

Collection #
P 0608

WEST UNION SHAKER VILLAGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY, 1991–1992

[Collection Information](#)

[Historical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Contents](#)

Processed by

Dalton Gackle
September 2017

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript folder, 1 photograph folder, 2 VHS tapes

COLLECTION DATES: 1991–1992

PROVENANCE: Indiana Historical Society Public Programs; 1993

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1993.0759X

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

In 1809, a large group of recent converts from Union Village, a Shaker community near Dayton, Ohio, loaded their property onto boats and headed down the Ohio River. They were going to a new settlement point on Busseron Creek about fifteen miles north of Fort Knox at Vincennes in what was then Indiana Territory. By the summer of 1811, around 300 Shakers had arrived at the settlement, which they called Busro. It was officially known as "West Union." Shakers also came to Indiana from the shaker community in Red Banks, Kentucky, and the failed Shaker communities at Eagle Creek and Straight Creek in Ohio.

According to the diary of Samuel Swan McClelland, the community contained a two-story brick house "50 by 45," with "14 rooms and cellar" which served as the quarters of the Center family. The house lot also included a "kitchen, doctor shop, skin shop, weave shop, wash house [and] smoke house." A "great frame meetinghouse two story 50 by 40" had the lot across from the home. The North family home was close by, a "30 by 21 two story and a cellar." The community also included several barns, two apple orchards, a sawmill, a grist mill, and another mill. There were also "threshing and flax machines" in the barnyard.

The community was apparently built on the trail that Native American tribes used, which became a path of mobilization during the War of 1812 for Natives aligned with the British. Because of this, the community was temporarily abandoned until the war ended.

The community struggled against mother nature (malaria, floods, tornados) and decided to move back east. The community was officially abandoned in 1826. Only one structure remained in the 20th Century, but has since been demolished. The property is now privately owned farmland.

Historian Stephen J. Stein said that the West Union failure was detrimental to the Shaker movement, as it had been the westernmost community.

Sources:

Diary of Samuel Swan McClelland, in "Shakers of Eagle and Straight Creeks," Shakers of Ohio: Fugitive Papers Concerning the Shakers of Ohio, with unpublished manuscripts, J. P. MacLean, ed. Columbus, Ohio, 1907.

Stephen Paterwic, *Historical Dictionary of the Shakers*, p. 236. Scarecrow Press, 2008.

Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994

Janzen, Donald E., *An Archaeological Survey of the West Union Shaker Village: Knox County*, Indiana: Indiana Historical Society, 1992. (Included in collection).

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains:

- 16 photograph slides of the archaeological survey and surrounding area with a sheet describing each photo,
- 2 VHS tapes – "West Union Shaker Village" and an excerpt from a non-broadcast version of "We Want Willkie," and
- The manuscript report of the survey – *An Archaeological Survey of the West Union Shaker Village: Knox County, Indiana*

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

"West Union Shaker Village" VHS

Excerpt from non-broadcast version of "We Want
Willkie" on VHS

16 slides of the archaeological survey and surrounding
area, with photograph descriptions sheet

*An Archaeological Survey of the West Union Shaker
Village: Knox County, Indiana* manuscript

CONTAINER

Videotape:
Photographs Box 1

Videotape:
Photographs Box 1

Slides: 35 mm
Photographs Box 1,
Folder 1

Manuscript:
Photographs Box 1,
Folder 2