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Outside Sources for Shaker Building at Pleasant Hill

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Most of the Shaker architecture at the central Kentucky village of Pleasant Hill conforms to a unified style of building. Since the Pleasant Hill Shakers were pietistic communitarians, it is not surprising that they normally followed an idiom developed by other communitarians, especially by earlier Shaker builders. After the mid-1820s, however, they deviated from their usual practice and were influenced by certain public structures and by builders' handbooks. These more worldly and academic elements in Shaker buildings were simplified and abstracted in accordance with the Shaker manner. The real significance of Pleasant Hill as an architectural monument is, therefore, that it reveals evolving ideals in building. The alteration in architectural style during the period can be linked to political and cultural changes, and to the master builder, Micajah Burnett.

The Shaker manner of building was determined long before Pleasant Hill was founded in 1805. Shakerism already was established in nine settlements in various parts of New York and New England by the end of the eighteenth century, when shortly thereafter six more communities were formed in Ohio and Kentucky. A common style of architecture evolved because plans and labor were shared from one Shaker village to another; and, inasmuch as each group was part of a federated system, designs were sent to the central governing body at New Lebanon, New York, for approval and perhaps changes. The lifestyle of the Shakers was reflected in their architecture. As is well known, the Shakers lived apart from the world, held a community of goods, adhered to the ideals of order and utilitarianism in everything they did, and strove for a purity in their relationships to one another that included celibacy. Buildings showed clean lines and functionalism rather than the architectural styles of the day. This makes it difficult at times to determine the date of a Shaker building by looking at it, as one can with secular architecture.
Fig. 1  Centre Family Dwelling House, 1824-34. 1977 photograph.
The characteristics of early Pleasant Hill buildings were partly determined by the local building vernacular of central Kentucky. This included not only forms and methods of building but also materials. The first stone house of 1809 is an example of a three-bay, two-and-a-half story limestone building adapted to suit Shaker needs from a type common and proper to central Kentucky. But for the most part, the early buildings of Pleasant Hill were based on Shaker prototypes from the northeastern United States. These in turn had been modeled after frame buildings common to New England. When manifested in Kentucky, the forms were translated into the two more durable regional materials, brick and limestone. Soon the Pleasant Hill Shakers also were adapting a regional feature, the rear ell, to their large buildings. The second stone Centre Family Dwelling House of 1812-1815, the first to have this feature, had originally been planned with a detached kitchen, but the joining of the back wing to the house itself had been ordained by the governing body at New Lebanon. All subsequent residential buildings included this feature, always on axis, and it became a distinct characteristic of the examples of the village. Thus Pleasant Hill architecture was a blend of eastern and local design and media.

This communal style of building was modified during the mid 1820s. In the third permanent Centre Family Dwelling House (fig. 1) one can observe a general adherence to Shaker principles of simplicity and utilitarianism. However, the treatment of several elements on the exterior, which was under construction from 1824 to 1827, and on the interior, completed in 1833 and 1834, seems to belie the Shaker ideals in building. The two-and-one-half story, forty room structure, with a six-by-four-bay main block and an attached ell nine bays long, was the largest and most handsome of the buildings at Pleasant Hill. The monumental size of the dwelling was not uncommon for buildings of well-established communitarian sects. Nevertheless, the Centre Family House, unlike earlier dwellings at Pleasant Hill, was bigger than other residential structures in Kentucky at the time. Therefore this Shaker building can be related more to public than to residential architecture of the central Kentucky region. It can also be connected, for specific details, with builders' handbooks.

