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## Shakers and Jerkers: Letters from the "Long Walk," 1805, Part 2

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# Shakers and Jerkers:

## Letters from the “Long Walk,” 1805, Part 2

By Douglas L. Winiarski\*



Throughout the bitterly cold month of January 1805, John Meacham (1770-1854), Issachar Bates (1758-1837), and Benjamin Youngs (1774-1855), struggled through mud and ice, biting winds, blinding snow, and drenching rains, on a 1,200-mile “Long Walk” to the settlements of the trans-Appalachian West. Traveling south toward Cumberland Gap, the three Shaker missionaries from New Lebanon, New York, were tracking a strange new convulsive religious phenomenon that had gripped Scots-Irish Presbyterians during the frontier religious awakening known as the Great Revival (1799-1805). Observers called the puzzling somatic fits “the Jerks.” Ardent supporters of the revivals believed the jerks were a sign of the presence of God’s indwelling Holy Spirit; others derided them as a nervous disorder or evidence of demonic possession. Meacham and his colleagues, by contrast, understood the jerks as a “preparatory work,” the fulcrum by which revival converts were pried from their foundations in mainstream Protestant denominations and inspired to accept Shakers’ distinctive religious beliefs and practices, including dancing, celibacy, and communal social organization. These small pockets of radical evangelical “Jerkers” emerged as prime targets for their proselytizing efforts during their Long Walk.<sup>1</sup>

\* The author is professor of religious studies and American studies at the University of Richmond. Research support for this essay was provided through generous fellowships from the Shaker Village at Pleasant Hill, the Library of Virginia, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, and the University of Richmond. The author wishes to thank Joseph Adelman and T.J. Tomlin for helping decipher notations at the end of the document.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Green Waterhouse, *Journals, 1795-1897*, typescript, 151, box 1, MS-918, Betsey B. Creekmore Special Collections and University Archives, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Richard M’Nemar, *The Kentucky Revival, or, a Short History of the Late Extraordinary Out-Pouring of the Spirit of God, in the Western States of America* (Cincinnati, 1807), 70; Douglas L. Winiarski, “Shakers and Jerkers: Letters from the ‘Long Walk,’ 1805, Part 1,” *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 89 (2017): 104. For debates over the jerks and other somatic phenomena of the Great Revival see, Douglas L. Winiarski, “Seized by the Jerks: Shakers, Spirit Possession & the Great Revival,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 76 (2019): 111-50. Additional reports of the jerking exercises, along with biographical information on major revival figures and teaching resources, may be found on the digital history project, “History of the Jerks: Bodily Exercises and the Great Revival (1803-1967),” <https://blog.richmond.edu/jerkshistory>.



As they trudged through the Shenandoah Valley and into East Tennessee, Meacham, Bates, and Youngs listened attentively to stories of the notorious jerking exercise. They spent an afternoon discussing the strange bodily fits with members of the family of Presbyterian elder Robert Tate (ca. 1753-1832) of Greenville, Virginia. At the end of the interview, three of Tate's children were seized by the jerks, an event the missionaries described in vivid detail in a letter to the Shaker ministry in New Lebanon. But this encounter was only prelude to what lay ahead. In the days that followed, Meacham, Bates, and Youngs beheld some of the most extraordinary eruptions of charismatic religion in the history of the early United States.

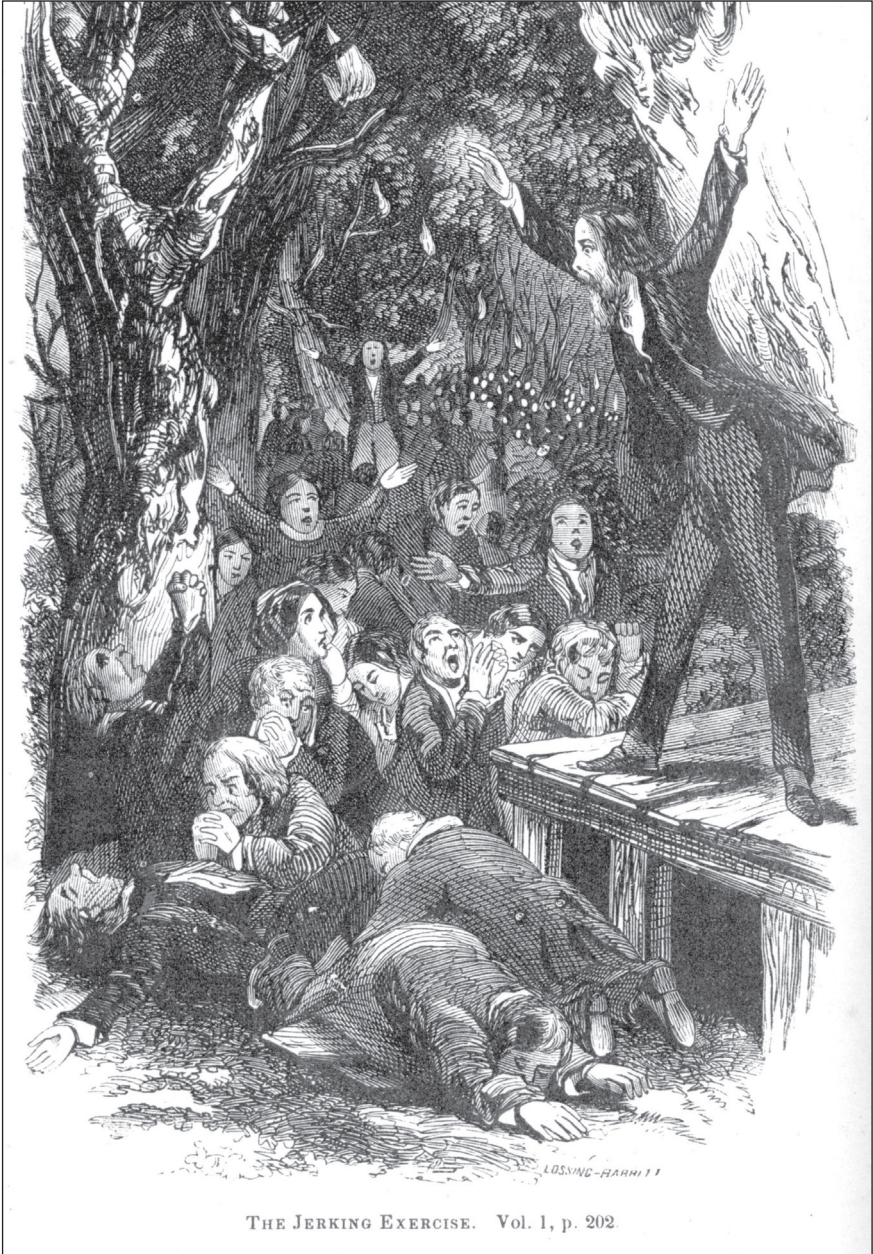
The essay that follows continues the story of the Shakers' Long Walk from volume 89 (2017) of *The Journal of East Tennessee History*. Published below for the first time, the missionaries' April 27, 1805 letter illuminates the shadowy world of Scots-Irish "revivalers" who thrived in East Tennessee during the peak years of the Great Revival. Although the Shakers eventually moved on and achieved dramatic successes in Kentucky and Ohio, the jerks and other somatic religious phenomena they witnessed briefly among the Presbyterians of East Tennessee remain an integral component of Holiness-Pentecostal worship practices to this day.<sup>2</sup>

