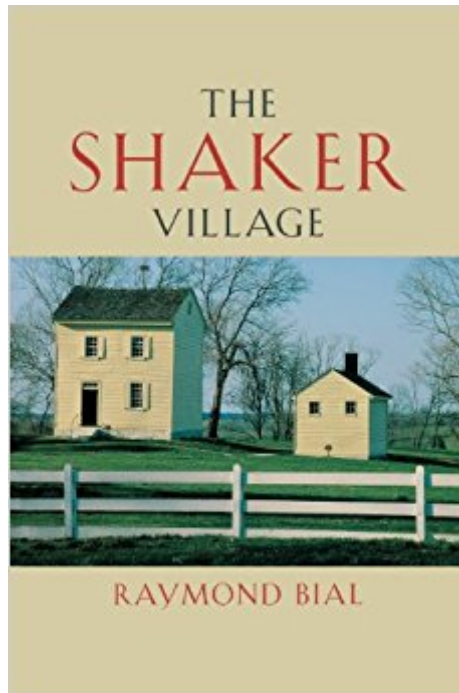




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# The Shaker Village



## Synopsis

The Shaker faith is estimated to have had a total of fewer than 20,000 members across its 250-year history, yet more than 100,000 people visit the various Shaker villages and museums scattered across the eastern United States every year. We are still fascinated with the world of the Shakers, and authentic examples of Shaker architecture, furniture, and crafts are prized wherever they remain. In *The Shaker Village*, author and photographer Raymond Bial brings readers the history of the Shaker religion and an examination of the Shaker way of life, which was based on cooperation and self-sufficiency. Each Shaker village was built with the goal of creating a heaven on earth for its inhabitants. The Shaker people were among the first in America to apply science and new learning directly to traditional farming and homekeeping. They invented or improved significantly upon designs of many farm and household items, including some still used today: the flat broom, the slotted spoon, the circular saw, and the idea of selling gardening seeds in packets. Although each Shaker community was self-supporting, the Shakers' success at applying their core values—simplicity, utility, and tranquility—carried Shaker villages to a point of abundance: they were able to export their beautiful furniture, delicious foods, and superior wares to the outside world, where they have been appreciated ever since. *The Shaker Village* is generously illustrated with Bial's evocative photographs of buildings and artifacts from the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, one of the largest and best-preserved Shaker sites. The Shaker movement reached its peak in the mid-nineteenth century. Membership began to drop with the onset of the Civil War, and as the new promise of industrialization began to take hold in America, Shaker numbers steadily dwindled. Although the Shaker religion has all but departed, *The Shaker Village* captures a revelatory glimpse of a legacy that still resounds with modern Americans.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Mirroring the simplicity and elegance of a Shaker chair, this book captures the spirit of a very special people. It is an eloquent introduction to the history and philosophy of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, commonly known as the Shakers. After relating the founding of the sect and discussing the ideals that guided (and still guide) the lives of its members, Bial details both daily living and worship. His enthusiasm for his subject truly shines in his discussion of their workshops and marvelous creations, inventions, and innovations. With one look at the flat broom, clothes pins, oval boxes, furniture, and architecture, readers will fully understand the shaker belief that, 'Anything may be called perfect which perfectly answers the purpose for which it was designed.' The author's exquisite full-color photographs, taken at The Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, reflect the clean lines of the people's art and architecture as well as the order of their lives." [— School Library Journal](#)

"Similar in format to the author-photographer's *Amish Home*, this handsome volume introduces the traditional Shaker way of life in a thoughtful text and well-composed, full-color photographs. Focusing on the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, the pictures show the buildings, fields, seeds, tools, and furniture of the people who live there. With no one in sight, the beautifully lit photos use the Shakers' surroundings to express the integrity and simplicity of their ways. From the origins of the sect of their beliefs activities, clothing, inventiveness, skills, and humanity, the text describes the people as they lived, worked, and changed. To Bial's credit, he's made a book with as much integrity as his subject."

[— Booklist](#)

"An appreciation of one of America's most significant communal groups. Bial perfectly reflects the Shaker ideal of functional simplicity in his summation of the Shakers' origins, mode of life, and devotion to productive work (their legacy includes such sensible inventions as the flat broom, the hay rake, and the slotted spoon as well as the clean-lined furniture that has come to command such high prices as to distress the few remaining Shakers.) Like his lucid text, the author's beautifully composed, uncaptioned color photos [—](#) neatly framed in fine rule [—](#) have a grace and clarity that echo the Shakers' open, light-filled buildings. An excellent introduction to a group whose ingenuity and striving for perfection have had an impact disproportionate to its small membership." [— Kirkus Reviews](#)

"Bial is a master at recreating the historical and philosophical contexts of the objects he photographs. Bial does justice to the

community by devoting as much space to the Shakers' religious beliefs as to their art and inventions. He shows how the simplicity of Shaker furniture grew out of the Shakers' desire to live a plain life" [Greenbelt Interfaith News](#)"Bial tells the story of the Shaker people with straightforward language and remarkable photography." [The Manchester Enterprise](#)"For readers needing a reliable summary of Shaker belief and customs, this book will deliver" [with beautiful views of Kentucky's precious treasure: the restored Pleasant Hill.](#)" [Karl Lietzenmayer, Northern Kentucky Heritage](#)"Raymond Bial's latest book offers a wonderful introduction to Shaker belief, history, and lifestyle. Highly recommended for all libraries." [Nancy Richey, WKU](#)"Anyone interested in the history of Shakers . . . should have this book. The book is an easy resource introduction for those who want to know more about the Shakers without having to read a long reference book." [Debbie Jenkins Cook, The Harrodsburg Herald](#)"Though this is an excellent introductory volume for children or young adults, its appeal will not be limited by age. The familiar 18th-century Shaker song 'Tis a Gift To Be Simple' ably describes this delightful book. Highly recommended." [Nancy Richey, Library Journal](#)"[Bial's] eye for color, depth and contrast do an excellent job of capturing the life of the community." [Bowling Green Daily News](#)"

Raymond Bial has published more than eighty books of photographs, including *Amish Home* and *Mist over the Mountains: Appalachia and Its People*. He lives in Urbana, Illinois, with his wife and children.

I had to write a research paper for my Fiber's class (weaving), and I chose to write about the Shaker-Quakers' weaving. This book helped me with the background of the Shaker's community. The book was very informative but not overwhelming. It was good enough for a quick outlook on the life of the Quakers, and their outcome.

Love it!

this book is overpriced for information that is free on the internet. There is no depth with just general information. The photos are OK.

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A Shaker Family Album: Photographs from the Collection of Canterbury Shaker

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