One of two unusual elements on the exterior of the Centre Family Dwelling House is the balustrade on the flat section of the roof. The balustrade is rare in Shaker building because it is a decorative, non-functional element. Balustrades were not a common
Fig. 2 The Principal Building of Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, c. 1818. 1828 engraving.
feature of contemporary residential architecture in Kentucky, but they could be found on important public buildings such as the academic building at Transylvania University in Lexington. This building is known to us today by a drawing made by the Kentucky portraitist Matthew Jouett, which was later engraved by Enoch G. Gridley (fig. 2). Occupied in 1818 and destroyed by fire in 1829, the academic building was constructed with modifications from an original 1816 design of Matthew Kennedy, one of Lexington's earliest architects. The balustrade that surmounts the cornice on the Transylvania building may very well have been a contemporary visual model for the Shaker builders of the Centre Family Dwelling House. An early engraving of the third stone Centre Family House, published in the 1847 edition of Lewis Collins's *Historical Sketches of Kentucky* confirms that the balustrade embellished the flat level of the Shaker roof as early as 1847, and was most likely executed as part of the original building project of the exterior from 1824 to 1827.

For the balustrade it is possible not only that the Shakers followed this fine visual model about twenty-five miles from their village but also that they turned to one of the many builders' handbooks circulating in the area at the time. The balusters that appeared on the Centre Family House were a simplified version of the many examples in these handbooks. For example, plate 40 in Abraham Swan's *The British Architect* (London, 1757; Boston, 1794) and plate 1 in William Pain's *The Builder's Pocket Treasure* (London, 1763; Boston, 1794) featured numerous balusters for the builder to copy. Both of these architectural books were advertised for sale at John Bradford's bookstore in Lexington in the 27 June 1795 issue of the *Kentucky Gazette*, and the latter book was again advertised in several issues of the same newspaper in 1810. The Shakers could well have had access to these design books. In fact, the very existence of the worldly balustrade on one of the Shaker buildings indicates contact with Lexington, either for the visual models of public buildings or for the architectural books in the bookstores.

The lantern on the roof line is the second specific exterior feature of the third Centre Family Dwelling House that can be traced to outside sources or influences (fig. 3). This lantern was probably modeled in spirit after a traditional cupola which was a round or polygonal form such as the one atop the roof of the Transylvania Building (see fig. 2). In actuality, however, it appears to be a
Fig. 3  Lantern and balustrade, Centre Family House, 1824-34. 1977 photograph.
modification of a dormer design, with windows on both sides of the structure. As Dolores Hayden has noted, communitarians delighted in establishing vantage points in order to survey their self-sufficient economies. In addition to this lookout to the north and south, there was another such lantern over the ell section of the building which provided distant vistas to the east and west.

A closer look at the Shaker lantern (fig. 3) reveals that the windows are arched or round-headed, with glazing bars that curve to points at the top. Surrounding the windows are a broken pediment and simplified engaged pilasters, modified classical elements. Since dormers were not a common feature of contemporary Kentucky residential architecture and since dormers with arched windows were even more scarce, it seems likely that a book provided the inspiration for this feature at Pleasant Hill.

A design for an arched window dormer on plate 19 of Owen Biddle's *The Young Carpenter's Assistant* (fig. 4) published in Philadelphia in 1810, seems to be a possible source for the lantern. Biddle's pattern was probably based on a much earlier Palladian style window, because this type of dormer had been used on fine homes in the East as early as 1723 and especially in the thirty years preceding the Revolution. A comparison of the facade of the Shaker lantern with the plate shows that the Shakers modified the traditional design. The Shaker lantern reflects in a simplified manner the classical elements of the broken pediment and engaged pilasters in the guidebook, but the entablature and keystone on the arch have been omitted. The curved part of the mullions on the Shaker window end in a point, rather than crossing, as in the Biddle design. In addition, the dentils and the fluting of the pilasters in the book are omitted. These modifications reflect the Shaker values of simplicity and austerity. Academic sources for Shaker building are unprecedented and undocumented, since this communitarian sect did not condone reading or learning outside the "3 R's." However, the choice of an early, traditional design rather than a contemporary pattern is in keeping with the Shaker's timeless sense of style.