On February 6, 1805, the Shakers deposited their first letter at the Fincastle, Virginia post office. Then they set out for Abingdon, the scene of a jerking episode that had been widely reported in the eastern newspapers the previous fall. Even the sparsely settled Catawba Valley was buzzing with news of unusual bodily phenomena erupting at revival meetings. Tavern conversations indicated that a jerker from East Tennessee had recently passed over the mountains to Kentucky, where his convulsions incited "above an hundred," who "took it at once." And Meacham and his colleagues continued to receive frightening, although unsubstantiated reports of the physical violence attending the jerking exercise. Peter Morison (1740-1809), proprietor of a comfortable country inn in Sullivan County, related the troubling story of a local resident who ordered his family "if ever he took the jerks to bind him." When the fits suddenly came upon the unfortunate man, his wife and children followed his instructions, but, to their horror, "he immediately expired in their hands."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Deming Andrews, "The Shaker Mission to the Shawnee Indians," *Winterthur Portfolio* 7 (1971): 127.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin S. Youngs, Journal, 1805, 23, 29, ASC 859, Edward Deming Andrews Memorial Shaker Collection, 1747-1982, The Winterthur Library, Winterthur, Delaware (JBY Winterthur). On the Abingdon incident see, Winiarski, "Shakers and Jerkers, Part 1," 90-92. Revolutionary War veteran Peter Morison obtained a substantial land grant along the Carters Valley Road in Sullivan County, near the settlement that would eventually bear his family name. Philip Alexander Bruce, *History of Virginia* (Chicago, 1924), 6:306; Mrs. John Vineyard, "First Land Owners of Sullivan County, Tennessee," typescript (Ozark, MO), 1974), 62.



One year before the Shaker missionaries departed for the western settlements, Lorenzo Dow, the prominent Methodist itinerant preacher, passed through East Tennessee and observed the “singularity called the jerks or jerking exercise.” Dow’s preaching exploits were later immortalized in *Recollections of a Lifetime* (1856), a breezy memoir by the popular nineteenth-century children’s author Samuel G. Goodrich. Samuel G. Goodrich, *Recollections of a Lifetime* (New York, 1856), 1:202.

Initially, the Shaker missionaries struggled to find the jerkers. Abingdon, especially, proved a disappointment. Although they spent two days in town, purchasing supplies, washing their clothes, and mending their boots, the Shakers were unimpressed by the state of religion in Southwest Virginia. Ultimately, they chose not to venture up to the Rich Valley, where two families of notorious jerkers, the Troxells and Brisons, lived. Crossing into East Tennessee, the trio briefly split up. While Bates and Youngs continued along the Great Wagon Road, Meacham stayed behind at the home of John Sinclair (1762-1851), a Methodist who regularly hosted camp meetings on his substantial farm along Reedy Creek. Sinclair's revival gatherings were well known for exhibitions of the bodily exercises. But when Meacham rejoined his traveling companions, he reported that "he saw none of it."<sup>4</sup>

The travelers had better luck a few days later when they ventured well out of their way to visit yet another family of jerkers living near Greeneville, Tennessee. Setting out from their lodgings at the Holston River ferry near Hawkins (now Rogersville), the missionaries crested Bays Mountain, forded a swollen Lick Creek, and passed Carter's Station, a popular spot for Methodist camp meetings where circuit rider Jacob Young (1776-1859) had watched more than five hundred people "jumping, shouting, and jerking" the previous summer. Discovering to their dismay that they had taken the wrong road, the Shakers backtracked along a crooked bridle path and passed over the mountain a second time in a driving rainstorm. Late in the afternoon, they arrived at the home of Presbyterian elder Joseph Dobson, soaking wet and desperately fatigued, their horse severely weakened after carrying their heavy portmanteau over twenty miles of rugged terrain.<sup>5</sup>

Dobson was a second-generation, Scots-Irish settler from North Carolina who had served in the Revolutionary War and fought at the Battle of Kings Mountain. During the 1790s, he settled with his wife and three sons on a 300-acre farm in Greene County. As the Great Revival gained momentum a decade later, Dobson began hosting midweek society meetings in his substantial log house along Big Gap Creek. During these informal religious assemblies, Presbyterian families joined together to pray, sing hymns, discuss theological matters, and exchange news. The fact that the Shaker missionaries were willing to detour more than one hundred miles off their route to Cumberland Gap and meet with Dobson suggests that the

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<sup>4</sup> JBY Winterthur, 27, 29. Virginia native John Sinclair—undoubtedly the "Singer" mentioned in Youngs's journal—purchased a large farm in the Pendleton Patent in Sullivan County. He later moved to Illinois. Vineyard, "First Land Owners of Sullivan County," 82.

