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## Shakers - South Union, Kentucky (MSS 63)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives  
 Department of Library Special Collections  
 Western Kentucky University  
 Bowling Green, KY 42101

*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 63 SHAKERS – South Union, Kentucky**

5 boxes. 35 folders. 218 items. 1800-1916. Originals, photocopies, typescripts.

1929.22.1

**HISTORY**

Ann Lee (1736-1784), mother of Shakerism, claimed a few years before her death to have experienced a vision in which she saw the next great opening for the gospel occurring in 1801 or 1802 in the southwestern part of the United States. John Meacham, Benjamin S. Youngs, and Issachar Bates embarked on a missionary journey to that area on January 1, 1805. This trek proved to be one of more than one thousand miles. Because of the great religious revival taking place in Logan County, Kentucky, the Shakers proceeded to that region. They gained converts and in 1807 established a communal society, which practiced celibacy and pacifism, at South Union in Logan County. Membership peaked at 349 in 1827. Disbanded in 1922, South Union was the last of the six western societies to close.

The industrious Shakers established an attractive and inviting village. They planted orchards, raised purebred cattle, built mills, began a silkworm industry, and had large-scale seed and preserves businesses. They marketed their seeds and preserves widely, making annual selling trips to New Orleans and other southern destinations.

The Shakers were very resourceful and visionary, incorporating inventions of “the world” into the Society when financially feasible. They were often the first in their community to introduce new and easier methods of achieving higher work yields into their everyday tasks.

*Bibliographical Notes*

The Collection.

Kentucky Library, Vertical Files, Newspaper clippings.

Neal, Julia. *By Their Fruits*, 1947.

Program. *Thirteenth Annual South Union Festival*,  
 South Union, Ky., 1974.

## **COLLECTION NOTE**

The collection is comprised chiefly of business papers and manuscript books of the Shaker Society at South Union, Kentucky. The business papers consist primarily of land transactions, receipts, and account books. One account book records transactions made on a southern seed-selling trip.

The largest part of the collection is comprised of five journals, covering most of the period 1865-1916, kept by an elder or eldress to document the activities of the Society. Four of the five journals originated in the North, East and Center "families," named after the communal dwelling houses at South Union. The remaining journal, known as Shaker Record C, was maintained by Elder Harvey L. Eads and includes annual censuses of Society members from 1867-1878. Indexes to the journals are available.

The collection also includes hymnals compiled by different members and a book containing articles of agreement that were signed by probationary members on joining the Society.

## **SHELF LIST**

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>Business papers and account books</b>	<b>1800-1889</b>	<b>200 items</b>
Folder 1a	Inventory and data on Shaker societies		3 items
Folder 1	Business papers	1800-1809	5 items
Folder 2	Business papers	1810-1819	35 items
Folder 3	Business papers	1820-1829	21 items
Folder 4	Business papers	1830-1885	18 items
Folder 5	Business papers – Willie W. Jones	1813-1826	16 items
Folder 6	Business papers – Elijah M. Covington	1817-1831	11 items
Folder 7	Miscellaneous receipts	1817-1833	75 items
Folder 8	Miscellaneous papers; hymns	1850; 1865, n.d.	14 items
Folder 9	Account book of seed-selling trip	Nov. 15-Dec.1, 1843; Nov. 6- Dec. 1, 1844	1 item
Folder 10	Account book	1855-1889	1 item

<b>BOX 2</b>	<b>Shaker Record C of Harvey L. Eads</b>	<b>1865-1879</b>	<b>1 item</b>
Folder 1	Shaker Record C – Original (stored in vault)	1865-1879	1 item
Folder 2	Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 1-97) of Folder 1	Jan. 1, 1865- Dec. 31, 1866	
Folder 3	Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 98-163) of Folder 1; includes census of members	Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 1867	
Folder 4	Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 164-230) of Folder 1; includes census of members	Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 1868	
Folder 5	Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 231-290) of Folder 1; includes censuses of members	Jan. 1, 1869- Dec. 31, 1870	
Folder 6	Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 291-367) of Folder 1; includes censuses of members	Jan. 1, 1871- Dec. 31, 1873	
Folder 7	Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 368-456) of Folder 1; includes censuses of members	Jan. 1, 1874- Dec. 31, 1876	
Folder 8	Shaker Record C – Photocopy (pp. 457-529) of Folder 1; includes censuses of members	Jan. 1, 1877- Oct. 18, 1879	
<b>BOX 3</b>	<b>Members Agreements; North and East, and Center family journals</b>	<b>1858-1908</b>	<b>8 items</b>
Folder 1	Articles of Agreement book signed by probationary members; name index	1858-1904	2 items
Folder 2	North and East families – Journal (Original stored in vault); name, subject, and chronological indexes	1865; 1888- 1897	4 items
Folder 3a	North and East families – Journal – Photocopy of Folder 2 (pp. 1-125) arranged in chronological order	1865; Mar. 1888- Mar. 1895	1 item
Folder 3b	North and East families – Journal – Photocopy of Folder 2 (pp. 126-153) arranged in chronological order	Apr. 1895- June 1897	

Folder 4	Center family – Journal kept by Lucilla Booker – Photocopy (original stored in vault)	Sept. 1, 1907- Dec. 31, 1908	1 item
Folder 5	Center family – Journal kept by Lucilla Booker – Typescript of Folder 4; name and subject indexes	Sept. 1, 1907- Dec. 31, 1908	
<b>BOX 4</b>	<b>Center family journals</b>	<b>1909-1916</b>	<b>2 items</b>
Folder 1	Center family – Journal kept by Lucilla Booker – Original and photocopy (F1a)	Jan. 1, 1909- Dec. 31, 1910	1 item
Folder 2	Center family – Journal kept by Lucilla Booker – Typescript of Folder 1; index	Jan. 1, 1909- Dec. 31, 1910	
Folder 3	Center family – Journal probably kept by Lucilla Booker – Original and photocopy (F3a,3b)	Jan. 1, 1913- Aug. 31, 1916	1 item
Folder 4	Center family – Journal probably kept by Lucilla Booker – Typescript of Folder 3; index	Jan. 1, 1913- Aug. 31, 1916	
<b>BOX 5</b>	<b>Manuscript books and hymnals</b>	<b>1844-1886</b>	<b>7 items</b>
Folder 1	Hymnal, possibly of Nancy McNemar – Original and photocopy	1844-1861	1 item
Folder 2	Hymnal of Center family sisters, Room 6	1855-1870	1 item
Folder 3	Hymnal of Eldress Mary Edwards	1868-1870	1 item
Folder 4	Book of poems, articles and hymns compiled by Birdie and Virgie Breedlove	1874-1886	1 item
Folder 5	Book of poems, articles and hymns compiled by Birdie and Virgie Breedlove – Photocopy of Folder 4	1874-1886	1 item
Folder 6	Book of hymns (manuscript and printed) compiled by Harvey L. Eads – Original and photocopy	1875-1876	1 item

Folder 7      Music book compiled by Harvey L. Eads      1880      1 item

### ***BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD***

MSS SHAKERS, South Union, Kentucky      1800-1916  
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Business records, deeds, notes, receipts, surveys, agreements, bill of complaint, etc., 1800-85; account books, 1843-89; journals, 1865-1916; agreement book of probationary members, 1858-1904; and manuscript hymnals, 1844-86 (6) of the Shaker Society of South Union, Kentucky.

5 boxes. 35 folders. 218 items. Originals, photocopies, typescripts.  
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African Americans – Reconstruction, 1866,1868      B2,F2  
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Arson      B2,F2-3  
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Hodges/Niedermeier/Jeffrey 11/30/2016