The likelihood that the dormer design in Owen Biddle's *The Young Carpenter's Assistant* of 1810 was known by the Shaker builders at Pleasant Hill is high. On the frontispiece of this book is printed "published by Johnson and Warner, and sold at their book stores in Philadelphia; Richmond, Virginia; and Lexington, Kentucky." Newspaper advertisements for "Biddles Architecture" in
Fig. 4 Dormer design from Owen Biddle, *The Young Carpenter's Assistant*, 1810, pl. 19.
every weekly *Kentucky Gazette* from 20 March to 12 June of 1810 verify that it was available in Lexington's Johnson and Warner book store. Accounts in Shaker journals and expense books from 1810 to 1817 indicate that the Pleasant Hill Shakers travelled fairly often to Lexington for business reasons. In fact, mention is made of Micajah Burnett, the Shaker master builder, visiting the city in March and in August of 1816. Therefore, it is quite probable that the Shakers had knowledge of architectural books available in Lexington, or at least were familiar with the buildings in the city at that time.

A most unusual feature of the third stone Centre Family House and of Shaker architecture in general can be found on the interior of the dwelling. In the dining hall, two half-round engaged classical columns articulate each of the two side walls (fig. 5). Two free-standing columns on pedestals divide the center of the room and stand in direct alignment with the engaged columns on either side. The simplest of the classical orders, the Tuscan, has been employed, probably for the effect of severity and simplicity. On the one hand, the use of classical columns in the center of an interior space is quite uncommon and somewhat provincial. On the other hand, the use of the engaged columns as responds for (i.e. in direct alignment with) the free-standing columns reflects a sophisticated knowledge of classical practice that has few, if any, known precedents in central Kentucky at this time. In addition, the use of the engaged columns on the side walls tends to be more decorative than functional. This concern for aesthetics rather than for pure function is unprecedented in Shaker architecture. Furthermore, classical columns, even in their simplest form, have no known antecedents in the architecture of a pietistic communitarian group such as the Shakers.

The classical orders, including the Tuscan, appeared in the earliest builders' handbooks in America. As mentioned earlier, the handbooks of William Pain, Abraham Swan, and Owen Biddle were available in Kentucky at this time. Pain's *The Builder's Pocket Treasure* illustrated the Tuscan order on plate 4. Swan's *The British Architect* gave the proportions of the five classical orders and in plate 1 pictured a column of the Tuscan order. The 1810 edition of Biddle's *The Young Carpenter's Assistant* also showed the Tuscan order, with pedestal and entablature, on plate 7. Both Swan's and Biddle's books indicate that the height of a Tuscan column from the base to the capital should be seven times the diameter of the
Fig. 5  Dining hall with engaged and free-standing Tuscan columns, Centre Family House, 1824-34. 1977 photograph.
column at the bottom of the shaft. At just over nine feet two inches tall, the Shaker free-standing columns are nine times their diameter at the base of the shaft. The engaged columns are slightly more elongated than their free-standing counterparts, as their diameter at the base is a little narrower and their height several inches longer. Thus although the Shakers were concerned with proportion, they did not slavishly imitate the canons of the books.

While builders' handbooks may have been the actual working source for the use of classical columns on the interior of the Shaker building, the visual model or inspiration may have come from the interior of the Old State Capitol built in Frankfort, Kentucky, between 1827 and 1829. The chamber of the House of Representatives features Tuscan columns on pedestals as supports for a gallery. These columns are similar to those in the Shaker dining room (cf. figs. 6 and 7). The capitol building designed by Gideon Shryock has been characterized as the first example of the Greek Revival style in Kentucky because of the colossal Ionic portico of the exterior. In Kentucky, however, architectural styles, including the Greek Revival, were not practiced in their purest form but rather were incorporated in eclectic blends. As a result, the interior of the Old State Capitol is not as trend setting as its exterior. The use of Tuscan columns on the interior, for example, is Roman, rather than Greek, especially since the columns rise from pedestals rather than directly from the floor. The fanlight above the doorway to the chamber of the House (fig. 7) is a reflection of the Neoclassical or Federal style that was popular in the eastern part of the country in the preceding decades. This fanlight, similar to the one over the doorway in the Shaker dining hall (fig. 6), helps to corroborate the idea that the Shakers may have remembered the interior of the Old State Capitol, when they were completing the interior of the Centre Family House. Again, it appears that a prestigious public building in Kentucky has served as the visual model for elements in the largest Shaker dwelling house.