<sup>5</sup> JBY Winterthur, 31; *Autobiography of a Pioneer: Or, the Nativity, Experience, Travels, and Ministerial Labors of Rev. Jacob Young, with Incidents, Observations, and Reflections* (Cincinnati, 1860), 139.

Presbyterian elder and his neighbors had developed a certain notoriety for raucous religious meetings and promoting the unusual bodily exercises that characterized the East Tennessee revivals.<sup>6</sup>

The following evening, more than forty people assembled for a candlelight meeting at the Dobson homestead. As the assembly struck up a hymn, a number of young men and women were “taken with the Jerks.” While sitting their chairs, their heads and shoulders pivoted back and forth with such rapidity that it seemed “as if every joint must instantly part asunder.” The jerkers were thrown out of their seats onto the floor, where they remained splayed in immodest postures. Other participants bucked across the room perilously close to the open fireplace or were hurled against with the walls with such violence that it appeared “almost impossible for their limbs & joints to keep together.” People took up positions along the walls to catch their convulsing neighbors and protect them from physical harm.<sup>7</sup>

Minutes turned to hours as the seemingly bizarre bodily fits escalated amid a riotous welter of singing, shouting, and clapping hands. Dobson briefly started jerking, but then his hands twitched and he began barking like a dog. Several other men followed suit, braying “as much so, as human voice or art is able to imitate.” In one corner, a married woman could be seen compulsively curtsying over and over again with “great delicacy.” Eventually, the three young women who had experienced the initial jerking convulsions stood up and began striding across the room. Entranced with eyes shut fast and heads arched to the heavens, they walked swiftly back and forth “20 or 30 times without cessation,” sometimes jumping, running, or pausing to twirl in place. The women occasionally walked in pairs or in opposite directions, yet they never collided, struck the walls, or stepped on the various bodies and other impediments that lay in their paths. Initially puzzled, Youngs concluded that they must have been “moved by a spirit which saw every obstruction.” “It is impossible to describe either by tongue or pen the strange & solemn appearance of this mysterious & irresistible power,” he noted excitedly in his journal.<sup>8</sup>

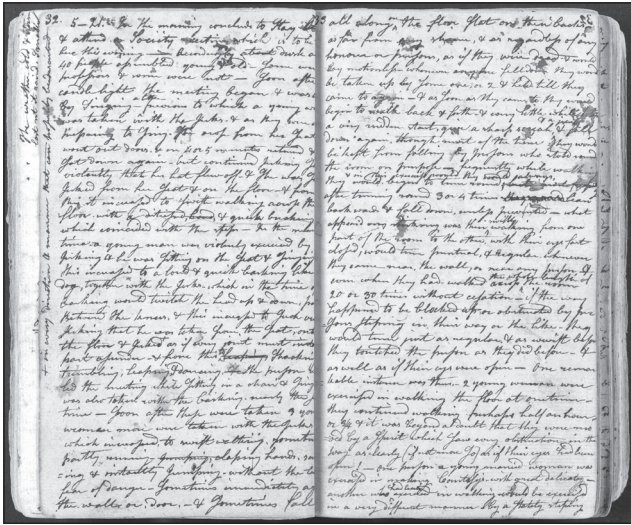
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<sup>6</sup> For genealogical information on Joseph Dobson and his family see, Katherine Keogh White, *The King's Mountain Men: The Story of the Battle, with Sketches of the American Soldiers Who Took Part* (Dayton, VA, 1924), 104, 169; Goldene Fillers Burgner, comp., *North Carolina Grants Recorded in Greene County, Tennessee* (Easley, SC, 1981), 124; Joyce Martin Murray, *Greene County, Tennessee, Deed Abstracts, 1785-1810: Volumes 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8* (Dallas, 1996), 28, 80-81; Goldene Fillers Burgner, comp., *Greene County, Tennessee, Wills, 1783-1890* (Easley, SC, 1981), 43; “1805 Enumeration, Greene County, Tennessee,” *Ansearchin' News* 28 (Winter 1981): 160; Goldene Fillers Burgner, comp., *Greene County, Tennessee, Tax Digests, 1809-1817* (Easley, SC, 1986), 29, 40, 82, 116.

<sup>7</sup> JBY Winterthur, 32; John Meacham, Issachar Bates, and Benjamin S. Youngs to David Osborn, April 27, 1805, IV:A-66, MS 3944, Shaker Manuscripts, 1723-1952, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio (Shaker Manuscripts, WRHS). The full text of Youngs's journal entry is available at, <https://blog.richmond.edu/jerkshistory>.

<sup>8</sup> Meacham, Bates, and Youngs to Osborn, April 27, 1805; JBY Winterthur, 33-34.





Benjamin S. Youngs' vivid description of the jerks and other bodily exercises that erupted during a Presbyterian society meeting held in the home of East Tennessee settler Joseph Dobson on February 21, 1805, is the longest entry in the extensive travel journal he kept during the Long Walk. Edward Deming Andrews Memorial Shaker Collection, The Winterthur Library, Winterthur, Delaware.

