



The Kentucky Shakers

Julia Neal

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In 1805, at the height of the period of early religious excitement in Kentucky, three members of the Shaker community in New Lebanon, New York, came to the Commonwealth of Kentucky to recruit converts. Soon there were little communities of Believers at Pleasant Hill in Mercer County and at South Union in Logan County. These settlements survived into the twentieth century as centers of worship and communal life; the buildings the Shakers erected here and many of their tools and artifacts remain to delight the eye today. But it is the life of the Shakers as well as the monuments they left that Julia Neal explores. Using the detailed journals and other records kept at both communities, she recounts the early struggles against poverty and persecution, the high hopes of the 1850s when the Shaker idea of communal life seemed to have borne fruit at last, and the hardship and violence of Civil War and Reconstruction days, from which the Kentucky Shakers were never to recover. This absorbing account of the Shakers at Pleasant Hill and South Union is, like so much else associated with the Shakers, simple, functional, and beautiful.



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