The third stone Centre Family House was not the only building at Pleasant Hill to reveal non-Shaker sources for its architectural forms, however. The second North Lot House of 1831-1832, which was destroyed by fire in 1946, had a semicircular transom on its portal that resembles the treatments of the portals on such wealthy houses in the area as Wickland (1813) at Bardstown, or the Owings House (c. 1814) in Owingsville, Kentucky. The half-round transom with sidelights was constructed on the Shaker building almost two
Fig. 6  Free-standing Tuscan column in dining hall, Centre Family House, 1824-34. 1977 photograph.
Fig. 7  House of Representatives Chamber, Old State Capitol, Frankfort, Kentucky, 1827-29. 1977 photograph.
decades after its use on other Kentucky structures and three decades after the latest appearance of half-round fanlights on domestic architecture in the East. This late application of an earlier fashionable architectural form reflects, on the one hand, provincialism and, on the other, a more worldly and sophisticated approach than is usually characteristic of the Shaker sect.

The Trustees' Office of 1839-1841 also reveals architectural forms that have their precedents in earlier fashionable architecture of the region, rather than in Shaker or communitarian building. For example, the square-headed triple windows in the Palladium scheme which appear on the front of the Trustees' Office could have been inspired by those on the front of the 1816 Transylvania building in Lexington (fig. 2). Likewise, the elliptical fanlight on the portal of the Trustees' Office is a simplified and late use of a popular form that appeared on domestic architecture in the East from the 1790s until about 1820 as part of the Federal style. In Kentucky, the elliptical fanlight was employed on such fine Lexington homes as the Hunt-Morgan House (1814), Mount Hope (c. 1819), or the Bodley House (c. 1815). All of these houses face the Transylvania green (now Gratz Park) which was headed at the north end from 1818 to 1829 by the Transylvania academic building. The Shakers were likely, therefore, to have been aware of these Lexington homes, but the fanlights on these houses were quite elaborate. Other simpler portal designs in the region offered inspiration more akin to the Shaker manner. The elliptical fanlights of the Ephraim McDowell House (1795) in nearby Danville, for instance, and of Old Centre (1819-1820) on the Centre College campus, also in Danville, may have provided visual prototypes for the Trustees' Office portal.

Further reflections of earlier fashionable architecture at the Trustees' Office are the twin circular staircases that spiral gracefully to the third floor (fig. 8). These are without precedent in Shakerdom. The staircase design appears to be a late adaptation of one of the features of the Adam style in England that came to America and was known here as the Federal style. Designs for spiral staircases were published in books such as Pain's *British Palladio* (London, 1790; see fig. 9) and Asher Benjamin's *American Builder's Companion* (Boston, 1806). In Lexington two of the houses near the Transylvania campus previously cited for their elliptical fanlights have stairways that may have provided inspiration for the Shakers. At the corner of Mill and Second
Fig. 8  Spiral staircase, Trustees' Office, 1839-41.
Fig. 9  Circular and oval staircase designs from William Pain, *Pain's British Palladio*, 1790, pl. 41.
Streets, the Hunt-Morgan House stairway curves stiffly upward along the rectangular sections of one inner and two outer walls. The Bodley House, on the corner of Market and Second Streets, has an elliptical stairway at one side of the front hall that spirals upward connecting three floors. Although quite different in form, the circular stair designed by Gideon Shryock at the Old State Capitol (1827-1829) in Frankfort is a further possible source of inspiration for the Shakers' twin staircases. At the time that the Trustees' Office was built (1839-1841) outside laborers were employed by the Shakers, and oral history indicates that at least one of them had also been employed to build the circular stair at the Old State Capitol, ten to twelve years earlier. It appears, therefore, that forms of the Adam style in England and of the Federal style in the East were making a late appearance in Kentucky: in Lexington by 1815, at the Old State Capitol in Frankfort by 1827 to 1829 and at the Shaker village of Pleasant Hill, another decade later.