It was long past midnight when Dobson brought the meeting to a close. The singing eventually died down and the assembled Presbyterians—many of them dripping with sweat despite the winter chill—collected themselves and prepared to return to their homes. Impressed with the proceedings, the missionaries asked Dobson for liberty to speak. After nearly two months of traveling in bitterly cold weather over 800 miles of rough backcountry terrain, Meacham, Bates, and Youngs for the first time revealed the true nature of their mission and outlined the fundamentals of the Shakers' controversial beliefs and practices. “We spake but a very few words,” Youngs recalled, “& that in a manner sublimely.” But Dobson and his neighbors, perhaps out of exhaustion following the night’s events, perhaps out a general wariness of strangers, remained unmoved. As with the Tate family in Virginia, the Presbyterians on Big Gap Creek remained on what Issachar Bates called the “old ground” of Calvinism, “totally blind” to the significance of the jerks or the truth of the Shaker gospel.<sup>9</sup>

The missionaries lodged with Dobson, then departed for Cumberland Gap the following morning. Along the way, they engaged in pleasant conversation with a young woman who recounted her year-long struggle with the jerks as she ferried the trio across the Holston River. It took them more than a week to traverse the Cumberland Mountains and enter the Kentucky Bluegrass country. Although heavily traveled, Daniel Boone’s famed Wilderness Road passed through a region of “tedious Mountains” and “disagreeable inhabitants.” The weary travelers forded dozens of creeks and shirted large cane breaks—impenetrable thickets of tall grasses, some

<sup>9</sup> JBY Winterthur, 34; Moses Eastwood, transcription, “A Concise Sketch of the Life and Experience of Isachar Bates, Written by Himself,” ca. 1856, 36, box 4, Shakers Collection, Dayton Public Library, Dayton, Ohio.



The Cane Ridge meetinghouse near Paris, Kentucky in Bourbon County, was the site a major revival meeting during the summer of 1801 involving more than 10,000 people. News of the Cane Ridge sacrament attracted the Shaker missionaries during their Long Walk four years later, but they received a cold reception from Presbyterian minister Barton W. Stone. "Cane Ridge Meeting House," *Historic American Buildings Survey*, Theodore Webb, Photographer, February 7, 1934, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., <https://www.loc.gov/item/ky0092/>.

rising almost twenty feet tall. It rained most of the time, which made the "going very muddy & heavy & uncomfortable damp." Youngs and Bates suffered from colds and digestive ailments.<sup>10</sup>

At nearly every hardscrabble cabin where the Shakers lodged—most had no glass windows and some stood open to the elements—settlers recounted tales of the region's violent past that had stained the "dark and bloody ground" of Kentucky only a few decades earlier: skirmishes, raids, ambushes, and massacres between Indians and the long hunters of the Revolutionary Era. At one point, the Shaker missionaries encountered the body of a young man lying on the side of the road in an advanced "state of mortification." In Kentucky, they listened to hair-raising reports of the recent murder of Joseph Lankford by the notorious serial killers, the Harpe brothers. A sign at the site of the killing read simply: "Lankfords defeat." "My soul and my flesh shuddered," Bates recalled, when he considered the casual manner by which residents accepted such acts of lawless frontier violence.<sup>11</sup>

As they approached the rolling hills of the Bluegrass, the missionaries encountered two women from the small settlement at Paint Lick in Garrard County, who invited them to visit. The local Presbyterian minister, Matthew Houston (1769-1853), was a leading figure in the Great Revival. In 1801, he preached at the Cane Ridge sacrament in Bourbon County and led equally powerful, although smaller revival meetings at Paint Lick and nearby Silver Creek. During the summer of 1803, Houston and a group of his parishioners traveled to Maryville, Tennessee, where they witnessed one of the first outbreaks of the jerking exercise. By the following spring, reports of falling, dancing, and holy laughter were circulating throughout the region, and

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<sup>10</sup> Meacham, Bates, and Youngs to David, April 27, 1805; JBY Winterthur, 40.

<sup>11</sup> JBY Winterthur, 36; Eastwood, "Concise Sketch," 36. On the violent exploits of the notorious Harpe brothers see, Craig Thompson Friend, *Kentucke's Frontiers* (Bloomington, 2010), 211-13.



Houston's congregants had embraced the controversial practice of jerking.<sup>12</sup>

Then, in April 1805, Houston made a startling declaration. Rejecting all theological creeds, the Paint Lick minister "relinquished the faith" of the Presbyterian Church and "declined the authority of [its] judicatories," for which he was promptly suspended by the Transylvania Presbytery. Two years earlier, Cane Ridge clergyman Barton W. Stone (1772-1844) along with four other ministers had broken away from the Synod of Kentucky. These "New Lights" or "Schismatics," as they came to be called, were frustrated by the growing conservatism of their colleagues, who questioned their red-hot revival zeal, the orthodoxy of their sermons, and their tacit support of bodily exercises. The Stone faction briefly organized a rump presbytery, but turned around less than a year later and declared the movement dead in a famous document entitled "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery." Now owning only the name of "Christians," the breakaway churches were unstable sites of chaotic innovations in theology and worship practices, with many members given over to millennial speculations, visionary phenomena, ecstatic dancing, and various forms of somatic agitation, including the jerks. During the early months of the schism, Houston initially stood with conservatives, but after participating in the powerful revivals in East Tennessee, he too joined the renegade New Lights.<sup>13</sup>

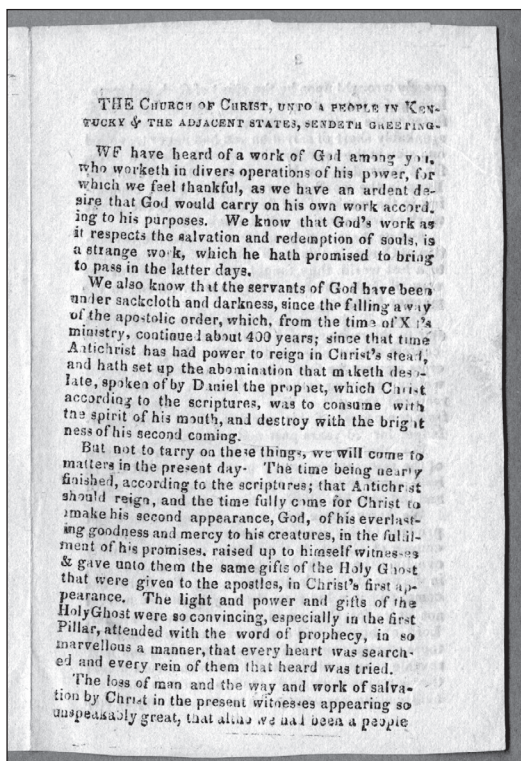
When the Shakers arrived at the Paint Lick meetinghouse the following year, Houston was "pounding at old Esau" in a torrid sermon in which he decried the tyranny of Calvinist doctrines of election and predestination. Later that evening, the missionaries attended a society meeting and were

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<sup>12</sup> For evidence of Houston's emerging radicalism and the Paint Lick revival see, John Lyle, "Narratio Factorum," 1801-1803, 21, 24, 26, 35-36, 50, 58-59, 67-72, 85, 91, 95, 133-36, *Narratio Factorum: Journals and Sermons, 1801-1808*, SC 422, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort; Eliza Ramsey to Anne Baxter, September 5, 1803, box 1, George Addison Baxter Papers, Collection 003, Special Collections and Archives, James G. Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia; William Williamson Journal, 1800-1807, [11], William Williamson Papers, Shane Collection, 1716-1860, RG 196, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.

