

united society of believers

United Society of Believers: An In-Depth Overview

The **United Society of Believers**, often known as the Shakers, is a religious movement with a rich history rooted in communal living, spiritual devotion, and innovative communal practices. Established in the 18th century, this society has left a lasting impact on religious thought, architecture, and social organization. Understanding the origins, beliefs, practices, and legacy of the United Society of Believers offers valuable insights into one of America's most unique spiritual communities.

Origins and Historical Background

Founding of the Shaker Movement

The United Society of Believers was founded in the 1770s by Ann Lee Stanley, a charismatic spiritual leader who claimed to be the Second Coming of Christ. The movement emerged in England before migrating to North America, where it gained significant traction. The society's name, "Shakers," is believed to have originated from their rhythmic dance and shaking during worship services, which was seen as a physical manifestation of spiritual fervor.

Migration to America

In the late 18th century, the Shakers migrated to the United States seeking religious freedom. Their first settlement was established in Watervliet, New York, in 1776. Over the next century, the society expanded across various states, including New Hampshire, Maine, Kentucky, and Ohio, establishing dozens of communal villages.

Core Beliefs and Religious Principles

Spiritual Foundations

The Shakers adhere to a set of religious principles centered around the worship of God through Jesus Christ and Ann Lee's teachings. They believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit and emphasize the importance of living a life of purity, humility, and devotion.

Celibacy and Community Living

- **Celibacy:** Members commit to celibacy, choosing to live without marriage or reproduction to focus entirely on spiritual growth.
- **Communal Ownership:** Property and resources are shared collectively, emphasizing equality and cooperation among members.
- **Gender Equality:** The society promotes gender equality, with men and women sharing leadership roles and responsibilities.

Distinctive Beliefs

1. **Second Coming of Christ:** Ann Lee and her followers believed that she embodied Christ's return, leading to a new era of spiritual awakening.
2. **Holy Spirit Manifestation:** Worship involves ecstatic dancing, singing, and shaking, seen as expressions of divine presence.
3. **Peace and Nonviolence:** The society advocates for pacifism and nonviolent conflict resolution.

Practices and Daily Life

Worship and Rituals

The Shakers are renowned for their unique worship practices, which include vigorous dancing, singing, and ecstatic shaking—hence the nickname. Worship services are communal, often held multiple times a day, fostering a profound sense of spiritual connection and unity.

Architecture and Craftsmanship

The Shakers are celebrated for their exceptional craftsmanship and innovative architecture. Their buildings emphasize simplicity, functionality, and beauty, often featuring:

- Gabled roofs and symmetrical layouts
- Open floor plans conducive to community gatherings
- Use of natural materials like wood and stone

These structures reflect their values of humility and purity and have influenced American architectural styles.

Crafts and Innovations

The society has historically been involved in various crafts, including:

- Furniture making: Recognized for its high quality and minimalist design
- Textile production
- Gardening and farming

Many of their handcrafted items remain highly collectible and symbolize their dedication to craftsmanship and sustainability.

Community Life and Organization

Leadership and Governance

The Shaker communities are governed by a hierarchical leadership structure, with elders overseeing spiritual and operational matters. Decisions are made collectively, emphasizing consensus and shared responsibility.

Roles of Men and Women

Gender equality is a cornerstone of Shaker governance. Both men and women hold leadership roles, participate equally in spiritual practices, and contribute to community chores and decision-making processes.

Education and Outreach

Historically, the Shakers valued education and self-sufficiency, establishing schools within their communities. Today, their outreach includes:

- Sharing their crafts and architectural knowledge
- Promoting their sustainable practices
- Preserving their historical sites and artifacts

Legacy and Influence

Impact on American Culture and Society

The Shakers have significantly influenced American design, architecture, and social ideals. Their innovative furniture design, characterized by simplicity and functionality, remains influential. Additionally, their commitment to equality and pacifism contributed to broader social movements.

Preservation of Heritage

Today, only a few Shaker communities remain active, with the most notable being the Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in Maine. Many former settlements have been preserved as historic sites, attracting visitors interested in religious history and traditional crafts.

Modern Relevance

The principles of sustainability, communal living, and spiritual dedication practiced by the Shakers continue to inspire contemporary movements focused on eco-friendly living and intentional communities. Their emphasis on peaceful coexistence and craftsmanship offers valuable lessons for modern society.

