpretation of the archaeological data itself. In doing this I will attempt to reconstruct Shaker lifestyle as it existed at South Union in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such topics as what the Shakers produced, what they traded for, and how Shaker archaeological sites differ from more typical historical American habitation sites will be examined in detail. The analysis of the site is especially important. The Shakers were in many ways a mysterious sect; our historical and scholarly accounts on them are often in conflict, and their contentious nature and beliefs make it difficult to know when such accounts are accurate. Hopefully, through analysis of the artifacts recovered by Dr. Schock, we will be able to separate fact from fiction and recreate Shaker life as accurately and scientifically as possible.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW

The purpose of this paper is not to explore the origins and development of the United Society of Believers, which has been done more extensively and effectively before, most notably by Dr. Stephen Stein (1992) and Dr. Julia Neal (1947,1982), and is an undertaking beyond the scope of this project. It is, rather, to be an analysis of a particular archaeological site formerly inhabited by that Society – specifically, the Shaker village of South Union located outside of Bowling Green, colloquially known as Shakertown.

Shaker lifestyle in the past two centuries was different from their neighbors in several key ways, and to understand Shaker archaeology researchers must understand these differences and the impact they had on the Shaker material landscape. Researchers must also have an account of how South Union was founded and its subsequent development, both as a guide to understanding the site at South Union and to judge whether or not extant historical accounts are incomplete or inaccurate. Therefore, a short summary of the movement's history, their beliefs, and their societal organization follows.

The Manchester Years

It is common to think of the Shakers as uniquely American. Plainly clad, serious, and possessed of a peculiar devotion, they remind Americans so much of the image of the

Pilgrim Fathers that it seems inevitable that they be associated exclusively with the United States. However, like the Pilgrims themselves, the true origin of the Shakers was not in America but on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, in England. It was there, in the town of Manchester, that we can say that the Shaker movement has its oldest roots.

The earliest references to the Shakers identify the group as the followers of a couple named James and Jane Wardley, in the late 1760s. This congregation was known as the Shaking Quakers or 'Shakers' because of their "enthusiastic" religious practices. "Enthusiastic" was a derisive term used by outsiders to designate a religious group that was both outside the mainstream and known for emotionally charged behavior (Stein 1992). A basic parallel can be drawn to groups today called "charismatic", or groups emphasizing unplanned and unorganized forms of worship, the reverence for individual spiritual leaders, and an emphasis on the emotional and experiential aspect of religious worship. Regarding the latter, the Wardley congregation became so known because of their distinctive shaking motions during worship, which they attributed to spiritual contact (Stein 1992).

A mutually antagonistic relationship with larger society, evident years before the Shaker group was formally established, would be characteristic of Shakers for decades to come. On one hand the Shakers made no secret of their disapproval of larger society, their conviction of its innate sinfulness and their own exclusive righteousness (Stein 1992). Their religious services, which in addition to their shaking also featured "screeching" which "disturb[ed] whole neighborhoods" and "singing and dancing" to the point of exhaustion, did nothing to endear them to larger Manchester society (Stein 1992). At times they even invaded and disrupted local Anglican congregations in the

middle of worship, hoping to use these disruptions as a vehicle to communicate their message (Stein 1992). The local populace repaid this confrontational behavior with repeated arrests from the civil authorities (Stein 1992: 5) and occasional mob violence from others (Stein 1992: 4).

It is not surprising that such a revolutionary group took hold in Manchester, given the historical context. By the late eighteenth century the Industrial Revolution had reached Manchester, and most of the town was employed in the mining industry, infamous for its terrible working conditions and effects on the body. Poverty, squalor and want were facts of life for the Wardley congregation, and it is little wonder that they began both to look to the next world and to criticize harshly the one in which they lived (Campion 1990). One of the most common patterns we see with millenarian movements is that they are more likely to arise when social and economic conditions are strained (Tarlow 2002), and this was definitely the case for the people of Manchester who adopted the Shaker gospel.

One of the Wardleys' congregants was a woman named Ann Lee, the uneducated wife of a blacksmith named Abraham Standerin. Her story is illustrative in showing the sort of living conditions the early Shakers dealt with: she was married at a young age and soon gave birth to a series of children. None of these survived to adulthood; most of them died in infancy, though a daughter, Elizabeth, lived to the age of six (Campion 1990: 13). If such a high rate of infant mortality was typical of Manchester residents, then living conditions must have been poor indeed.

Lee was known both for being very active in the Wardley congregation and having repeated run-ins with the local authorities. Lee was one of the most prominent "repeat offenders" in the Wardley congregation, being arrested several times in the summer of 1773 alone (Stein 1992). Her constant legal battles, even at this early date, make her stand out as a notable member of the congregation who was ready and willing to go to extreme ends for her faith.

As the Shakers' relationship with non-Shakers was crystallizing, the earliest tenets of Shaker belief were beginning to form, as well. They believed in a rapidly approaching world apocalypse. Due to their emphasis on direct spiritual inspiration as opposed to education, women and men were accorded equal access to God. Finally, seeing the world as innately sinful, they believed in the inevitable corruption of the Anglican Church and refused to acknowledge its leaders or authority. Given their antagonistic relationship with local authorities it is little wonder that Ann Lee and a few other Shakers left England for what was then the American colonies in the spring of 1774 (Stein 1992).

Colonial Beginnings

The first few years after the Shakers arrived in America are shrouded in mystery; it seems that, upon arriving in this new country, Lee and her fellow Shakers disappeared from the historical record. We do not even know the exact date or location of their arrival. Some have suggested Ththat the Shakers thought it wise not to immediately alienate their new neighbors, a position supported by Stephen Stein (1992). Instead, the Shakers seem to have chosen to wait until they were securely established in the

community before they regrouped. If the Shakers did continue their unorthodox religious practices in these early years, they did it in a much more understated way, as it is unlikely that their confrontational actions would have been any better received in the colonies than they were in England, despite the heady religious atmosphere that immediately preceded the Revolutionary War (Stein 1992).

However, it is clear that the Shakers never abandoned their original beliefs or their goal of spreading their millenarian gospel. A few years later, the original cohort from Manchester, along with a few new converts, moved as a group to a manor to the northwest of Albany, New York, a site known as Niskeyuna. So begins the period of Shaker history known as the Age of the Founders (Stein 1992).

Unfortunately for scholars, this period is scarcely easier to recreate than the previous one. By this point, Ann Lee had began to change in status from a prominent and outspoken member of the Shakers into a more traditional charismatic religious leader, viewed as semi-divine by her followers. As Lee herself was illiterate, the early Shakers in turn had little reverence for the written word, eschewing written tenets, creeds and dogma in favor of a more experiential and revelatory approach to religious life (Stein 1992).

As a result of this view toward the written word, very few records from the Shakers themselves exist from this period. The only extant accounts of these early Shakers were recorded by their opponents, both apostate converts and members of other religious congregations who saw the Shakers as a dangerous and immoral cult. Needless to say, these accounts are extremely biased, depicting the Shakers as a society so

debauched as to shame Caligula's Rome – unrestrained and forced sexual practices, drunkenness, mutilation, and general depravity are common themes. Since these all of these are common charges aimed at new and threatening religious groups, it is extremely difficult to separate fact from fantasy and determine the reality of the life of the Shakers in 1780. It is clear, however, that the Shakers had resumed their antagonistic relationship with the law; both Ann Lee and some of her followers served time in jail for their activities in the early 1780s (Stein 1992).

If the Shakers had hoped to find a society more permissible toward their lifestyle in America, they were sorely disappointed. Strictly apolitical with a pacifist streak, Shakers supported neither the Loyalists nor the Patriots, a policy which endeared them to neither. In particular, Shaker refusal of military service made them extremely suspect in the eyes of their fellow citizens. Likewise, their proclamations of being the only true people of God made even their most fervent neighbors denounce them as a fanatical cult (Stein 1992).