Political changes were among the factors which caused the deviation from the pure communitarian style of building at Pleasant Hill. Dolores Hayden has indicated that the strength or the weakness of the leadership in a communal society is a significant factor in the consistency of the architectural style of that village. Ties between Pleasant Hill and New Lebanon, the center of the sect in America, were tenuous, and during the 1820s there was conflict among the members of the Kentucky community.

The ministry at New Lebanon had given supreme charge of the western Shaker societies to Father David Darrow at Union Village in Ohio. According to F. Gerald Ham's study of western Shakerism, the leaders at New Lebanon allowed Darrow to decide what orders the western Shakers were able to endure. Because of this, the West early lagged behind the East in communal regulation. After the death in 1821 of Mother Lucy Wright, the supreme head of Shakerism, there was no longer any single respected authority in New Lebanon, and Darrow looked less and less to the East for counsel. In the later years the western bishopric was almost completely independent of the New York community. A spirit of the world infiltrated the West's communal societies, and even capitalistic practices became evident.

The leadership within Pleasant Hill also underwent change. After Father John Meacham retired to New Lebanon in 1818, his position as head of the Pleasant Hill bishopric passed to the saintly and
incompetent Mother Lucy Smith. Then in 1825 a revolt against the theocratic government at Pleasant Hill took place. John Whitbey led a faction which forced the decentralization of control in the Pleasant Hill community. Elders and deacons were now to be elected by all members of the church. The church lands, livestock, and property were no longer to be owned communally but were divided among the West, Center, and East families.

When the elders and the chief Ministry of Union Village were sent to Pleasant Hill in 1827 to take control, they found a "deplorable state & condition . . . of infidelity, independence, & opposition." They also found that intercourse with the people of the world had become blatant. The Union Village Ministry removed Mother Lucy Smith from her position of leadership. James Rankin, who had come to the Pleasant Hill society in 1809 at the age of sixteen was appointed to the Ministry in 1830, an appointment which marked the commencement in the following decade of a completely native leadership. This native leadership, which had no links or previous experience with the New Lebanon Ministry, contributed to the weakening of ties with the central authority of Shakerism.

The increasing independence of the western Shaker communities from New Lebanon made possible the inclusion of worldly elements in the architecture at Pleasant Hill and meant that the buildings there became less reflective of the previous models of the East. The internal strife within the village affected the structures in more specific ways. In a letter of 1827 to Union Village the New Lebanon Ministry described what they perceived as the prevailing spirit at Pleasant Hill:

What a pity it is that such a sense and spirit should get in among believers! A republican sense! and therefore very honorable in our land .... But believers ought to know that this [republican] government is of the world, and does not belong to the kingdom of Christ.

This spirit was quelled somewhat by 1828 when order and communal sharing had been restored. However, its effects lingered. Classical elements, which are more representative of a republican than of a communal society, began to appear at Pleasant Hill. Thomas Jefferson, in order to symbolize the new American republic, had modeled the University of Virginia and the Virginia
the State Capitol on ancient Roman buildings. The classical columns in
the dining hall of the Centre Family House and the Palladian-
derived elements at Pleasant Hill reflect the republican spirit that
had infiltrated the village.