<sup>13</sup> William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: A Collection of Source Materials* (New York, 1936), 2:197-99, 313-24; M'Nemar, *Kentucky Revival*, 29, 45. Documents relating to the New Light schism, along with the text of "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery," may be found in, Hoke S. Dickson and Robert W. Steffer, eds., *The Cane Ridge Reader: A Collection* (Paris, KY, 2006). The Shaker missionaries first learned of Stone's emerging Christian movement while traveling in the Shenandoah Valley. See, Winiarski, "Shakers and Jerkers, Part 1," 104. The original members of the faction included: Stone; John Dunlavy (1769-1826) of Eagle Creek, in what is now Brown County, Ohio; Richard McNemar (1770-1839) of Turtle Creek, Ohio; Robert Marshall (1760-1832), minister of Bethel Presbyterian Church near Lexington, Kentucky; and John Thompson of Springfield (now Springdale), Ohio. David Purviance (1766-1847) of Cane Ridge and Matthew Houston later joined the group, bringing to total number to seven, as the Shakers noted in their letter. Marshall and Thompson eventually reunited with the Presbyterians, but Stone and Purviance played key roles in the development of the Disciples of Christ movement, while Dunlavy, Houston, and McNemar converted to Shakerism. For the controversies that provoked this landmark split in the history of American Presbyterianism see, John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (1972; Lexington, KY, 1996), 143-64; Paul K. Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (Madison, WI, 1990), 115-63.





During their 1805 Long Walk to Ohio, Meacham, Bates, and Youngs carried a manuscript copy of this stern epistle from the Shaker ministry in New Lebanon, New York, exhorting the “people in Kentucky & the adjacent states” to reject “natural generation” and embrace the “strait and narrow way” of the sect’s celibate gospel. Communal Societies Collection, Hamilton College, Clinton, New York

pleased to see several young women “powerfully exercised by Jerking” and an enslaved African American man engaged in “very proper dancing, for near half an hour at a time.” The leader of the group urged the visitors to speak, and Youngs obliged with a few words. Encouraged, the missionaries decided to stay at Paint Lick for a few days

and began “speaking our faith” with “some freedom.” For the first time, they had encountered frontier families willing to consider the believers’ celibate “way of the cross” with “deep consideration.”<sup>14</sup>

On Thursday, March 7, 1805, the Shakers returned to the Paint Lick meetinghouse. Meacham provided some brief opening remarks to an audience of perhaps 150 people. Then Youngs stood and read aloud an introductory letter they had carried with them from the Shaker ministry in New Lebanon. “Christ hath made his second appearance here upon earth,” Youngs triumphantly proclaimed, and yet “the poor lost children of men know it not.” Like the revivalers at Paint Lick, many of the eastern Shakers had once presumed they had experienced conversion during various seasons of religious revivalism; but the “light manifested” in Ann Lee, the Shakers’ founder, revealed to their great consternation that they had stopped “unspeakable short of salvation” and “never travelled one step in the regeneration towards the new birth.” True believers needed to embrace the tenets of the Shakers’ faith. They must accept that the spirit of Christ had already appeared in the figure of Lee; confess their sins in a private conference with the Shaker elders; separate from the “course of this world”; and dedicate themselves to a life of celibate spiritual perfection. The letter

<sup>14</sup> Eastwood, “Concise Sketch,” 37; JBY Winterthur, 41-42.

promised that the missionaries would remain in the West to “declare these things more particularly, and open the way of eternal life,” and it closed with an exhortation to receive the travelers as “messengers of Christ and friends to your salvation.”<sup>15</sup>

As Youngs concluded his address, murmuring erupted among the Paint Lick assembly. A few grumbled in opposition and “appear’d very hard,” but the majority were “more or less wrought upon.” Many were in tears. Curious householders invited the missionaries into their cabins. Houston was overjoyed. “This I can say I believe without a doubt,” he declared to Youngs the following day, “you are men of god, & I have no doubt of the testimony of your origin.” The Shakers remained in Paint Lick for nearly a week, visiting with Houston’s congregants, rereading the New Lebanon letter, and sharing further insight into Shaker beliefs and practices. The results were astounding. They “sucked in our light as greedily as ever an ox drank water,” Bates later remembered. “Indeed not only the doors of almost all in this place, but the hearts & ears of many appear to be open & sincerely seeking after the truth,” Youngs agreed. Houston’s parishioners “felt nearer to us than any we had yet found.”<sup>16</sup>

Emboldened by their success at Paint Lick, Meacham, Bates, and Youngs pressed on, eager to encounter other New Light congregations. During the next two weeks, they moved steadily northward through the heart of Bluegrass country and crossed the Ohio River. Along the way, they met with key leaders of the nascent Christian movement. At Cane Ridge, Barton Stone and his supporters engaged the travelers in a discussion of the broken state of the Presbyterian churches. But the Shakers found it “hard speaking,” for “there was little or no room in their hearts to receive anything.” Finally, on March 22, 1805, the missionaries pulled up in front of the compact, framed dwelling of Malcom Worley (1762-1844), a former Presbyterian elder and prominent leader of the New Light faction. Worley’s farm was situated on a gentle rise in a sparsely populated section of Turtle Creek township, near the small village of Lebanon. He welcomed the strangers into his house, and they debated religion deep into the night. The following morning, his pregnant wife Miriam (1776-1839) fell into a jerking fit—the latest of many she had experienced during the recent revivals. Less than a week later, the Worleys confessed their sins to Meacham and Youngs and became the first Shaker converts west of the Appalachians. The Long Walk was over.<sup>17</sup>

The Worley farm at Turtle Creek became the nucleus of the Shakers’ first western village. After a tense initial meeting, the missionaries succeeding

<sup>15</sup> Various copies of the Shakers’ circular letter have survived, both in print and in manuscript. Quotations in this paragraph have been drawn from Ralph Stenstrom, “Church of Christ Unto a People in Kentucky & the Adjacent States,” *American Communal Societies Quarterly* 1 (July 2007): 132-34.