Given this mutual antagonism toward larger society – both on religious and secular grounds – it is no surprise that the Shakers began to live in a secluded, communal fashion. Apparently, their lifestyle – food and lodging, general egalitarianism (with, of course, the exception of reverence for elders such as Ann Lee), and a sense of togetherness - made the Shakers an attractive sect for some. If this seems strange to us today, we must remember that in a country in the midst of an extended and divisive revolution, the idea of guaranteed sustenance and acceptance must have seemed a powerful draw indeed. Also, the fact that Shaker worship was dynamic and highly

emotional no doubt appealed to those who were uncomfortable with more staid and traditional religious practice (Stein 1992).

Whatever the motivation of these new converts, by 1781 Ann Lee and a few of her followers left the community at Niskeyuna to spread the Shaker gospel around the greater New England region. They would not return for more than two years (Stein 1992).

During this period the Shaker movement was growing, both as a result of converts at Niskeyuna and "abroad". Beliefs that would later characterize the Shakers – most importantly, celibacy in addition to isolation and communitarianism – had begun to crystallize as doctrine. No longer an isolated enclave of sectarians, Shaker theology had now made inroads from Niskeyuna to sites in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island (Stein 1992).

However, the community was rocked in 1784 by two deaths – the first being the death of William Lee, Ann Lee's brother and prominent Shaker elder. Ann Lee herself followed William a couple of months later. Many religious groups could hardly have survived the loss of their charismatic leader; however, Lee was seceded by a close disciple, one of the original Manchester Shakers named James Whittaker. Whittaker assumed leadership of the community for several years, allowing the community to ride out the turbulent aftershocks of losing Ann Lee. When Whittaker himself died a few years later, in 1787, another follower, a former Baptist elder named Joseph Meacham, stepped up as leader, a move that was seen as spiritually ordained (Stein 1992). Meacham was a shrewd organizer who established a policy by which Shaker elders could

appoint their successors. With a working system of secession established, the Shakers were able to remain an influential group even without Lee to guide them (Stein 1992).

The Meacham Model

Ironically, it is Joseph Meacham, and not the Founders themselves, who is probably most responsible not only for the continued survival of the Shakers as an organized sect, but for many of the practices that later became associated with that group. While, as we have said, Shaker beliefs had been gradually becoming more rigid for years, it was under Meacham's direction the Shaker organizational system and hierarchy was established and accepted (Stein 1992).

Under the Meacham system, Shakers were divided into three "courts" distinguished by "age, spiritual accomplishments, and degree of separation from the world" (Stein 1992). The first and most important court was composed of adult Shakers with a degree of authority in the community. Younger, less spiritually attuned Shakers were in the second court, and the third court was composed of the elderly. Each court was headed by elders and eldresses who had authority over the courts (Stein 1992). While the tri-court system was not, ultimately, a widely-practiced system of organization, it did serve as a prototype for the multi-family system later used by the Shakers and established the groundwork for the subsequent Shaker hierarchy. Finally, and most significantly, Meacham chose a woman named Lucy Wright as his "partner in the ministry" (Stein 1992). The effects of this appointment were twofold. On one hand, Lucy Wright was by all accounts a very capable administrator, spiritual minister, and organizer – someone who could not only console her congregants but also direct them

effectively toward a common purpose. Her aptitude as a leader of the Shakers shaped the actions of the community until her death many years later (Stein 1992).

However, despite Wright's direct contributions to the sect, the most far-reaching consequence of this appointment was its firm and final reaffirmation of Shaker spiritual equality. Men and women had always been on more equal footing in the Shaker community than in others. When Ann Lee served as the *de facto* head of the church, it would have seemed perhaps absurd for other women to accept the thoroughly subordinate religious role expected from most Christian denominations of the era (Stein 1992). However, most Shaker leaders after Ann Lee's death were male, and it would have been entirely plausible for the sect to become as male-dominated as any other religious group of the period. Meacham's appointment of Wright as a co-minister, and her subsequent performance in that position, contributed to the more egalitarian role of women in the Shaker power structure. However, even for the Shakers such radical change came slowly (Stein 1992).

Now that Meacham had achieved an established and accepted position of leadership, he began the process of changing the Shakers from a scattered collection of individual families and loners into a series of organized "villages" with a functioning power structure. The center of authority in New York State was moved from Niskeyuna to New Lebanon, to the southeast, which was more accessible from the east and thus closer to the rest of New England, where their conversion efforts were bearing fruit (Stein 1992).

Finally, it was also under the administration of Meacham and Wright that some of the earliest Shaker writings on their own religion were penned. While the development of Shaker theology and apologetics is an interesting one, it is outside the scope of this paper. Sources written by the Shakers themselves, such as White and Taylor's *Shakerism: Its Meaning and Message* (1972), or non-Shaker scholarly commentary, as found in Stephen Stein's *The Shaker Experience in America* (Stein 1992), would be respected sources for such information.

It was at New Lebanon that the first true Shaker village was formed. While the Shakers at Niskeyuna had lived communally in a given area, it was not until the move to New Lebanon that the organizational system developed under Meacham and Wright came to its full fruition and began to be expressed overtly in architecture and intrasite spatial patterning. The systems tested and perfected there, such as the tri-court system, living arrangements and communal organization, would become a template for future Shaker villages (Stein 1992). As these systems were perfected, New Lebanon became more stable and more solvent, and eventually some of the New Lebanon Shakers were sent out to help other Shaker enclaves adapt the same model to their own communities (Stein 1992). The Shaker village model will be discussed more in-depth below.

Meacham died in 1796 (Stein 1992). The decade under his guidance had drastically changed the landscape of Shaker society. However, it is with his ministerial partner and successor, Lucy Wright,that the story of South Union begins.

The Western Missionaries

Upon Joseph Meacham's death, Lucy Wright acceded to the position of *de facto* head of the Shaker church. While many among the male leadership had their reservations about having a woman as their governor, Lucy Wright proved to be an extremely capable and intelligent leader who earned the respect of her colleagues through her perceptive and practical approach to managing Shaker society (Stein 1992).

There were many problems facing Shaker society during Wright's administration, most notably a drain on Shaker membership and resources. The Shakers always had problems maintaining their numbers; some members would spend a few years as Shakers, become disenchanted, and leave the community. During the Meacham years, few attempts had been made to replenish these lost members; too much energy had been focused on organizing and managing the Shakers themselves. There was also the perennial drain on resources, most notably the constant heavy fines the Shakers had to pay to keep their male members exempt from military conscription (Stein 1992).

Wright realized that the answer to these problems was a renewal of missionary efforts to bring more new believers into the community. As a celibate society, they were entirely unable to replenish members on their own; therefore, a more vigorous program was necessary to ensure the sect's survival. She sent Shaker missionaries into New England and the Ohio Valley. These were fruitful expeditions, and the Shakers gained converts in the West as they had in New England. The Ohio Valley was fertile ground for conversion efforts, as it was already undergoing a period of religious awakening, often manifested in a strong charismatic streak (Stein 1992).

The Shakers converted individuals, families and even whole congregations (Procter-Smith 1985). However, the same pressures against the Shakers existed in the West as they had in New England, and these new Shakers were obliged once again to isolate themselves from the world and practice self-sufficiency (Stein 1992). Also, in order to prevent future sectarian disputes, the new Shaker villages were clearly instructed in the Shaker hierarchical model; being schismatics themselves, Shaker leaders knew all too well how easily groups could become divided over their religion (Stein 1992).

It was during this heady period of conversion and consolidation that the village of South Union was first established. It rose from a small gathering of newly-confessed converts who settled at a site near the Gasper River in 1807 (Neal 1982). Initially the site was simply called the Gasper community; the name was changed to South Union shortly after its founding (Neal 1982). This gathering, the westernmost of all the Shaker colonies (Stein 1992), would soon grow into a thriving and prosperous community.