The Shakers' use of classical elements in architecture was in part
an indirect result of the dissension in the village. As many as forty-
two covenant members seceded from the Pleasant Hill society
between 1826 and 1831. Many of them sought to recover property
which had been donated to the Shaker community when they had
joined. John Whitbey and seventeen former members presented a
petition in the 1827-1828 session of the Kentucky General Assembly
which led to the state legislature's passing an act that established a
legal basis for bringing suit against a community as a whole. The
Shakers enlisted the aid of a state senator who managed to have the
act rescinded in the 1830-1831 session. Because of these political
activities the Shakers went to Frankfort a number of times while the
Old State Capitol was under construction and again immediately
following its completion. When attending the session of 1830-1831
they could hardly have ignored the impressive circular stairway or
the Tuscan columns and half-round fanlight doorways on the
interior.

The cultural and educational background of the Pleasant Hill
Shakers and of Micajah Burnett in particular, were key elements in
the shift in architectural style. According to an entry of 1879 in the
community's Ministerial Journal, Micajah Burnett "was the
principal Architect of this Village. . . . An accomplished Civil
Engineer, A Masterly Mathematician, A competent Surveyor, A
Mechanic and Machinist of the first order, and a good Mill Wright,
etc." Shaker church records reveal that he came to Pleasant Hill
with his parents and five siblings in 1809, when he was seventeen.
His early education presumably took place in Madison and in
Wayne Counties, Kentucky, where his family lived before they
moved to Pleasant Hill. An indication of his eventual interests and
educational pursuits is provided by a travel account written by
Elder Henry Blinn of the Canterbury, New Hampshire, Shaker
community after his visit to Pleasant Hill in 1873: Brother Micajah
"studied surveying & became proficient. In his shop we found a
large library of excellent books." It is not known today what
books were part of Micajah Burnett's library, but its very existence
indicates that this Shaker was interested in higher levels of
knowledge and learning than were usually espoused by Shakers,
Fig. 10  Sketch of Micajah Burnett by Constantine Rafinesque, c. 1823-26.
who considered education above the “3 R’s” a diversionary tool of the Devil to lure the believer away from the simplicity of the gospel. The Pleasant Hill account book of 1810-1811 and M. Thomas’s journal of 1816-1817 reveal that Shaker believers, and Micajah Burnett specifically, travelled to Lexington, Kentucky, for business reasons in those years. It is quite probable, therefore, that Micajah learned of or purchased builders’ handbooks and architectural books while in Lexington. The architectural details on the Centre Family House alone testify to the fact that the master builder was a well-read and well-travelled individual. The account books and Shaker journals confirm that.

One of the more interesting insights into Micajah Burnett is provided by a drawing of him by Constantine Rafinesque that has been published in a book entitled Rafinesque’s Kentucky Friends (fig. 10). It is noteworthy that Micajah Burnett should be known by and considered a friend of the illustrious professor of botany and natural history at Transylvania University in Lexington. Since Rafinesque’s only years in Kentucky were those spent in Lexington from 1819 to 1826, this drawing can be safely dated in that period.

Constantine Samuel Rafinesque (1783-1840) was primarily a botanist, but his exorbitant number of publications indicate interests in historical, archeological and geological topics as well. In 1823 the Transylvania University professor had an ambitious plan for a botanical garden which was to include a medical garden, a park for pedestrians, an agricultural garden, and a school for farmers. Although Rafinesque’s project ended when his financial subscribers failed, his plan probably attracted considerable attention because in 1823 he had prepared a First Catalogues and Circular of the Garden. This was printed in English and in French for circulation among Rafinesque’s friends and correspondents in America and Europe with the intent of stimulating an exchange of seeds and plants. Surely this enterprise would have interested the Shakers since by the mid 1820s the Pleasant Hill believers had a well-developed garden seed trade in many Kentucky towns. In this context it is not difficult to imagine the well-travelled Micajah Burnett meeting the eccentric Transylvania professor, although contact with the people of the world was not a common practice among Shakers.