<sup>16</sup> Meacham, Bates, and Youngs to Osborn, April 27, 1805; JBY Winterthur, 44; Eastwood, “Concise Sketch,” 38.

<sup>17</sup> JBY Winterthur, quote 49, 48-57.



in converting Richard McNemar, the local Presbyterian minister and leading member of the New Light movement, along with scores of his parishioners. In December 1806, the Worleys and five other “young Believers,” as the western converts came to be called, consecrated their property and personal goods to the Shakers and signed a covenant pledging to “spend the rest of our days and talents for the support and increase of the Gospel.” Bolstered by McNemar and David Darrow (1750-1825)—a prominent eastern Shaker leader dispatched to the West from the ministry in New Lebanon—Bates and Youngs traveled relentlessly among a network of disaffected Presbyterians and other radical revivalers stretching from southern Ohio to the Cumberland Plateau in southern Kentucky. They returned regularly to Paint Lick, where Matthew Houston eventually led most of his congregation into the Shaker fold. The missionaries even met with Tenskwatawa, the militant Native American prophet and brother of the Shawnee war captain Tecumseh.<sup>18</sup>

As the work of conversion proceeded in the West, the upstart Shakers endured repeated acts of violence. Arsonists torched the believers’ outdoor dancing stage at Turtle Creek. Vigilantes broke the windows of young converts’ homes, mutilated their farm animals, and threatened them with beatings, whippings, and castration. Local ruffians even poisoned the missionaries’ beleaguered horse, which they had left at Cane Ridge near the end of their Long Walk. Much of the violence was fueled by scandalous newspaper reports of Shakers stripping naked during their dances, drinking to excess, and physically abusing members. Concerned families of converts harassed the sect with lawsuits over property rights and child custody. The pacifist Shakers struggled to obtain exemptions from military service, especially during the War of 1812. Anti-Shaker sentiment galvanized mobs that descended on their villages in 1810, 1813, 1817, 1819, and 1834. But the western believers persevered and even prospered under the abuses of their neighbors. Recurrent periods of temporal trials brought spiritual renewal, new converts and, on a few occasions, powerful meetings punctuated by “violent jerking, rolling, & tumbling on the floor.”<sup>19</sup>

In the face of opposition, the western believers slowly expanded their land holdings and villages. They constructed communal dormitories, meeting

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<sup>18</sup> Jean M. Humez, ed., *Mother's First-Born Daughters: Early Shaker Writings on Women and Religion* (Bloomington, 1993), 120; Malcom Worley, et al., *Covenant*, December 22, 1806, Warren County Records Center Archives, Lebanon, Ohio. For the Shakers’s mission to the Shawnee prophet see, Andrews, “Shaker Mission,” 113-28. Carol Medlicott chronicles the development of western Shakerism in *Issachar Bates: A Shaker's Journey* (Hanover, NH, 2013), 82-176. See also, Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven, 1992), 39-118.

<sup>19</sup> Theodore E. Johnson, ed., “Violence at Turtle Creek: An 1805 Missionaries’ Letter,” *Shaker Quarterly* 12 (1972): 107-116; J.P. Maclean, *Shakers of Ohio: Fugitive Papers Concerning the Shakers of Ohio, With Unpublished Manuscripts* (Columbus, OH, 1907), 362-87; Tom Kanon, “Seduced, Bewildered, and Lost’: Anti-Shakerism on the Early Nineteenth-Century Frontier,” *Ohio Valley History* 7 (2007): 1-30; “From Elder John Meacham to a Brother in Hancock,” in Alonzo Hollister, “Book of Remembrance,” quote 74, VII:B-110, MS 3944, Shaker Manuscripts, WRHS.



houses, workshops, barns, and mills; they cleared timber, fenced fields, dammed streams, and planted orchards—all in accord with Shaker principles of cleanliness, order, and union. They pioneered innovations in farming techniques, engaged in a wide array of cottage industries, and developed a reputation for fair dealing a quality craftsmanship. In an extraordinary burst of literary creativity, McNemar published *The Kentucky Revival* (1807) a detailed account of the frontier religious awakenings and the bodily exercises, while Youngs penned *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing* (1808), a formidable, 600-page theological treatise. By the mid-1820s, perhaps as many as 2,000 Shaker converts had established five western settlements at Union Village (formerly Turtle Creek) and Watervliet in southern Ohio; Pleasant Hill in the heart of Bluegrass country; South Union on the Cumberland Plateau near the Tennessee and Kentucky border; and West Union on the Wabash River in Indiana.<sup>20</sup>

Although Shaker leaders continued to believe that Scots-Irish Presbyterian revivalers in East Tennessee presented a missionary field “white to harvest,” the missionaries never returned to the heart of jerker country. Consolidating their gains in Ohio and Kentucky, the Shakers turned away from the families of Robert Tate, Joseph Dobson, and their zealous neighbors. As the Great Revival simmered down, Presbyterians and Methodists also began distancing themselves from the jerks and other somatic exercises. In an emerging Bible Belt of settled pastorates, educated ministers, and respectable congregations bent on decorous bodily comportment, the jerks vanished from view.