South Union in the Nineteenth Century

The early years of the Shaker community at South Union were marked by constant and strenuous labor. Shakers were known for their tireless devotion to labor, and constructing a functioning and mostly self-sufficient village on the Kentucky frontier took a good deal of labor indeed. They did most of the labor themselves, especially in the early years, and the village itself continued to grow even when the Society itself began to decline. For instance, the last large building at South Union was constructed in 1883, when the membership crisis was beginning to become evident. The sheer number of buildings can be staggering; although no maximum number of buildings for South

Union was constructed in 1883, when the membership crisis was beginning to become evident. The sheer number of buildings can be staggering; although no maximum number of buildings for South Union is on any extant record (Cook 2006), a comparable settlement at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky had as many as 266 buildings (Neal 1982). Truly, calling Shaker settlements "villages" was no exaggeration; if anything, it was something of an understatement (Figure 2.1). There is evidence that Shaker settlements gained a certain notoriety for their rapid growth. For instance, President James Monroe and then-General Andrew Jackson visited South Union in 1819 (Neal 1947).

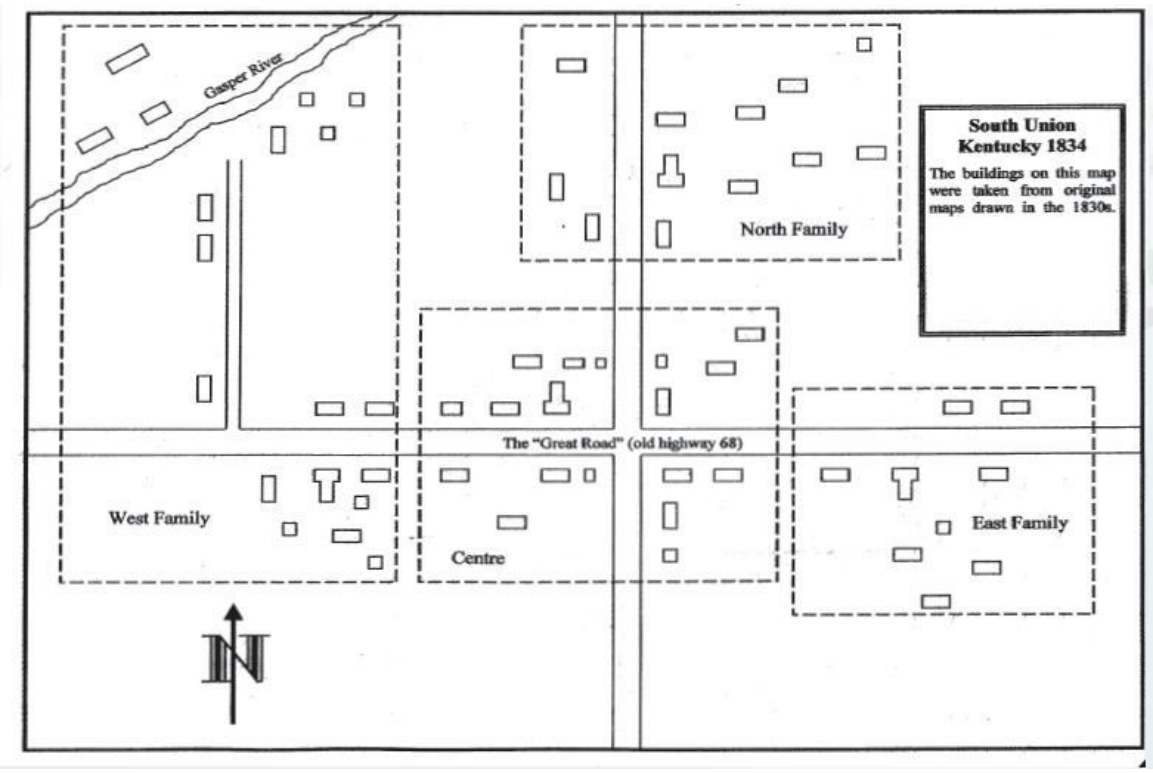

Figure 2.1 Map of South Union in the Early Nineteenth Century (Cook 2006). (Please note that this map is incorrect in the location of the Gasper River, which is several kilometers north of South Union).

Despite the relatively large size of Shaker settlements, however, Shaker populations never exceeded those of the small towns around them (mostly because, by their own tenet of celibacy, Shaker populations had to be maintained through immigration or large-scale conversion, neither of which happened consistently). Also, a smaller proportion of Shaker buildings were residences, since Shakers lived in large, communal dwellings as opposed to private homes. Most Shaker buildings were, in fact, work areas – workshops, storage buildings, barns, stables, and other places where Shakers worked and stored the items and goods they produced. Shaker villages were meticulously organized; every building had a dedicated and specific purpose (Neal 1982). This was true at South Union as it was at all Shaker villages.

However, the Shakers were not completely self-sufficient. They often had to go to larger and more developed areas to purchase items they themselves could not produce on-site, such as glass or metal goods. Of course, their currency for these transactions was the products of their labor – from brooms to clothing to canned fruit to seeds (Neal 1982). Seeds, in particular, were one of the Shakers' best and most reliable sources of income throughout the nineteenth century, both at South Union and among the Society as a whole (Stein 1992).

Also, millenarians or not, Shakers were not Luddites. They embraced technology whenever they could afford it and had no moral problems with machinery that saved them valuable time. For instance, in 1837, South Union trustees asked their Pleasant Hill colleagues to assist them in duplicating a surprisingly modern water-pump system that allowed Shakers to have access to indoor water sources for their kitchens and washhouses (Neal 1982).

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, South Union continued to grow and become more profitable. One particularly lucrative export was canned fruit (Neal 1982); the Shakers raised "apples, peaches, strawberries, and blackberries" for sale, as well as "cherries, raspberries, grapes, and pears" (Keith 1965: 36-38). An unusual item that was produced was silk (Neal 1982). Shakers grew their own mulberry trees and imported large numbers of silk worms. Incredibly, all stages of silk production – from the raw materials and animals necessary for silk production, to harvesting, and finally to weaving the fabric - was done by Shakers (usually women), on-site (Neal 1982). Clothing, tools, and other light goods also supplemented the highly varied Shaker export market; however, agricultural exports, especially the seed business, was their primary source of income (Neal 1982), so much so that seeds eventually became nearly synonymous with Shakers. Species of seeds for sale included beans, beets, carrots, cabbage, corn, lettuce, melons, onions, tomatoes, and many other varieties of plants and fruits, often specializing in several varieties of each plant (Keith 1965). Usually, these seeds were sold by travelling Shaker merchants or trustees (Neal 1982). Later, many of these merchants travelled by railway instead of by horse and wagon; South Union itself was located near a railway line from Louisville to Nashville, an important thoroughfare (Neal 1982). Although the Shakers of South Union remained a small sect, they were influential and prosperous well beyond what their numbers and status would indicate.

The Civil War and the Decline of South Union

Despite the increasing ease of Shaker life through modern conveniences and a growing economic security, forces outside their control would soon force South Union into a crisis. Unfortunately, it was one from which they would never truly recover.

Shakers in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were never fully trusted by larger society, and were often outright despised. The antagonistic attitude of their neighbors often manifested itself in assault, vandalism, robbery, and arson (Stein 1992).

The Civil War only intensified these feelings of distrust; Shakers had the unenviable position of being hated and mistrusted by both the Union and the Confederacy. Unionists, who knew that Shakers were abolitionists and had often been involved in both covert and overt actions to help slaves gain their freedom (Andrews 1953), did not understand why this abolitionist position did not translate into military support for the Union cause. Likewise, the Confederacy distrusted the Shakers because of these very same activities, despite their pacifism and refusal to take up arms for the abolitionist cause (Neal 1982). The Shakers of South Union were in an especially bad position, being located on a major road that linked several vital Confederate sites – both organizationally and militarily (Neal 1982). Shakers knew that, should Kentucky formally join the Confederacy, they would be in real danger of, at best, losing their homes and livelihood; in fact, slave-holding neighbors had been attempting to do drive the Shakers away for years even before the war began (Neal 1982). While these attempts ultimately ended in failure, local animosity continued to grow over time and was only exacerbated by the war (Neal 1982).

