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Reaching an apogee of 6,000 members in the years just before the Civil War, the Shaker movement was the most extensive, enduring, and successful utopian society ever established in America. Leaving Manchester, England, in 1776 to avoid persecution, the Shakers crossed the Atlantic and during the next 50 years established 19 villages from Maine to Kentucky.

The Shakers were guided by the principles of utility, honesty, and order in both their work and worship, and this belief system influenced the physical expression of the goods they produced for use at home and for sale outside their communities. This lovely book presents a wide array of extraordinarily fine examples of Shaker furniture, household objects, textiles, religious drawings, and items made to sell to the "world's people" (non-Shakers). The book's expert contributors discuss Shaker design in relation to the furniture they constructed, the products they sold, their gift drawings and spirituality, and their rejection of American Fancy design. The book also considers the powerful inspiration Shaker design has provided for diverse modern and contemporary designers, including George Nakashima, Roy McMakin, Thomas Moser, and Scandinavian furniture makers.