

Crafting utopia

Shaker exhibit opens at Davenport museum

By Alma Gaul
QUAD-CITY TIMES

They were a deeply spiritual people who believed in equality of the sexes, communal ownership of property and glorification of God in everything they did.

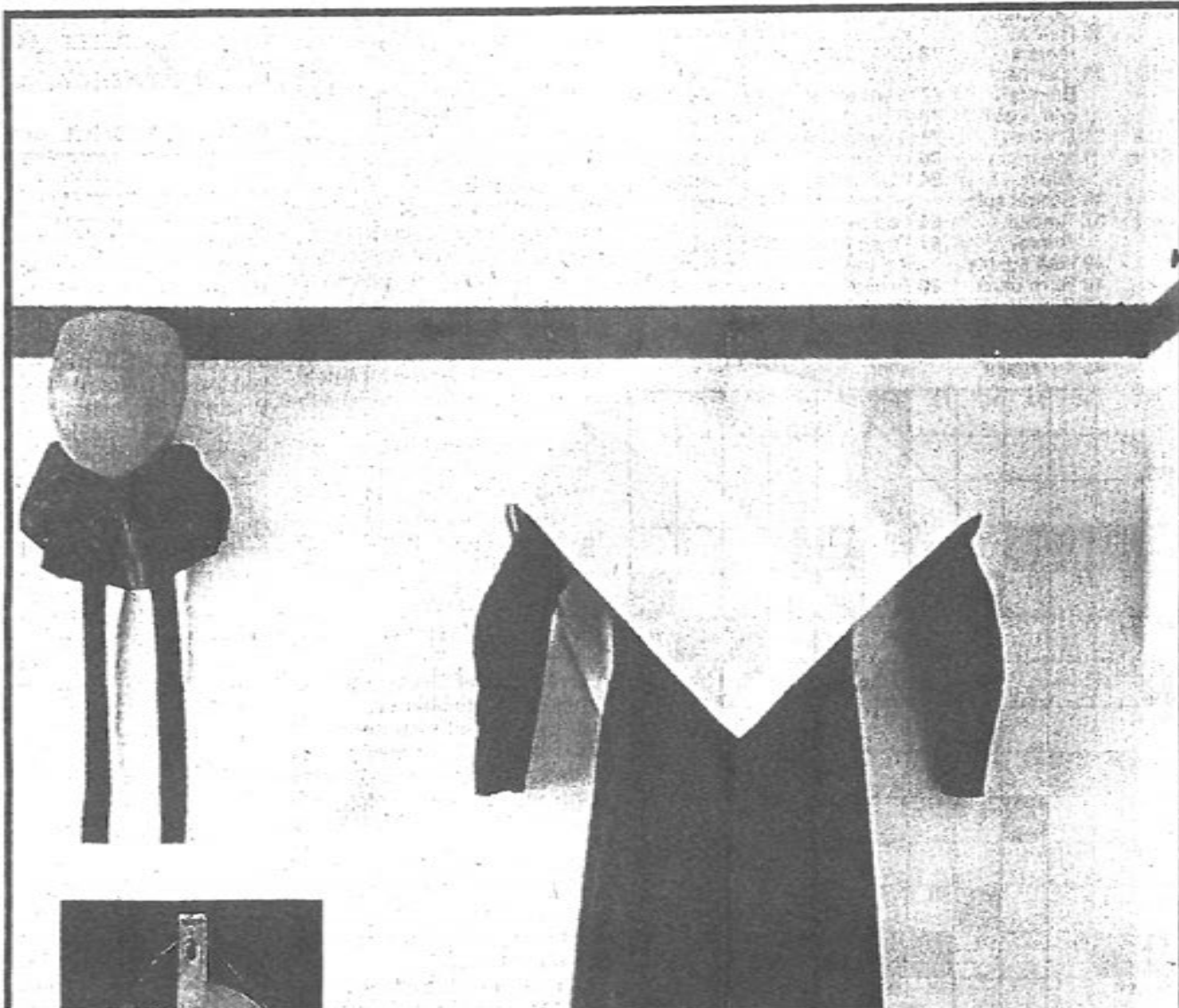
They were called the Shakers, a religious offshoot of the Quakers who got their nickname from their practice of whirling, trembling or shaking during services.