Once troop movements began in earnest, the Shakers began to fare even worse. Soldiers were well aware that Shakers were religiously obligated to assist those in need, and the both Federals and Confederates took advantage of this generosity. Often, it reached the point where Shakers were spending most of their time attending to the needs of the soldiers who passed through South Union (Neal 1982). Most of the time, this

relationship was relatively benevolent – such assistance was in fact a tenet of Shaker religion, and usually the soldiers acted genuinely appreciative of the assistance (Neal 1982). Also, Shakers were often moved with pity toward the soldiers, who were often starving and exhausted by the gruesome realities of nineteenth-century warfare (Neal 1982). However, as in all wars, what the military needed began to be taken by force (Neal 1947). Horses were especially prone to confiscation, especially Shaker horses (Neal 1982). As usual, though, the Shaker's worst enemies were not armies or governments but their own neighbors, who viewed their pacifism and relative prosperity during the war years with outrage and anger.

Sadly, the end of the war did not bring an end to troubled times for the Shakers. Their resources depleted, South Union was forced for the first time to hire laborers to assist them in running the village. When the trustees hired freed blacks, it did not sit well with the surrounding community, who retaliated with threats (Neal 1982). Violence got worse instead of better as reconstruction went on, and arson became a tragically common occurrence (Neal 1982). One particular fire in 1868 destroyed an estimated $60-75,000 worth of equipment and property (Neal 1982) – a devastating sum even today, but a small fortune in 1868. Incredibly, in 1871 a young Shaker woman set fire to a building herself (Neal 1982), an action symbolic of the decline the society was in by that time.

Economically devastated and with much of the forward-looking spirit gone from the society, South Union was now on a downward trajectory from which it would never recover. While South Union village did not close officially until the 1920s – and, indeed, even continued to build occasionally in the intervening years between the end of the Civil War and the twentieth century – the heyday of Shaker religion in Kentucky was

essentially over. Their population was down to around 100 in 1880; by the time the village closed 40 years later, there were fewer than a dozen (Desroche 1971).

The Closing of South Union

By the declining years of the nineteenth century, the membership crisis had become undeniable (Desroche 1971), and South Union was only a shadow of its former self. The society was aging, and there were few young people left who were interested in becoming the next generation of Shakers. Shakers often attempted to adopt orphans, and while this occasionally made for very dedicated and active Shakers such as Elder Harvey Eades (Neal 1982), such results were far from guaranteed. It was just as likely that these orphans would grow up and leave the community upon coming of age. Despite its comforts and security, many eventually tired of celibacy and what they saw as a lack of close interpersonal relationships within Shaker communities (Foster 1981).

During the next few decades, Shakers gradually began to act less and less like Shakers (Desroche 1971). South Union began accepting non-Shaker boarders in the 1870s (Neal 1982). Some outsiders began to pose as new converts in order to steal from the society (Neal 1982). In 1890, a young Shaker woman eloped and left the compound. Some Shakers began attending outside religious services (Neal 1982). Eventually, others went so far as to buy personal items for themselves, despite still officially having communal property (Neal 1982). The zeal that sustained the community a few decades prior had clearly left South Union. By 1919, it had become clear that the community was too small to continue; only eight Shakers – two men and six women – remained on-site (Neal 1982). Realizing South Union was no longer sustainable, Elder Wallace Shepard

from the New Lebanon colony came and offered the remaining members a choice – either accept a $10,000 gift to live out the remainder of their lives on, or move to New Lebanon and live with some of the few remaining Shakers in America (Neal 1982). Only one, Elder Logan Johns, accepted this offer to continue to live as a Shaker (Neal 1947). South Union closed as a Shaker settlement; it was the last such village outside the New England area (Neal 1982).

CHAPTER 3

SHAKER BELIEFS AND SOCIETY

Shaker beliefs, like the beliefs of any other religious group, were always in a constant state of change. However, there are a few core tenets that remained relatively constant even from the early years. Most of these tenets had an impact on their material culture, and are thus within the scope of this paper.

Celibacy and Membership

One of the earliest tenets of Shaker belief was the necessity of a celibate lifestyle. To abandon lust and sexual desire was, to the Shakers, one of the most important requirements for godly living. Ann Lee herself was particularly firm on this issue, having received an epiphany during an ecstatic vision that sex was the original sin which drove Adam and Eve from Eden (Campion 1990). While the Shakers were hardly the first group to make this statement, they did take the application of that belief to a much further end than most Protestant groups did (Stein 1992).

Committing to a wholly celibate lifestyle brought its own set of problems. Obviously, Shakers were entirely unable to replenish their own numbers from within. The death of a Shaker represented an irreplaceable loss of membership; the death of many Shakers over long periods of time represented a constant threat to the sect's continued survival (Brewer 1986).

The Shakers dealt with this crisis in several ways. The first and oldest way to replenish their numbers was, of course, to convert new members from the surrounding population. This was not always as difficult as one would believe, despite the Shakers' ascetic practices and isolation from larger society. If this seems strange today, it must be remembered that most of the population lived very frugal lives that were almost 'ascetic' by default, simply because of the amount of hardship associated with living in rural nineteenth-century America.

Women were particularly likely to convert, for several reasons. A Shaker woman had considerable autonomy compared to her married non-Shaker counterparts, and the Shaker hierarchy afforded one of the few opportunities for a woman in the nineteenth century to have a position of authority and respect (Sprigg 1998). Widows were also known to be good candidates for conversion. Having little support from the outside world and at constant risk of poverty, widows and widowed mothers stood much to benefit from living as a Shaker, being guaranteed of food, shelter, and support from a community of sympathetic peers (Sprigg 1998).

Although they never converted large portions of the population anywhere they went, during the early years it was not uncommon to convert families or even whole congregations of sympathetic believers. In later years this became less common, as both the level of material comfort and cultural emphasis on progress and secularism become more dominant (Brewer 1986).

However, conversion carried with it its own set of difficulties. It was not uncommon for new converts to become disillusioned with the sect after a few years and

subsequently abandon it. Also, when families joined the Shakers, it was not uncommon for one spouse to leave and for the other to stay. This situation was difficult enough in and of itself. However, when both spouses - Shaker and apostate - sought custody of the children, the resulting legal battles often turned ugly and even violent. Such legal altercations often served as a motivation for angry mobs to vandalize or destroy Shaker property (Stein 1992).

Another way in which Shakers recruited members was through the adoption of local orphans. Adoption of orphans by religious groups was legal in the US until the mid-twentieth century. Adopting orphans was beneficial in several ways. It allowed the Shakers to gain new members while providing a home for children who would have otherwise had few other alternatives. Unlike most orphaned children of the nineteenth century, children adopted by the Shakers were guaranteed food, shelter, and an extensive support group that they could depend on for help. Also, due to the industrious nature of the Shakers, those children raised in Shaker villages were given a degree of education. Shakers were intelligent and relatively progressive in their child-rearing practices. They treated children as individuals and attempted to discover each child's gifts and talents in order to give him or her the most efficient and productive education possible (Andrews 1953). A child raised by the Shakers at least knew how to read and write and, most importantly, had knowledge of farming techniques, carpentry, construction, and other forms of skilled and semi-skilled labor. Of course, this came at a price – the orphans were expected to continue a life of celibate asceticism until their deaths. Children raised within the Shaker villages were given the option of leaving the village once they had

come of age, and it is perhaps unsurprising that many took this opportunity and left "into the world" (Andrews 1953).

Despite the fact that it is not a materially-oriented form of behavior, Shaker celibacy had its impact on their material culture. Shaker villages were sexually segregated, as was the Shaker workday. Despite their belief in the essential equality of the sexes, both temporal and spiritual, Shakers had no moral objections to the common divisions of labor which prevailed in popular society of the day. Men commonly worked in the fields and did heavy labor such as construction and farming; women performed domestic tasks for the village, such as cooking, washing, and cleaning. Although these often-stressed communities used all hands available when necessary, for the most part Shakers continued to work at the same jobs they had in their prior lives outside the community (Stein 1992).