Conclusion

The **United Society of Believers** stands as a testament to the enduring power of faith, community, and innovation. Despite their decline in numbers, their influence persists through their architecture, crafts, and social ideals. By exploring their history and practices, we gain insight into a unique spiritual movement that prioritized harmony, equality, and devotion. Whether through their beautifully crafted furniture or their ideals of peace and community, the Shakers' legacy continues to inspire generations around the world.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the United Society of Believers commonly known for?

The United Society of Believers, also known as the Shakers, is a religious community renowned for their communal living, unique worship practices, and contributions to furniture craftsmanship.

When was the United Society of Believers founded?

The Shaker movement was founded in the 18th century, with the first community established in 1774 in Watervliet, New York.

What are some core beliefs of the United Society of Believers?

Core beliefs include communal living, celibacy, pacifism, equality of genders, and a focus on spiritual purity and worship.

How has the United Society of Believers influenced modern sustainable living practices?

The Shakers' emphasis on simple living, renewable resource use, and sustainable craftsmanship has inspired contemporary eco-friendly and intentional communities.

Are the United Society of Believers still active today?

While their numbers have dwindled, a small number of Shaker communities and adherents remain today, continuing some of their traditions and crafts.

What are some notable contributions of the United Society of Believers?

They are well known for their innovative furniture design, agricultural practices, and contributions to spiritual music and dance.

How did the United Society of Believers' communal lifestyle impact their social organization?

Their communal lifestyle fostered equality, shared resources, and collective decision-making, setting them apart from mainstream society.

What challenges has the United Society of Believers faced over the years?

Challenges include declining membership, societal changes, legal issues related to property, and maintaining their traditions in a modern world.

Additional Resources

United Society of Believers (Shakers): An In-Depth Exploration

The United Society of Believers, more popularly known as the Shakers, is one of the most intriguing religious movements in American history. Known for their distinctive communal living, innovative craftsmanship, and unique religious practices, the Shakers have left an indelible mark on American religious and cultural landscapes. This comprehensive review aims to delve deep into their origins, beliefs, practices, societal contributions, and ongoing legacy.

Origins and Historical Background

Founding and Early History

- The Shakers were founded in the mid-18th century in England, around the 1740s, by Ann Lee, a charismatic leader who claimed to be the Second Coming of Christ.
- They migrated to America in 1774, seeking religious freedom, particularly to escape persecution in England.
- The first American settlement was established in Niskayuna, New York, under Ann Lee's leadership.

Migration and Growth

- From their initial settlement, the movement expanded rapidly across the United States, establishing dozens of communities in the Northeast, Midwest, and South.
- Their growth was driven by their appeal to those seeking a communal, egalitarian lifestyle and a strict religious discipline.
- At their peak in the 19th century, Shaker communities numbered over 6,000 members, with dozens of villages.

Decline and Contemporary Status

- Post-World War II, the number of active Shaker members dwindled sharply due to societal changes, urbanization, and declining interest.
- Today, only a few Shaker communities remain, with the Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in Maine being the last active communal settlement.

Core Beliefs and Theology

Theological Foundations

- The Shakers believed in the imminent Second Coming of Christ, which they associated with Ann Lee's teachings.
- They emphasized the duality of male and female principles, which informed their belief in gender equality and communal living.
- Their theology integrated elements of Christian doctrine but interpreted through a unique spiritual lens emphasizing purity, simplicity, and the direct experience of divine grace.

Key Beliefs

- God as Dual Principles: They believed in a dual Godhead comprising both male and female aspects, which was revolutionary at the time.
- Christ's Second Coming: Seen as a spiritual event, with Ann Lee as the earthly embodiment of this divine truth.
- Salvation through Separation: They believed in separating from worldly temptations to attain spiritual purity.
- Equality and Community: Men and women are equals in the eyes of God, promoting gender equality and shared responsibilities.
- Pacifism and Nonviolence: They adhered strictly to pacifist principles, refusing to participate in war or violence.

Practices and Daily Life

Worship and Religious Services

- Shaker worship was characterized by spiritual dance, singing, and prayer.
- Their services often involved shaking, which is how they got the nickname "Shakers," symbolizing their energetic worship style.
- They believed that their dances and songs helped them attain a higher spiritual state and communicate with the divine.

Communal Living and Social Structure

- Members lived communally, sharing property, labor, and resources.
- The communities were highly organized, often with a leader or elders who guided spiritual practices and daily activities.
- Work was considered a form of worship, and members engaged in various crafts and agricultural activities.