Perhaps more likely, the jerkers receded into the hills and hollows of Appalachia where they resurfaced in the spirit-filled practices of the pejoratively named “Holy Roller” churches later in the nineteenth century. “These people claim to be the ‘Church of God’ and that all outside of it are lost,” noted one Presbyterian home missionary. “They claim to ‘live above sin,’ to heal the sick by ‘laying on of hands’ and prayer, to handle snakes, to handle fire, to ‘speak in tongues,’ and all by the power of the Holy Ghost. In their meetings they shout, dance, jerk, roll on the floor, jump wildly, or lie in a trance as if dead. These, they claim, are different ways of showing that the ‘power’ is on them.”<sup>21</sup> The charismatic worship practices of today’s

<sup>20</sup> M’Nemar, *Kentucky Revival*; [Benjamin S. Youngs], *The Testimony of Christ's Second Appearing, Containing a General Statement of All Things Pertaining to the Faith and Practice of the Church of God in This Latter-Day* (Lebanon, OH, 1808). On developments in Shaker theology and hymnody see, Stephen J. Stein, “A Candid Statement of Our Principles’: Early Shaker Theology in the West,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133 (1989): 503-19; Carol Medlicott and Christian Goodwillie, *Richard McNemar, Music, and the Western Shaker Communities: Branches of One Living Tree* (Kent, OH, 2012). General histories of the western Shaker communities include, Julia Neal, *By Their Fruits: The Story of Shakerism in South Union, Kentucky* (1975; Chapel Hill, 2012); Thomas D. Clark and F. Gerald F. Ham, *Pleasant Hill and Its Shakers* (Harrodsburg, KY, 1982); Cheryl Bauer and Rob Portman, *Wisdom's Paradise: The Forgotten Shakers of Union Village* (Wilmington, OH, 2004); Cheryl Bauer, ed., *Shakers of Indiana: A West Union Reader* (Milford, OH, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> David [Darrow] to Nathaniel [Deming], December 12, 1807, Unbound Shaker Manuscript Collection, Amy Bess and Lawrence K. Miller Library, Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, Massachusetts; “New Notes from the Mountains,” *Home Mission Monthly* 30 (1915-1916): 47.

independent Holiness-Pentecostals remain an enduring legacy of the Great Revival, brilliantly illuminated in the 1805 Long Walk letters of Yankee New England's most radical religious sectarians.

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Turtle-creek, county of Warren, State of Ohio, April 27th 1805<sup>22</sup>

Beloved Elders & Brethren,

We have for some time past felt an anxious desire to write & send you a letter, for we believed our brethren would be glad to know how matters went with us; & we have also had a great desire to hear from them, but circumstances, as well as the great distance have prevented us from sending information, as often as we could wish, & considering the nature of the errand we were sent upon, we had a feeling to wait untill we should be able to give some satisfactory account of the situation of the people in this country, & of the work of God among them.

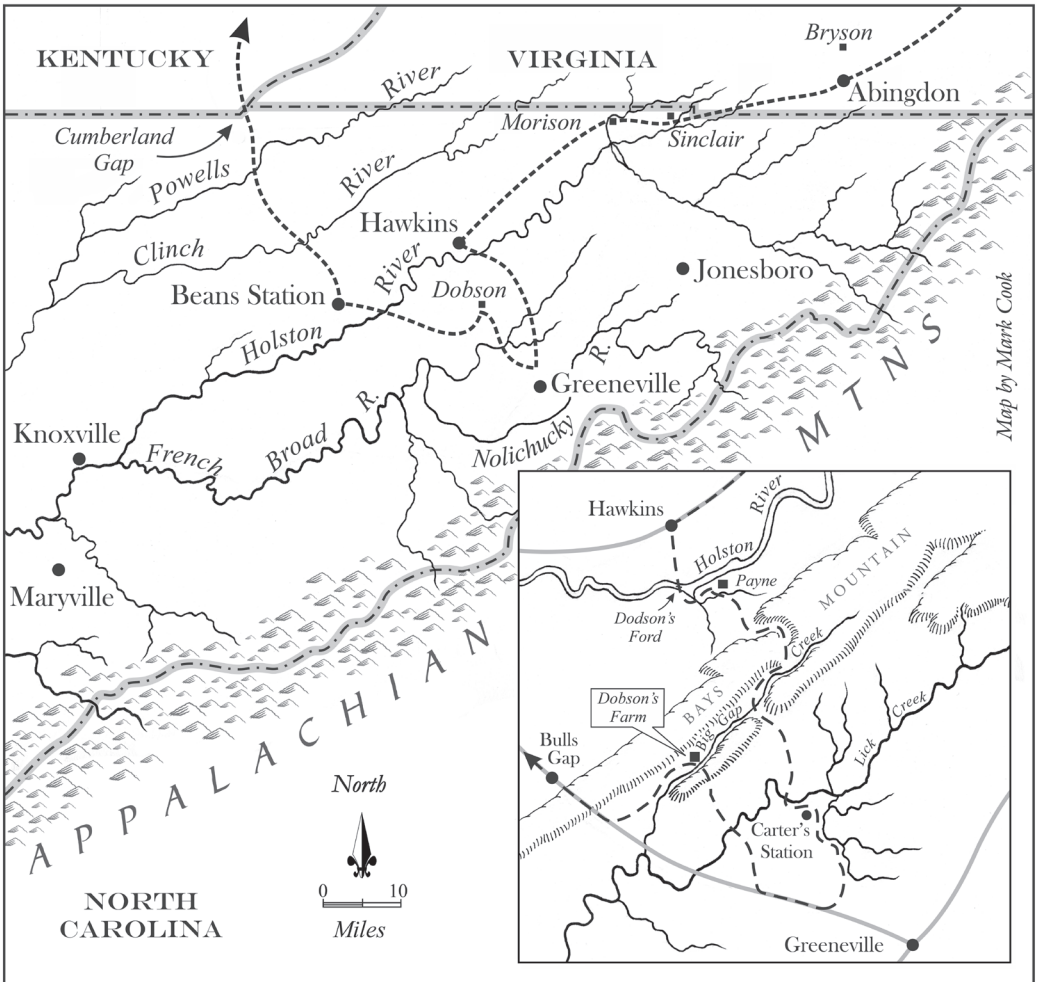
Perhaps some have thought that it would not have required so long a time to have become able to give intelligence more satisfactory than we even now, after so long a time, are able to give; but you are very sensible that the work is Gods work, & not mans, & that He will carry it on in his own way, & in his own time; & therefore no man can hasten it. And all that we can do is to abide faithful in the calling wherein we are called, in such a manner that we may be excepted of God, & find our justification before Him.