Such a pattern of organization will have a noticeable impact on the archaeological record. Instead of generalized domestic artifacts being found in close proximity, we would expect to find gender-oriented concentrations of artifacts. For instance, we might find groupings of heavy tools such as farming implements and construction equipment all in one area, with a notable absence of cooking utensils, ceramics and other domestic tools. Likewise, an area with lots of ceramics would be unlikely to have heavy tools or other objects associated exclusively with men. This is a contrast to the standard domestic assemblage found in most historical homesteads, where both types of artifacts would be found in close proximity wherever the family was located.

The most noticeable aspect of Shaker material culture affected by their celibacy was, of course, the construction and layout of Shaker villages themselves. Although male and female Shakers often lived in the same buildings (usually, there was a large dormitory for housing each family), they lived in separate areas of those buildings. Even during meetings, Shakers were expected to remain sexually segregated, with women seated on one side of the meetinghouse and men on the other; dances were structured and performed in a similarly segregated manner. This sexual segregation – as well as the concept of group housing – was unusual in the non-Shaker world, and made Shaker buildings a distinct form of their material culture. As with functional artifacts that indicate division of labor, certain domestic artifacts (such as clothing fasteners) should be spatially segregated along gendered lines.

Communitarianism

Shakers in a particular community lived and worked as a single body of believers. An individual Shaker had no true property to call his or her own, nor did the Shaker hierarchy, technically, own any of its property. This seems contradictory at first – after all, did the Shakers not own large farm estates with extensive holdings, light industry, as well as an abundance of raw material and manufactured goods?

The answer is: yes and no. The Shakers did, of course, have land that they lived on, and this land was understood by the surrounding community as being 'owned' by the Shakers. Legally, they were not squatters. Also, not only did Shakers have extensive landholdings, they also had a production capacity far beyond their own needs. Shaker goods – from canned fruit to brooms to clothing to their most famous export, seeds –

were known for their superior quality and their sturdy and utilitarian design (Keith 1965). Some Kentucky Shakers even produced silk, which was widely considered among the best available. Since the industrious Shakers were able to produce far more than their own communities needed, the rest was sold to provide money for the community's needs.

However, there was a catch. Since no Shaker could own property, the property itself had to be legally owned by non-Shakers. In practice, each Shaker village typically had an associated non-Shaker individual known as a trustee, who legally owned all the village property and carried out most of the community's financial and legal transactions (Stein 1992). While this allowed even the higher-ranking Shakers to stay ideologically pure, once again, it came with its own set of problems. Trustees could be notoriously untrustworthy, at times absconding with vast amounts of cash or expensive portable goods (Stein 1992). In the event of a faithless trustee the Shakers had few options for legal recourse, given the nature of the crime and the fact that local authorities were usually prejudiced against the Shakers to begin with. Even when trustees *were* trustworthy, they themselves were often targets of attacks by the surrounding community, both for their association with the mistrusted Shakers and for the simple fact that they were known to be in possession of large sums of money (Stein 1992).

The impact of communitarian principles on Shaker material culture is manifested in the ubiquity of certain types of artifacts that the archaeologist could expect to find at a Shaker site. The lack of private property meant that personal effects – elaborate jewelry, for instance, or other luxury items which only one individual would have had access to – would be considerably rarer than in comparative non-Shaker settlements. Also, unlike

most historical-period sites, a Shaker site should have very few if any coins or other forms of cash money present in Shaker-period artifact collections.

Simplicity and Industry

While a spirit of industry was not technically a part of Shaker dogma, Shakers were widely known for being both very hard-working and for producing practical, high-quality goods. A common Shaker expression, attributed to Ann Lee – "Do your work as if you had a thousand years to live and as if you were to die tomorrow" – expresses well the Shaker attitude toward occupation. Shakers were millenarians, but they had no intention of simply waiting until the end of the world. In the meantime, they chose to dedicate themselves to labor (Stein 1992).

It was the Shaker love of industry and pride in workmanship that most noticeably affects their material culture. First of all, it means that Shakers produced for themselves many of the things they used, such as furniture or tools, and these artifacts often have very distinctly "Shaker" appearances. For instance, Shaker furniture is famous for being very plain and functional during a period when most furniture or other material goods were highly decorated and elaborate in their appearances. Shaker architecture is likewise known for its simplicity and strict emphasis on function and utility. Even Shaker clothing was noted for its simplicity, being as functional and unadorned as the buildings they lived in (Stein 1992).

Also, their highly industrious nature – along with their communal ownership of property – meant that Shakers often had access to goods, such as machinery for light industry, that comparable settlements in the region did not have. While Shakers believed

in living a simple life, they had no moral problems whatsoever with purchasing state-of-the-art industrial technology or labor-saving devices; after all, less labor on one activity meant that those energies could be directed into some other activity. Local communities often resented the Shakers for their access to such equipment, viewing it as giving the Shakers an unfair advantage over those who could not afford it (Stein 1992).

As a result of their open-mindedness toward technology, we could therefore expect to find artifacts associated with this technology that would otherwise seem very out-of-place in a nineteenth-century historical farming community. Machinery would be one category which a Shaker interpretive model would need to take into account. For instance, because of the communal division of labor, Shakers did their laundry using large-scale industrial washing equipment (Pearson and Neal: 1994), while their non-Shaker neighbors would have done their laundry by hand on a much smaller scale. The Shakers were also pioneers in such fields as the development of medicine, and some Shaker villages distilled and formulated various medicinal formulas on-site (Pearson and Neal, 1994). This also required specialized equipment that a Shaker interpretive model would need to accommodate.

Although it was not a religious tenet, Shakers also prized creativeness and ingenuity in devising new technology. The Shakers claimed credit for a wide range of historical inventions, from the simple clothes pin to construction tools (White and Taylor 1972). However, as a rule Shakers did not patent these inventions, as doing so would have conflicted with their teachings on property (White and Taylor 1972). Therefore, we could reasonably expect to find these inventions in wider use and at earlier dates than is found at non-Shaker occupations, given that Shakers were known to travel between

villages to share skills and knowledge that particular villages might be lacking (Keith 1965).

Spiritualism and Ecstatic Worship

Shakers were known from their earliest days for their ecstatic forms of worship, which could be loud, chaotic and even bizarre to the uninitiated viewer. Such worship services often drew curious crowds from the surrounding community (Stein 1992). While it may seem unusual for their style of worship to impact the archaeological record, especially in a group which used no ritual objects or even musical instruments in worship, there are a few ways in which their unique style of worship left a material imprint.

The first way is in the design of Shaker houses of worship. Shaker meetinghouses were designed in such a way that there would be room for their dances during the meetings (Stein 1992). This is in stark contrast to the layout of a typical Protestant church building, which is often filled with heavy, immobile seating which takes up most of the interior space in the sanctuary.

A more noticeable and evident archaeological impact is found in the presence of large, outdoor "holy sites" found in most Shaker communities. During the 1840s, the Shakers went through a phase of intense spiritualism that was spectacular even by their own standards. During these years, mediums, usually young people with little formal power in the Shaker hierarchy, began to make repeated and direct contact with various divine entities, such as angels from heaven or even Ann Lee herself (Stein 1992). The focus became so otherworldly, in fact, that it actually began to affect Shaker productivity.

While the emphasis on this form of direct spirituality was eventually replaced by more sober forms of worship, they did leave one important legacy. During this period, Shaker villages often utilized elaborate outdoor religious loci where they would go and make contact with the divine, holding "feasts" of heavenly food and receiving symbolic gifts from the beings they made contact with (Stein 1992). These locations were often marked with such features as a large, carved stone explaining the nature and origin of the worship area. These worship areas should be associated with the community but notably lacking in a high density of artifacts. They are entirely unique to the Shakers and form an important component of Shaker archaeological study.

Other Beliefs

There were many other beliefs unique to the Shakers that we could discuss at length here – among them their pacifism, their idea of the deity as having both male and female aspects (ie, Jesus Christ and Ann Lee), or their use, rare among Protestants, of public confessions as a tenet of faith. However, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the Shakers (and specifically South Union) from an archaeological perspective, and these beliefs, while interesting, had little tangible effect or Shaker material culture or on the archaeological record.