Roles and Gender Equality

- Men and women held equal roles within the community, including leadership positions.
- Women often managed domestic affairs, while men contributed through farming and craftsmanship.
- The community's egalitarian approach extended to their religious practices and decision-making processes.

Celibacy and Reproduction

- The Shakers practiced celibacy; they believed that sexual activity was a distraction from spiritual pursuits.
- This commitment to celibacy resulted in their communities maintaining stability through adoption and recruiting new members rather than through reproduction.

Art, Craftsmanship, and Innovation

Unique Craftwork

- The Shakers became renowned for their high-quality craftsmanship, especially in furniture-making, textiles, and ceramics.
- Their furniture was characterized by simplicity, functionality, and durability, reflecting their spiritual values.
- Shaker designs influenced American furniture styles, emphasizing clean lines and practicality.

Innovations in Agriculture and Industry

- They developed efficient farming techniques and were early adopters of mechanized tools.
- Their innovations extended to food preservation, herbal medicine, and manufacturing processes.
- Their technological advancements often integrated spiritual principles, emphasizing harmony between humans and nature.

Art and Cultural Contributions

- Shaker art includes intricate woodworking, painted items, and handcrafted religious symbols.
- Their music, including hymns and spiritual songs, contributed significantly to American religious music traditions.
- Many of their artifacts are now valued collectibles, displayed in museums and private collections.

Community Life and Social Organization

Structure and Governance

- Shaker communities operated under a theocratic governance, with leadership based on spiritual insight.
- Decisions were made collectively, often through spiritual consensus or guidance from the elders.
- Their organizational model promoted stability, discipline, and shared responsibility.

Education and Outreach

- They operated schools for children within their communities, emphasizing moral and practical education.
- Outreach efforts included establishing new settlements and recruiting converts.
- They also published literature, hymnals, and instructional manuals to spread their beliefs.

Challenges and Internal Dynamics

- As societal values shifted, maintaining strict discipline and celibacy became increasingly difficult.
- Internal disagreements and declining membership contributed to community closures.
- Despite challenges, the community maintained a focus on spiritual purity and communal harmony.

The Decline and Current Status of the Shakers

Factors Contributing to Decline

- Societal changes post-1920s, including urbanization, changing gender roles, and secularization.
- The difficulty in recruiting new members due to their celibate lifestyle.
- Competition with other religious and secular organizations.

Legacy and Preservation

- The remaining Shaker communities have shifted focus to preservation, education, and tourism.
- The Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in Maine remains active, maintaining religious services and craft workshops.
- Their historical sites serve as museums, offering insights into their spiritual practices and craftsmanship.

Modern Influence and Cultural Impact

- Their emphasis on gender equality and pacifism has influenced various social movements.
- Their design principles continue to inspire modern furniture and architectural styles.
- Their spiritual hymns and art remain part of America's cultural heritage.

Conclusion: The Enduring Spirit of the Shakers

The United Society of Believers (Shakers) exemplifies a unique blend of spiritual fervor, communal living, innovative craftsmanship, and social ideals. While their numbers have diminished, their legacy persists through their art, philosophy, and influence on American culture. Their unwavering commitment to equality, pacifism, and spiritual purity offers valuable lessons and inspiration for contemporary society seeking harmony, simplicity, and purpose.

In an era marked by individualism and materialism, the Shakers' emphasis on community, shared purpose, and spiritual discipline remains a compelling testament to the enduring power of faith and collective effort. Their history is not just a story of a religious sect but a reflection of human aspiration towards a higher, more harmonious way of living.

United Society Of Believers

united society of believers: The Shaker Experience in America Stephen J. Stein, 1992-01-01
The first general history of the Shakers, from their origins in 18th-century England to the present day. Drawing on written and oral testimony by Shakers over the past two centuries, Stein offers a full and often revisionist account of the movement. 57 illustrations.

united society of believers: **A Concise History of the United Society of Believers Called Shakers** Charles Edson Robinson, 1893

united society of believers: *A Concise History Of The United Society Of Believers Called Shakers* Charles Edson 1836-1925 Robinson, 2023-07-18 A brief history of the Shakers, a religious sect known for their celibacy, communal living, and ecstatic worship practices. This work has been selected by scholars as being culturally important, and is part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it. This work is in the public domain in the United States of America, and possibly other nations. Within the United States, you may freely copy and distribute this work, as no entity (individual or corporate) has a copyright on the body of the work. Scholars believe, and we concur, that this work is important enough to be preserved, reproduced, and made generally available to the public. We appreciate your support of the preservation process, and thank you for being an important part of keeping this knowledge alive and relevant.