They flourished in various communities between 1830 and 1850, then gradually declined, but left behind a legacy of simplicity and integrity that continues to influence American folk art and

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aesthetics.

You can see part of that legacy beginning Sunday, Oct. 1, when the Davenport Museum of Art presents a major exhibit of Shaker work called "Crafting Utopia. The Art of Shaker Women."

Collected from the Hancock, Mass., Shaker village that dissolved in 1960, the exhibit features 125 artifacts such as fine furniture, tools and textiles that reflect the significant role of Shaker people in American social, religious and economic life.

In conjunction with the display, the museum has organized 10 special programs highlighting music, food and crafts.

An opening reception will be 1-4 p.m., with music and a dance demonstration, guided tours of the exhibit and pie and cider. The exhibit continues through Nov. 26.

The museum chose this particular exhibit because it meets many criteria: it is of high quality (after the showing in Davenport, these objects will travel to The Louvre in Paris), it features a variety of objects, it has never been done in this area before and it

— SHAKER

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AT A GLANCE

What: "Crafting Utopia, The Art of Shaker Women," an exhibit featuring 125 objects such as furniture, tools and textiles reflecting the significant role of Shaker people in American life, supplemented by educational programs and family activities.

When: Oct. 1-Nov. 26. Hours are 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursdays and 1-4:30 p.m. Sundays.

Where: Davenport Museum of Art, 1737 W. 12th St., Davenport

How much: The exhibit and most programs are free, but donations are appreciated.

Tours: Docent-guided tours are free, but must be arranged in advance. To schedule, please call (319) 888-2045

Sponsors: The Beaux Arts Committee Fund Inc., and the *Quad-City Times*

ABOUT THE PHOTOS

MAIN: A sister's cloak and bonnet are among the textiles that will be part of the Shaker exhibit.

TOP TO BOTTOM: An apple peeler was a useful Shaker tool. The skills used to make lidded baskets were shared by men and women.

Wooden forms were used to help fashion baskets.

DAVENPORT MUSEUM OF ART

'THE ART OF THE SHAKER WOMEN'

Shaker: Davenport couple admire group for its sacrifices

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s for a multitude of educa-
tie-ins, Angela Carlson, of
useum, says.

s a fun show, and differ-
she says. "Everybody
find something that they
in it."

ough it's called "The Art
aker Women," curators
know if men or women
the particular pieces on
it because the craftspeople
t sign them. To do so would
een a mark of pride, and
as frowned upon.

point is, women could
made them because they

were active in all facets of
Shaker society, not relegated to
only cooking and housework,
and the exhibit explores their
role, Carlson says.

Although furniture may be the
Shakers' best-known legacy, it is
only one aspect of their work.

Shakers wanted to glorify God
through all of their labor,
whether they were peeling a
potato, mending a dress, sweep-
ing a floor, or turning a chair
leg, Carlson says. Spirituality
permeated every aspect of their
lives. By living mindfully, in
conscious emulation of Christ,
the Shakers aspired to create a

heaven on this earth.

Several Quad-City residents
are involved in the programs.

Stephen Burks, music direc-
tor of St. John's United
Methodist Church, Davenport,
and his wife, Laura Nealy
Burks, will present the song-
and-dance program at the open-
ing reception, and they orga-
nized a program of Shaker
music that will be performed at
the church on Sunday, Nov. 5.

The Burks have a personal
interest in the Shakers and
Nealy Burks has previously re-
created Shaker worship ser-
vices, directed a play and

worked in a Shaker museum in
Smith Union, Ky., near where
she grew up.

Both admire the Shakers
because of their willingness to
make personal sacrifices for
their beliefs and faith.

