

Who are the Shakers?

The Shakers were a major religious communal group formally known as the United Society of Believers in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ founded by Mother Ann Lee in the late eighteenth century in England. Prior to founding the religion, Mother Ann Lee and her husband were members of the Shaking Quakers, a branch of Quakerism. Mother Ann Lee and her husband emigrated to the United States to practice their religion without persecution in 1774.



An 1871 engraving believed by many 19th century Shakers to be a portrait of Mother Ann Lee, founder of the Shaker religion.

Where did the Shakers Live?



Western Shaker communities.

Most Shakers lived in New England. The first Shaker community was founded in New Lebanon, New York. But there were also seven Western Shaker communities, of which four were located in Ohio. The Shaker community of Union Village was special in that it served as a spiritual and political hub in the communication network between the western and eastern Shaker communities.

What happened to the Shakers?

Many people believe the reason for Shakerism's failure is due to their practice of celibacy and strict separation of the sexes in their daily lives and activities. But many other nineteenth-century communes also had issues with recruiting and retaining of members, which suggests the fall of Shakerism is more complex than what people commonly believe. There is one active Shaker village left, Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in Maine, whose only remaining members are Brother Arnold and Sister Frances.



Last remaining members of the Shaker religion.