Since the sketch of Micajah Burnett by Rafinesque indicates that the Shaker master builder was in touch with the Transylvania University professor, meetings in at least two possible situations
could have occurred. Rafinesque could have come to Pleasant Hill in 1824 when his travels to solicit subscriptions for the botanic garden were made within forty miles around Lexington. He collected botanical specimens in Kentucky, and made trips to study and survey prehistoric sites in the state. With his varied interests, he might have been quite curious about one of the largest buildings in Kentucky, the third stone Centre Family Dwelling House, being erected that year in Pleasant Hill. If Rafinesque came to the Shaker community, that he should choose to sketch Micajah Burnett, of all the Shakers, indicates something of a kindred spirit between the two.

Another possibility is that Micajah Burnett could have met Rafinesque when he came to the Lexington campus to learn of Rafinesque's botanical garden, medical garden, or seed exchange. If this were the case, it becomes apparent that the Shaker builder could have been aware of the principal building of Transylvania University (fig. 2). Earlier it was suggested that this prominent landmark on the Transylvania campus from 1818 to 1829 may have served as an inspiration for some of the architectural details on the Centre Family House at Pleasant Hill. Burnett's visit to the Transylvania campus would probably have been after 1823 when Rafinesque conceived his seed exchange and botanical garden project and before 1826 when Rafinesque departed from the university. (The sketch of Micajah Burnett might be more specifically dated within this period also.) The probability that the Transylvania building and some of the nearby homes provided a visual example for the Shaker builder can now be more firmly stated.

Micajah Burnett's role as "principal Architect of this Village" reflects a weakening in the adherence to communalism and unworldliness that had been characteristic of the early years of the Shakers at Pleasant Hill. The very attribution of the function of "principal Architect" to a Shaker was unusual, since the communal idea of the Shaker society frowned upon individual recognition for any of its craftsmen and builders. It would be difficult with the sources available to ascertain to what extent Micajah Burnett asserted his individuality in regard to the buildings at Pleasant Hill. However, the use of architectural motifs that were new to Shaker building, though very traditional for secular architecture, reflects deliberate choices. To the extent that he exercised his individual taste, Micajah Burnett was working counter to the concept of
communal planning. Because he was able to own a "large library of excellent books," as noted by Elder Blinn, and because he had contact with an intellectual in the outside world, he was probably an exception within the Pleasant Hill community. Yet in order to achieve these ideals he must have been acting with the approval of the Pleasant Hill leadership. Micajah was described by a fellow Shaker as "a firmly established, honest hearted Christian Shaker, Beloved, respected & honored by all who knew him." He was able to satisfy his natural curiosity about worldly and academic concerns because his environment was conducive to such interchange. As the master builder of Pleasant Hill, Micajah Burnett translated into architecture the spirit of the world that was condoned in his relaxed surroundings.

The Shaker builders at Pleasant Hill, as has been shown, emulated important public buildings and adapted features of houses and designs in architectural books and builders' handbooks. A weakened, lax leadership at the village in the 1820s allowed outside influences, together with the personality of Micajah Burnett, to determine a less strict Shaker mode of building. Nevertheless, the architecture at Pleasant Hill does generally conform to Shaker principles, and for that reason, many of the more sophisticated architectural forms were simplified and abstracted in their translation to the Shaker manner of building. Furthermore, because Shaker building in general was derived from earlier Shaker architecture or from regional vernacular models, it was generally quite traditional, and, in fact, retardataire in its expression of stylistic trends for any area. On the other hand, the use of classical columns at Pleasant Hill, however traditional such columns may be, represents a dramatic departure from pure communitarian and traditional Shaker building, because the columns express academic and aesthetic concerns. In fact, the placement of free-standing classical columns in a residential interior, and especially in a Shaker interior, as executed in the dining hall of the Centre Family House was unique for the time.

NOTES

1Over two hundred and sixty structures existed at varying times in the history of the Pleasant Hill community from 1805 to 1910. Today more than thirty original buildings remain and have been or are being restored by the non-profit, educational corporation known as Shakertown at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, Inc.
For a more detailed discussion of how the eastern Shaker manner of building was transmitted to Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, see my thesis, “Conformity and Digression in Communitarian Building: Shaker Architecture at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky,” University of Kentucky 1977, pp. 9-15.