The St. John's event will fea-
ture the church's 30-member
orchestra playing "Shaker Vari-
ants," as well as about 60 singers
and instrumental solos. "It will
be a nice event, interspersed
with singing and dancing,"
Burks says.

"What sets Shaker music
apart from the folk music of its
day is the lyrics," Burks says.

Many songs, for example,
refer to "Mother Ann," or Ann
Lee, the enthusiastic, outspo-
ken, charismatic and visionary
Shaker leader who evangelized
throughout New England.

Songs also refer to humility, to
bending (as in bending before
God, giving up everything to
God), to willow trees and to
water, he says.

In addition to music, there
will be spoken-word interpreta-
tions of Shaker teachings that
are readily available from repro-
ductions of the meticulous jour-
nals they kept, Burks says.

Other Quad-Citians con-

tributing to the programs:

■ Patti Hawkins, a Moline
fiber artist, will discuss the his-
tory of Shaker basket tech-
niques and show how she incor-
porates them in her contempo-
rary baskets.

■ Professors Gary A. Mann
and Myron Fogde, both of
Augustana College, Rock Island,
will present programs on
Shaker beliefs and utopias.
Fogde's talk will acknowledge
the similarity between the
Shaker community at Pleasant
Hill, Ky., and Bishop Hill, Ill.

The exhibit was organized by
International Arts and Artists.

Music, food part of Shaker programs

The opening reception for the
Shaker exhibit at the Davenport
Museum of Art will be 1-4 p.m.
Sunday, Oct. 1, in the main
gallery.

Tours will be at 1:30, 2:15, and
3 p.m., with trained guides inter-
preting the objects and explain-
ing the story behind them.

At the beginning of each tour,
Stephen Burks and Laura Nealy
Burks, both former members of
the South Union (Ky.) Shaker
quartet, will present a short
program featuring traditional
Shaker songs and dances.

Pie and cider will be served
throughout the afternoon in the
Museum Auditorium. Free, dona-
tions appreciated.

Here are other attractions:
Educators Explore

Luncheon, 1737 W. 12th St., Davenport, Iowa, 52804. Reservations are required by Oct. 25. Cost: \$10.

■ **Lecture, Craft Demonstration**
7-8:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 2,
Wiese Auditorium

Moline fiber artist Patti Hawkins
will discuss the history of Shaker
basket techniques and show how
she incorporates them in her con-
temporary baskets. Free.

■ **Celebration of Shaker Music**
7-8 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 5, St. John's
United Methodist Church, 14th
and Brady streets, Davenport

This program will feature instru-
mental, vocal and spoken-word
interpretations of Shaker teach-

SHAKER Q&A

Who were the Shakers?

The American Shaker church
was founded in 1774 by a small
group of followers from Man-
chester, England. In 1787 the
Shakers founded a central inde-
pendent communal colony at
New Lebanon, N.Y., where they
could live, work and worship
without persecution. As more
followers joined this faith, 19
Shaker communities were
established in New York, Mass-
achusetts, Connecticut, New
Hampshire, Maine, Ohio, Ken-
tucky and Indiana.

**Why were they called
"Shakers"?**

The United Society of Believers
in Christ's Second Appearing
was the official name of this
group, but they are more com-
monly known as Shakers. They
earned the name Shakers, or
"Shaking Quakers" because of
their ecstatic group dancing.

**Why is Shaker design so
relevant to people today?**

**What makes Shaker objects
so unique?**

Shaker design is distinguished
by simplicity of form, harmo-
nious relationship of parts, good
workmanship, and utility. Even
the simplest of Shaker items
suggest a very high quality of
workmanship and appreciation
for the natural beauty of materi-
als. Shaker craftsmen were not
usually permitted to sign their
works, for this represented a dis-
play of personal pride.

**Why is the Shaker style so
popular?**

Shaker furniture has never
been more popular than today.
Whether it's because Shaker
forms evoke a purer lifestyle or
because they are purely beauti-
ful, their simple lines and
uncluttered surfaces have
appealed to furniture buyers for