CHAPTER 4

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Knowing the history of South Union and some of the temporal and ideological forces that made the site what it was, the actual artifacts found at the South Union site must be examined. This section will briefly describe the excavations that have taken place there thus far, the artifact assemblage recovered in those excavations, consider time periods of occupation, and test a Shaker interpretive model based on the given archaeological data.

Previous Research

Unfortunately, the archaeological record of South Union (Site 15LO27) is fragmentary. The site has, up to this point, received only cursory excavations. There have been three major periods of archaeological investigation at South Union by Western Kentucky University. The first excavation period was in 1975, the second in 1980 and 1981, and the final and most thorough in the spring and fall of 1991 (Figure 4.1). These excavations were carried out by Dr. Jack Schock. Other researchers have studied South Union from time to time, including Dr. Kurt Fiegel (Fiegel 1995) and graduate student Matthew Cook (Cook 2006); however, the Schock excavations are the most extensive, and it is the artifacts recovered in these excavations that are the primary focus of this study.

Figure 4.1. Excavations at the South Union Smoke and Milk House in the Fall of 1991 (Davis 1991)

However, despite this series of excavations over a period of decades, the South Union archaeological investigations are far from complete. The excavations were sporadic in nature; the first two excavations only focused on a very small number of excavation units. The final excavation in 1991 was the most thorough, as well as being the most thoroughly documented (Schock 1991),(Davis 1991). However, even this excavation has its problems. The most noticeable obstacle in reconstruction of the excavations is the fact it is difficult to determine provenience for many of the artifacts. Excavation units, which are designated directionally relative to the site datum, often have incomplete coordinates and it is thus impossible to definitively state where an artifact was excavated. For instance, an artifact collection might be listed as being from "1N1E 2N1E" – which, taken alone, would be a one-dimensional line on the site map, rather than

a two-dimensional region which could represent a valid two-dimensional excavation unit (Schock 1991).

The multiple periods of excavation present their own set of problems: multiple site datums make it extremely difficult to determine exactly where the excavations took place in relation to each other without physically going back to South Union and replotting all the datums together as a group (and even this would be very difficult; the datums were determined in relation to various buildings and landmarks, some of which have been moved at South Union in recent years). Finally, most of the artifacts seem to have no depth provenience at all, which, once again, makes it very difficult to reconstruct a stratigraphic profile of the various excavation units. Complicating this issue is the fact that South Union was owned by non-Shakers for a period of several years before being made a historical landmark, meaning that not only was the landscape of the site considerably altered, but there is a very real possibility that not all artifacts recovered were of Shaker origin.

Despite these difficulties, however, it is not impossible to investigate South Union as an archaeological site. Although the artifact collection has its flaws and it is difficult to determine where some artifacts belong, the recovered artifact collection is undeniably extensive, and most of the excavation units nearest to the site datum have some artifacts which are undeniably Shaker, such as cut nails or window glass.

Also, while the provenience data may not always be as extensive as desired, the collection itself, as a whole, can still tell us much about the Shakers. Also, by using such techniques as nail type analysis, window glass analysis, and the use of interpretive

models, we can conduct proper archaeological analysis on the South Union collection and propose what would be part of a Shaker interpretive model.

The current research focuses on artifacts recovered during the 1991 field season. These excavations were carried out primarily in the vicinity of what has been identified as the smokehouse and milkhouse (Figure 4.2). This dual-purpose brick structure, rectangular in shape, has dimensions of 14 meters by 7 meters. The building aligns roughly to magnetic north, and the site datum was placed on the northeast corner of the building (Schock 1991).

Figure 4.2. The Smoke and Milk House, the Focus of the 1991 Excavations at South Union (Cook 2006).

Excavation units were almost always 1x1m squares, except in the case of a single feature and two units that were extended or shortened slightly. There were five excavation units that abutted the east side of the building, mostly placed at intervals of one meter, as well as one excavation unit three meters east of the east side of the

building. Four 1x1m excavation units were placed one meter south of the south side of the building, most of them at intervals of four meters (Figure 4.3). They were placed one meter from the south side of the building because of a modern-period sidewalk that borders the south side of the building. Of these nine identifiable units from the 1991 excavation, seven of them had artifacts that were recovered from these units; artifact associations on the other two units are unclear.

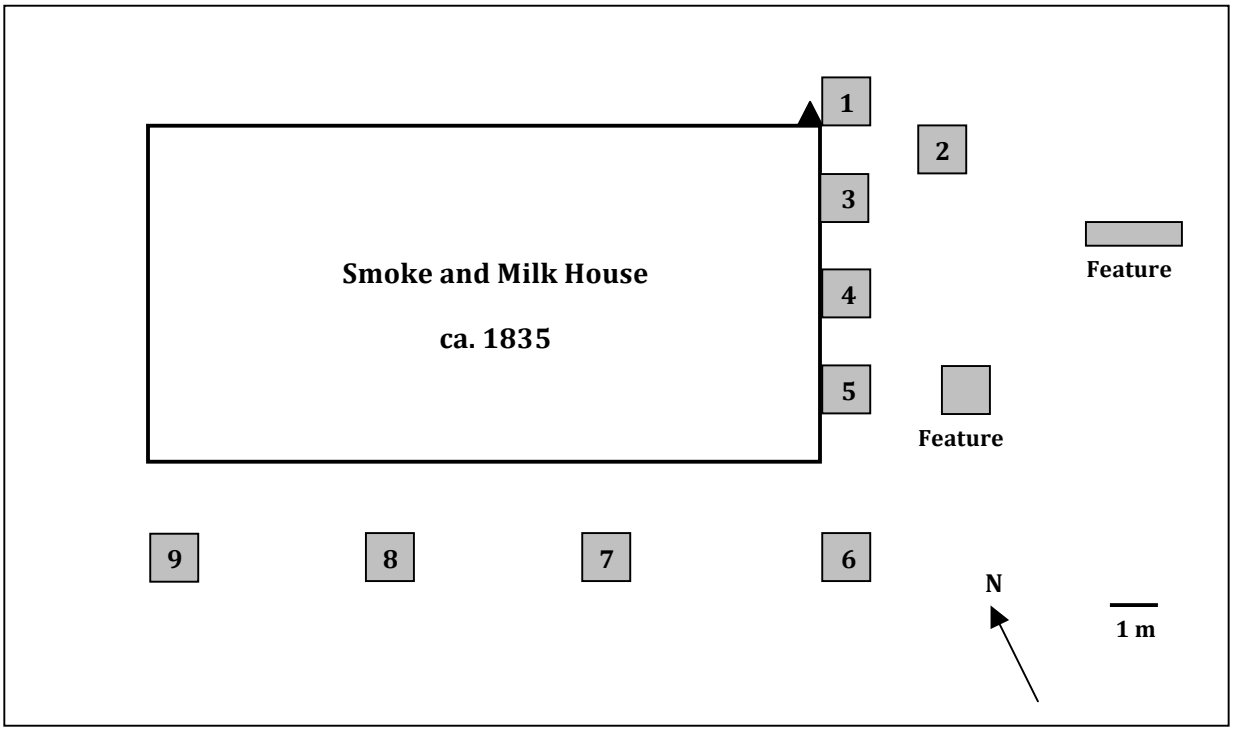

Figure 4.3. Map of the Excavation Units at the Smoke and Milk House (Davis 1991).

Two features were located in close proximity to the building. Feature 1, located south-southeast of the site datum, was identified as a buried sidewalk that surprisingly yielded many artifacts. Feature 2 was a backfilled trench, southeast of the site datum.

Feature 1 was identified as having an extensive artifact collection; artifacts associated with Feature 2 are still in dispute due to unclear provenience data.