Refer to my thesis, p. 15, for a discussion of the Taylor-Glover-Vivian House, built about 1790, which was a possible regional model for this early stone Shaker dwelling. See pp. 81-82, figs. 6 and 7 for illustrations of both buildings.

John & Samuel, Lucy & Anna, Pleasant Hill Ministry, Letter to New Lebanon Ministry, 13 April 1812, Western Reserve Historical Society.

Shaker correspondence determines this two stage dating for the third permanent Centre Family House. See my thesis, p. 71, n. 6, and p. 72, n. 11, for the text of the letters that date the two phases of this building project.

This engraving was first published in Charles Caldwell, A Discourse on the Genius and Character of the Rev. Horace Holley, LL.D. (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little and Wilkins, 1828) and reproduced recently in Antiques 105 (March 1974), 557.


See my thesis, p. 71, n. 6, for a Shaker letter documenting the external completion of the building. A reconstructed balustrade made in the 1960s adorns the Centre Family House today. A 1912 photograph of the original balustrade provided the visual documentation for the reconstruction.

This was first noted by Lancaster in Ante Bellum Houses, p. 28.


Although the Centre Family House of 1824 was the only building at Pleasant Hill to have lanterns of this type, the same round-headed dormer design also appeared on the rear of the second Centre Family House (1812-1815) and on the front of the Trustees' Office (1839-1841). See my thesis, p. 83, fig. 9 and p. 97, fig. 32, for illustrations.

Fiske Kimball, Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic (1922; rpt. New York: Dover, 1966), p. 91. See also George B. Tatum, Philadelphia Georgian (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1976), figs. 13, 14 and 40 for three important Philadelphia homes of the 1760s that had these dormers. Their marked similarity at this early date to Biddle's 1810 plate indicates that Biddle's was not the first book to publish this traditional design.

The Pleasant Hill Account Book, 1810-1811 (Western Reserve Historical Society MS.); Maurice Thomas's Journal, 1816-1817 (Filson Club MS.).

Kimball, Domestic Architecture, p. 217. For illustrations of half-round fanlights see my thesis, p. 89, figs. 18 and 19.

See my thesis, p. 90, fig. 20, for an illustration of the portal of the Trustees' Office. The Lexington homes mentioned are all extant today.
Also, their fanlights are illustrated in Lancaster, Ante Bellum Houses, pp. 47-48 and endpapers.

16See my thesis, pp. 90-91, figs. 21-23, for these Danville examples and for one other elliptical fanlight comparable to the one at the Trustees’ Office.

17See my thesis, p. 43, for evidence of the use of Pain’s staircase designs in this region, and, pp. 105-06, figs. 45-47, for illustrations of other curving stairways.


19Hayden, Seven American Utopias, p. 40.


22Ham, “Pleasant Hill,” pp. 77-79.


26Ham, “Pleasant Hill,” p. 81.

27For a more detailed account of these civil proceedings, see Ham, “Pleasant Hill,” pp. 84-90.

28Arthur F. Jones first suggested to me the relationship between the circular stairway of the Old State Capitol in Frankfort and those of the Trustees’ Office at Pleasant Hill. He also suggested the methodological approach for determining if the Shakers might have been familiar with this building.

29Ministerial Journal, 10 January 1879 (Filson Club MS.). The increasing Shaker contacts with the world by the 1870s undoubtedly influenced the use of the term “architect” in referring to Burnett. As of 1841, Burnett was referred to as “a skilful mechanic,” a term more appropriate to the communal society.

30Original Register, pp. 19, 21, 57 (Shakertown MS.); Church Record, Book C, Biographical Record, pp. 50, 56 (Harrodsburg MS.); List of Members, (Filson Club MS.).


33This drawing of Micajah Burnett was first noted by James C. Thomas,


36Account Book, 1825-1830, pp. 61ff. (Filson Club MS.).


38Ministerial Journal, 10 January 1879 (Filson Club MS.).