united society of believers: **A Summary View of the Millennial Church, Or United Society of Believers, Commonly Called Shakers** Calvin Green, 1848

united society of believers: *A Summary View of the Millennial Church, Or, United Society of Believers, Commonly Called Shakers* Shakers, 1848

united society of believers: **A Summary View of the Millennial Church Or United Society of Believers** Calvin Green, 1848

united society of believers: Shaker Experience in America Stephen J. Stein, 1994

united society of believers: A Concise History of the United Society of Believers Called Shakers Charles Edson Robinson, 1975

united society of believers: A Summary View of the Millennial Church Calvin Green, 2018-10-11 This work has been selected by scholars as being culturally important and is part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it. This work is in the public domain in the United States of America, and possibly other nations. Within the United States, you may freely copy and distribute this work, as no entity (individual or corporate) has a copyright on the body of the work. Scholars believe, and we concur, that this work is important enough to be preserved, reproduced, and made generally available to the public. To ensure a quality reading experience, this work has been proofread and republished using a format that seamlessly blends the original graphical elements with text in an easy-to-read typeface. We appreciate your support of the preservation process, and thank you for being an important part of keeping this knowledge alive and relevant.

united society of believers: A Brief Exposition of the Established Principles and Regulations of the United Society of Believers Called Shakers Shakers, 1846

united society of believers: The Communistic Societies of the United States Charles Nordhoff, 1875

united society of believers: Religious Bodies: 1926 United States. Bureau of the Census, 1929

united society of believers: The A to Z of the Shakers Stephen J. Paterwic, 2009-09-28 The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, commonly known as the Shakers, followed Mother Ann Lee to the United States in 1774 when life in England became difficult. In the United States, they established several colonies whose governing principals included celibacy and agrarian communal living. Even at its peak, however, Shakerism claimed only about 4,500 members. Today, except for one active community in Sabbathday, Maine, the great Shaker villages are diminished, but the Shakers left an enduring impact on the religion and culture of the United States. The A to Z of the Shakers relates the history of this fascinating group through a chronology, an introductory essay, a bibliography, and over 200 cross-referenced dictionary entries on Shaker communities, industries, individual families, and important people. Every definition, biography, and point of history was submitted to the Shakers at Sabbathday Lake for their review before it was included for publication. As such, the voice of the contemporary Shakers is found in the dictionary, and they have given it their unequivocal endorsement.

united society of believers: Separate denominations: History, description, and statistics United States. Bureau of the Census, 1910

united society of believers: Religious Bodies United States. Bureau of the Census, 1910

united society of believers: Religious Bodies: 1906 , 1910

united society of believers: Religious Bodies: 1906 United States. Bureau of the Census, 1910

united society of believers: A Brief Exposition of the established Principles and Regulations of the United Society of Believers, called Shakers, etc SHAKERS., 1851

united society of believers: The Communistic Societies of the United States, from Personal Visit and Observation Charles Nordhoff, 1875

united society of believers: Author List of the New Hampshire State Library, June 1, 1902 ... , 1904

Related to united society of believers

United Airlines - Airline Tickets, Travel Deals and Flights CoBrowse will allow the agent to see what you see and answer your questions. They will only be able to see united.com - nothing else. Your personal information, such as credit card numbers

United Airlines - Wikipedia Since Varney was a part of United, the founding year of United is 1926, making United the oldest commercial airline in the United States. United has ranked among the largest airlines in the

United Cheap Flights to 300+ Destinations Worldwide | United Airlines Book United Airlines cheap flights to 300+ destinations worldwide on our official site. Find our most popular flight deals and earn MileagePlus® miles

United Airlines (UA) - Flights, Airline Tickets & Reviews United Airlines is one of the three major airlines in the United States, with a fleet of more than 900 planes that fly to more than 300 destinations around the world

United Airlines on the App Store Meet the United app From planning, to booking, to day of travel, we've got you covered. On our app you can: look for flights across our global network

Check Your United Flight Status - Search by Route or Flight Check the status of your United Airlines flight by searching by route or flight number. Stay up to date with our flight status tools

United Airlines - Flight Check In Check in for your United or United Express-operated flight, depending on where you are in your travel experience

United Airlines Reservations - Book a Flight on More Than 80 Search for flights on United and more than 80 airlines. Find adult, senior, child and pet fares, and use money or miles to book. Apply promo codes and use certificates

Travel Information and Guidelines | United Airlines Airport information Learn about our airport check-in process, expedited security programs like TSA PreCheck® and our United Clubs