South Union Artifact Assemblage

Schock recovered a total of 1554 artifacts during the 1991 excavations. About 32% (n=503) are curved or container glass fragments, 9% (n=136) are fragments of window glass, and 15% (n=245) are decorated or undecorated whiteware. Structural artifacts, such as brick fragments, roofing chips, mortar, and plaster, made up 10% (n=150) of the collection, while animal bones contributed 5% (n=83). Other miscellaneous historical artifacts formed 16% (n=241) of the collection. A small number (n=22, 1%) of prehistoric artifacts were also uncovered; they were not analyzed for the current research project.

Table 4.1. Artifact Types Recovered from Units around the Smoke and Milk House.

Artifact Type	Quantity	Percentage
Curved Glass, Clear	287	18.5%
Curved Glass, Colored	216	13.9%
Flat Glass	136	8.8%
Whiteware, Undecorated	181	11.6%
Whiteware, Decorated	64	4.1%
Cut Nails	74	4.8%
Wire Nails	100	6.4%
Structural	150	9.6%
Animal Bones	83	5.3%
Prehistoric Artifacts	22	1.4%
Other	241	15.5%
Total	1554	99.9%

Most of the curved-glass objects were too fragmentary to analyze in detail, and few were large enough to determine such information as place of manufacture or even the

shape of the original container; many seemed undecorated and slightly curved, suggestive of canning jars. The curved-glass artifacts were split fairly evenly between colored and uncolored glass; most of the colored glass was blue or green, although some was a dark teal, olive, amber, or even purple color. Milk glass and canning lids were also found.

Nails found during the excavations were either of a machine-cut or wire-cut variety, with wire-cut nails being slightly more predominant (100 wire nails to 74 machine-cut nails), at least near the Washhouse. The relative abundance of wire nails is somewhat perplexing; by 1900, when wire-cut nail manufacturing was developed, the South Union Shakers had not built any new structures for years. Thus, these nails probably represent more twentieth-century contamination, probably by non-Shakers, especially given their relatively low state of oxidation. It is possible, however, that these were evidence of Shaker repairs to existing structures.

The ceramic assemblage at South Union was extensive but fairly homogeneous in surface treatment and functional category. Nearly all of the ceramic artifacts were from servingware, though a few crockery sherds were found. Most of the artifacts were small whiteware sherds. These sherds were either entirely undecorated with the exception of a glaze, or extensively decorated with gold leaf patterns, paint, imprints and other forms of ornamentation. Motifs found among the ceramic collection are include floral designs and landscapes. Certain fragments were especially ubiquitous at the site, including servingware fragments with a maroon stippled transfer print design, as well as a blue painted design. While it is impossible to discuss the relative age of the undecorated and decorated ceramic artifacts without stratigraphic information, it is likely that the undecorated whiteware represents earlier Shaker use when the community followed a

more rigidly ascetic lifestyle (since undecorated whiteware would have been the cheapest and simplest form of tableware available at the time). The decorated ceramics could possibly date to after the Civil War, when the Shakers began to be more integrated into larger society and began to adopt a more 'worldly' lifestyle. It is possible, however, that the decorated sherds represent the post-Shaker period.

The animal bones found at South Union were usually too fragmentary to fully identify the species from which they came; for most specimens, only the epiphyses of the long bones remained. However, the size and shape of the bones was consistent with the sort of domestic animals that the Shakers were known to keep, including pigs, chickens, cattle and horses, and it is almost a certainty that the bones came from these species.

Other objects found encompass nearly every type of historical artifact imaginable, from fishing hooks and shell buttons to marbles and ammunition casings, indicating that a wide variety of activities took place at South Union. Nails and architectural elements, such as braces, bolts and screws from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were also common, meaning that the buildings were built and subsequently maintained over a period of several decades. There were a few bullet casings found, but they were of a fairly recent vintage and could represent non-Shaker use (although the Shakers were pacifist, they did occasionally own firearms). A single non-provenienced lead bullet, possibly from the civil war, was also found on-site, representing the only definitively Shaker-period evidence of weapons at South Union. Evidence of clothing use and manufacture was found, especially an abundance of buttons; however, most of these clothes must have been fairly unadorned, being lacking in beads or other decorations. The buttons, for instance, are made of simple and unadorned shell or wood, without any

decoration or maker's stamps on them. There was also very little jewelry or other personal items found at the site. No coins, keys, or tobacco pipes were found in the vicinity of the Washhouse or among the non-provenienced artifacts. Most of the artifacts found were of a functional nature – tool fragments, architectural elements, or other practical and non-personal items. The only personal item found in the immediate vicinity of the building was a toy – a single glass marble.

Periods of Occupation

With no vertical provenience available on these artifacts, it becomes extremely difficult to reconstruct a chronological profile of the site based on the artifact collection alone, as it prevents us from developing even relative boundaries between Shaker and post-Shaker occupation. Fortunately, we know when South Union was occupied; the first conversions were made in 1807, the first buildings were erected in 1810 (Keith 1965), the Smoke and Milk House was constructed ca. 1834 (Cook 2006), and the Shaker community was abandoned ca. 1920. We can test these dates through several artifact analyses.

The results of a Moir (1987) regression analysis on the window glass found at the site yields dates as early as 1835 and as late as 1905. Both of these dates fall within the known Shaker occupation of South Union. The lack of earlier artifacts probably means that the building in question was not built for a couple of decades after the Shakers settled in the area. This corroborates with Matthew Cook's findings in the historical documents at South Union, which places the earliest appearance of the building on a map dated 1836 (Cook 2006).

The mean ceramic date (South 1977) for the ceramic assemblage is ca. 1858. The colors of the curved-glass artifacts included blue, green, brown, amber, and purple; these would indicate a time period between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries (Applegate, personal communication 2009). Nails found around the Smoke and Milk House were split fairly evenly between wire and cut nails. The abundance of cut nails at the site is indicative of construction or maintenance in the nineteenth century. The absence of hand-wrought nails, which were used until ca. 1800, supports that construction of the building occurred after the turn of the 19th century (Applegate, personal communication, 2009.

While it would be tempting, then, to say that these artifacts all represent Shaker occupation, the archaeological record has unfortunately been contaminated; clearly modern objects, such as plastics, were found alongside nineteenth-century artifacts such as machine-cut nails. Reconstructing the period of occupation based exclusively on artifacts is nearly impossible for this reason. Fortunately, we have the Shakers' own extensive historical documents to fall back on. According to Shaker accounts, South Union was settled in the early nineteenth century, grew rapidly in the first half of that century and experienced a slow decline until its eventual closing in the 1920s. There is nothing in the archaeological record to dispute this account, and while there is a noted absence of artifacts dating to South Union's earliest years, it can easily be explained if the structure in question was not built until later. Therefore, we can safely say that Shaker accounts of their occupation periods at South Union were honest and accurate, based on available information.

Testing the Shaker Interpretive Model

While the archaeological record is far from complete, the artifacts found at South Union generally confirm what we know about the Shakers based on available historical documents. They engaged in many of the same activities that their non-Shaker neighbors did, although they did them in a very different way. For instance, while we know Shakers manufactured their furniture on-site, it is telling that few objects normally associated with furniture according to the South model (South 1977) was not found, such as metallic clamps and fixtures. While these are commonly found on nineteenth-century furniture pieces, Shaker furniture generally eschewed such elements, and it is unsurprising that none were found. If the Shakers were elaborately decorating their furniture, clothing or other objects they were doing it elsewhere.

The lack of jewelry and especially coins is also very characteristic of what we might expect to find at a Shaker site. Shakers, of course, owned no private property, and owning money would have been a violation of Shaker customs. Therefore, the lack of money and most personal adornment also fits with what we know about the Shakers, from their own accounts and that of outsiders. The fact that so few brick and mortar fragments were found next to a building that spent a period of years with little use is a testament to the strength and durability of Shaker architecture.

What we can glean about Shaker lifeways is also consistent with both their own records and with the accounts of outsiders. According to available historical documents, the Shakers at South Union practiced an extremely wide variety of activities on site, growing virtually every variety of plant that would grow in Kentucky, both for

subsistence and for sale, as well as raising many different kinds of livestock, from horses to poultry to pigs to cattle. They also engaged in forms of light manufacturing, from tanning and bookbinding to hatmaking and textile manufacture. Once again, the historical and archaeological accounts matched, and while most of these artifacts have been lost to the elements (such as leather, vegetation and other organic materials), the collection contains many indirect sources of evidence for these activities. Such evidence includes farm implements and animal bones from several different types of animals. While most of the bones recovered were, as mentioned above, too fragmentary for species identification, they did seem to be from the sorts of domestic animals, especially pigs and chickens, which are attested to in contemporary historical accounts. Although the incomplete archaeological record means that there is not currently evidence for all historically-attested Shaker activities, there is a good deal of evidence backing up some of those activities. Overall, there were very few surprises in the South Union collection; it seems that the Shakers were living their lives there just as they said they were.

Final Conclusions and Future Research

The first and most important conclusion to be drawn from the available artifact collection is this: more excavations are necessary at South Union than what have been done so far. While the available collection is extensive, problems arising from the documentation damage the utility of these artifacts. Also, even if all the artifacts had the necessary information associated with them, the excavations to this point are nowhere near extensive enough to actually reconstruct the site archaeologically. Only a few areas of the village have been studied up to this point, and those were not the ones associated with the more vital Shaker buildings, such as the living quarters or the meeting house.

The second conclusion is that the Shakers of South Union were, insofar as we can tell, quite honest and accurate in their accounts of their own lifestyle. The available artifact collection lends little evidence to the idea that the Shakers were, in fact, a debauched and hypocritical group, a view often held by their opponents, especially in the early years. Of course, Shakers violating their own rules was far from unheard of – the elopement mentioned above is evidence enough for this. However, had any large-scale hypocrisies been taking place – the ownership and accumulation of cash money, for instance, or the use of personal luxuries and distinctively private property – the archaeological record would bear witness to this. Given the absence of such artifacts, it currently seems safe to conclude that the Shakers were, in fact, living by their own rules.

Finally, there is evidence of the necessity for an interpretive archaeological model specifically designed for studying Shaker archaeology. The material impact of such doctrines as communal property ownership and celibacy could lead archaeological data to be misinterpreted, given the differences in usage found in Shaker contexts.

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APPENDIX

FULL ARTIFACT COLLECTION

Artifact Type	Quantity	Percentage
Curved Glass, Clear	287	18.5%
Curved Glass, Colored	216	13.9%
Flat Glass	136	8.8%
Whiteware, Undecorated	181	11.6%
Whiteware, Decorated	64	4.1%
Stamped Nails	74	4.8%
Wire Nails	100	6.4%
Structural	150	9.6%
Animal Bones	83	5.3%
Prehistoric Artifacts	22	1.4%
Other	241	15.5%
Total	1554	99.9%

Unit 1	
Curved Glass, Clear	144
Curved Glass, Colored	61
Flat Glass	73
Whiteware, Undecorated	85
Whiteware, Decorated	34
Stamped Nails	36
Wire Nails	13
Structural	14
Animal Bones	30
Canningflat/ Milk Glass	1
Glazed China Sherd	1
Glazed Stoneware	2
Glazed Tile Frags	6
Thin Metal Frags	3
Rubber Frags	1
Flat Iron Pieces	5
Metal Wire	1
Circular Metal Object	1

Chert Flakes (Prehistoric)	6
Bullet Casings	3
Metal Tack	1
Wood Handle Tool	2
Stoneware	1
Coal Frags	1
Charred Wood Frags	3
Stoneware, Red Glaze	1
Total	529

Unit 2	
Curved Glass, Clear	29
Curved Glass, Colored	54
Flat Glass	0
Whiteware, Undecorated	38
Whiteware, Decorated	3
Stamped Nails	1
Wire Nails	0
Structural	6
Animal Bones	10
Frosted Glass	5
Porcelain Sherds	2
Slate Rod	1
Canning Jar Lid	1
Metal Frags	5
Aluminum Tubing	1
Comb Frag	1
Charcoal Frags	1
Bullet Casing	1
Total	159

Unit 3	
Curved Glass, Clear	0
Curved Glass, Colored	0
Flat Glass	0
Whiteware, Undecorated	0
Whiteware, Decorated	0
Stamped Nails	0
Wire Nails	0
Structural	0

Animal Bones	0
Prehistoric Artifacts	0
Total	0

Unit 4	
Curved Glass, Clear	20
Curved Glass, Colored	17
Flat Glass	35
Whiteware, Undecorated	9
Whiteware, Decorated	7
Stamped Nails	7
Wire Nails	3
Structural	13
Animal Bones	0
Hollowed Sandstone Cylinder	1
Metal Button	1
Metal Screw	1
Coal Frags	2
Total	116

Unit 5	
Curved Glass, Clear	0
Curved Glass, Colored	0
Flat Glass	0
Whiteware, Undecorated	0
Whiteware, Decorated	0
Stamped Nails	0
Wire Nails	0
Structural	0
Animal Bones	0
Total	0

Unit 6	
Curved Glass, Clear	28
Curved Glass, Colored	16
Flat Glass	0
Whiteware, Undecorated	12
Whiteware, Decorated	5

Stamped Nails	2
Wire Nails	25
Structural	53
Animal Bones	8
Porcelain Sherds	1
Unglazed Earthenware	2
Ceramic Tile Piece	1
Glazed Ceramic Tile	2
Coal Cinders	10
Bullet Casings	3
Bottle Cap	1
Metal Wires	2
Assorted Metal Objects	32
Brush Frags	2
Slate Roofing Frags	5
Vulcanized Rubber Button	1
Lithic Debitage (Prehistoric)	3
Total	214

Unit 7	
Curved Glass, Clear	24
Curved Glass, Colored	36
Flat Glass	0
Whiteware, Undecorated	5
Whiteware, Decorated	8
Stamped Nails	3
Wire Nails	19
Structural	6
Animal Bones	14
White Glass	4
Red Insulation Wire	1
Aluminum Ring	1
Metal Battery Tube	1
Black Spike	1
Twisted Wire	1
Chert Flakes (Prehistoric)	3
Metal Washer	1
Metal Ring	1
Battery Cores	2
Charcoal Frags	30
Total	161

Unit 8	
Curved Glass, Clear	14
Curved Glass, Colored	2
Flat Glass	24
Whiteware, Undecorated	5
Whiteware, Decorated	1
Stamped Nails	2
Wire Nails	14
Structural	23
Animal Bones	8
Milk Glass	1
Coal Frags	19
Lithic Debitage (Prehistoric)	2
Cinders	13
Giant Metal Hook	1
Glass Button	1
Marble (Toy)	1
Metal Bolt	1
Assorted Metal Objects	3
Metal Washer	1
Screws	3
Total	139

Unit 9	
Curved Glass, Clear	0
Curved Glass, Colored	0
Flat Glass	0
Whiteware, Undecorated	0
Whiteware, Decorated	0
Stamped Nails	2
Wire Nails	19
Structural	3
Animal Bones	0
Lead Frags	5
Charcoal Frags	5
Assorted Metal Objects	4
Chert Core Fragments (Prehistoric)	2
Total	40

Feature 1	
Curved Glass, Clear	28
Curved Glass, Colored	30
Flat Glass	4
Whiteware, Undecorated	27
Whiteware, Decorated	6
Porcelain Frag	1
Earthenware Frag	1
Stamped Nails	21
Wire Nails	7
Structural	32
Animal Bones	13
Metal Brace	1
Coal Frags	15
Malted Glass Frag	1
Iron Strap	1
Sheet Metal Frags	1
Curved Metal Tool	1
Lithic Debitage (Prehistoric)	6
Total	196

Feature 2	Quantity
Curved Glass, Clear	0
Curved Glass, Colored	0
Flat Glass	0
Whiteware, Undecorated	0
Whiteware, Decorated	0
Stamped Nails	0
Wire Nails	0
Structural	0
Animal Bones	0
Total	0