United App | United Airlines From planning, to booking, to the day of travel, the United App has got you covered. Download the app to check-in your flight, manage your trip, view flight status, boarding pass, and more

United Airlines - Airline Tickets, Travel Deals and Flights CoBrowse will allow the agent to see what you see and answer your questions. They will only be able to see united.com - nothing else. Your personal information, such as credit card numbers

United Airlines - Wikipedia Since Varney was a part of United, the founding year of United is 1926, making United the oldest commercial airline in the United States. United has ranked among the largest airlines in the

United Cheap Flights to 300+ Destinations Worldwide | United Airlines Book United Airlines cheap flights to 300+ destinations worldwide on our official site. Find our most popular flight deals and earn MileagePlus® miles

United Airlines (UA) - Flights, Airline Tickets & Reviews United Airlines is one of the three major airlines in the United States, with a fleet of more than 900 planes that fly to more than 300 destinations around the world

United Airlines on the App Store Meet the United app From planning, to booking, to day of travel, we've got you covered. On our app you can: look for flights across our global network

Check Your United Flight Status - Search by Route or Flight Number Check the status of your United Airlines flight by searching by route or flight number. Stay up to date with our flight status tools

United Airlines - Flight Check In Check in for your United or United Express-operated flight, depending on where you are in your travel experience

United Airlines Reservations - Book a Flight on More Than 80 Airlines Search for flights on United and more than 80 airlines. Find adult, senior, child and pet fares, and use money or miles to book. Apply promo codes and use certificates

Travel Information and Guidelines | United Airlines Airport information Learn about our airport check-in process, expedited security programs like TSA PreCheck® and our United Clubs

United App | United Airlines From planning, to booking, to the day of travel, the United App has got you covered. Download the app to check-in your flight, manage your trip, view flight status, boarding pass, and more

Related to united society of believers

Visit the Shaker property in Shirley this fall (Sentinel & Enterprise1y) SHIRLEY — The United

Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, more commonly known as the Shakers, had a community in Shirley for over 100 years. From 1793 - 1908 the group lived, worked, and
Visit the Shaker property in Shirley this fall (Sentinel & Enterprise1y) SHIRLEY — The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, more commonly known as the Shakers, had a community in Shirley for over 100 years. From 1793 - 1908 the group lived, worked, and
'One Shaker Life: Isaac Newton Youngs, 1793-1865' (The Chronicle of Higher Education19y) As a youth in New Lebanon, N.Y., Isaac Newton Youngs was something of a rebel. He was also a Shaker, and that created a problem. The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, better

'One Shaker Life: Isaac Newton Youngs, 1793-1865' (The Chronicle of Higher Education19y) As a youth in New Lebanon, N.Y., Isaac Newton Youngs was something of a rebel. He was also a Shaker, and that created a problem. The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, better

Travails of a religious group during the Civil War (Richmond Register2y) Religious communities in Kentucky sustained the loss of food, crops, livestock and other necessities of life during the Civil War. The sect known as the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second

Travails of a religious group during the Civil War (Richmond Register2y) Religious communities in Kentucky sustained the loss of food, crops, livestock and other necessities of life during the Civil War. The sect known as the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second

Shaker Obit (NPR24y) One of the few remaining Shakers, Sister Marie F. Burgess, died this week at the age of 81. The Shakers, a Christian sect formed in England in the 1770s, are formally known as the United Society of

Shaker Obit (NPR24y) One of the few remaining Shakers, Sister Marie F. Burgess, died this week at the age of 81. The Shakers, a Christian sect formed in England in the 1770s, are formally known as the United Society of

Religion: One More River to Cross (Time2mon) Sister Sadie Neale is not worried about the atom bomb. Her mind is on more important things—the great days of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, whom the “world's people”

Religion: One More River to Cross (Time2mon) Sister Sadie Neale is not worried about the atom bomb. Her mind is on more important things—the great days of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, whom the “world's people”

Shakers once attempted to build a community in Windsor: What happened (pressconnects1y) It is the second half of the 19th century, and there were great changes for the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing. If you are not familiar with that name, you might be more

Shakers once attempted to build a community in Windsor: What happened (pressconnects1y) It is the second half of the 19th century, and there were great changes for the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing. If you are not familiar with that name, you might be more

Related Articles

- [sex and the city kiss and tell](#)
- [dan brown new book the solomon key](#)
- [order of the phoenix first edition](#)

[Back to Home](#)