But as we believe that there are those who are more able to judge of these things than we ourselves, we think it proper to give a general statement of our proceedings. We have sent one letter before this, Dated Greenville in Virginia, January 31st, In which, if the letter was received, it is found stated that our Journey to that time had been very slow & fatiguing, on account of the uncommon severity of the season. This severity continued for about 2 weeks after that date; & we found that the winter has been uncommon severe all over this part of the world. In the Carolinas, & even in Georgia, we learn that the Snow was 2½ or 3 feet deep on a level. That letter we lodged in the Post Office at Fincastle in Virginia; but not untill Wednesday February 6th, on which day the Northern Mail was to start. This was 645 miles from New Lebanon.

From Fincastle we went & crossed the Alegany Mountain, & traveled 145 miles to Abingdon, where we came on Wednesday the 13th, & staid in that disagreeable place till Friday morning, in order to satisfy ourselves

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<sup>22</sup> The following transcription of the Shaker missionaries' April 27, 1805 Long Walk letter draws upon the expanded method outlined in Mary-Jo Kline, *A Guide to Documentary Editing*, 2d ed. (Baltimore, 1998), 157-58, 161-64; Samuel Eliot Morison, "Care and Editing of Manuscripts," in *The Harvard Guide to American History*, ed. Frank Freidel, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA, 1974), 1:28-31.



*Map of the Shaker Long Walk through East Tennessee, 1805. By Mark Cook.*

respecting the Jerkers. We found there were but few of them in those parts, & they live in a place called Rich Valley, between the hills 4 miles North West of the town. The two young men by the names of Byson, who last fall fled out of town by the beating of a Drum are among those few.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> In 1783, Hugh Brison purchased 400 acres of land in the Rich Valley along the North Fork of the Holston River. His two sons, James and John, were likely the "2 young men" mentioned in the account of the Abingdon jerkers that appeared in the *Virginia Argus* on October 24, 1804. Both married later that year. By the end of the decade, the Brisons had left the Rich Valley and settled in Eastern Indiana. Lewis Preston Summer, *Annals of Southwest Virginia, 1769-1800* (1929; Johnson City, 1992), 2:1196, 1277; Thomas Jack Hockett, abstracted, *Washington County, Virginia: Personal Property Tax Lists* (Athens, GA, 2004), 3:69, 158; Marty Hiatt and Craig Roberts Scott, abstracted, *Washington County, Virginia, Marriages: Ministers' Returns, 1776-1855* (Athens, GA, 1994), 25; August J. Reifel, *History of Franklin County, Indiana: Her People, Industries, and Institutions* (Indianapolis, 1915), 177-78.

From Abingdon in Virginia we went 93 miles by the way of Hawkins, in the State of Tennessee, to a remote place called Lick-creek, immediately under the West foot of Bay Mountain, in the county of Greene; where we came on Wednesday 20th, & put up at one Dobbsons; where the next evening were met together a Presbyterian Society; among whom we verily found the power of God. Soon after they began to sing several were taken with the Jerks, while sitting on their seats. Their heads, & shoulders were Jerked back & forth, with such increasing violence, that in a few seconds their hats, & bonnets, & even hankerchiefs which were tied close to their heads would fly off. Some would soon be Jerked flat on the floor, in a manner very mortifying to all delicate feelings; regardless of any pride in their appearance, & solely incapable of the least resistance. Those who fell on the floor were generally taken up, by some ones who in every part of the room were watching lest any of them should be Jerked into the fire, or be dashed to pieces against the wall &c. Still their exercises were increasing; some of them to swift walking across the floor, accompanied with as quick, & loud breathing. In this walking they would continue 2, 3, & 4 hours; with their eyes fast closed, & their faces gathering a certain paleness. In short, their whole appearance & exercises was a striking emblem of what little Idea one might form of departed Souls, who feel a sence of their loss from God; who seek with unwearied pains after peace but cannot find it. These would every once in a while, give a scream, & instantly (if not prevented) jump against the wall, or the door, with the utmost violence, & without the least fear of any danger; & not one of them would be hurt. Others who were exercised in walking appeared in a very different situation of mind; these were more moderate, & calm; two or three would set out together & travel back, & forth, for half an hour or 3 quarters with great diligence, without any slack or deviation from that manner of exercise. These also, did not interfere with each other, but were punctual & regular to make way, or turn, whenever any obstruction presented, though their eyes were closed. Frequent instances occurred that shortened their first limits, or that someone would happen to step in their way, but it was beyond a doubt that they were altogether actuated by a spirit which saw every obstruction as clearly, if not more so, than if their eyes had been open! Some others were so violently exercised with the Jerks, that it appeared almost impossible for their limbs & joints, & limbs to keep together; these would in a kind of intermission, bark like dogs, & as much so, as human voice or art is able to imitate.

It is impossible to communicate a true, & full sence of the extraordinary appearance of these things. A simple Catalogue however, of the real exercises which we saw at this meeting may be given as follows: Jerking, Jumping, Falling-down, Shaking, Quaking, Trembling, Walking, Running, Screaming, Courtesying, Claping hands, Shouting, Leaping, Dancing, Barking, &c.





It is worthy of notice that all those who are thus exercised, pay not the least regard to anything that is said by the blind leaders, or to any sort of will worship, though it appear never so sacred; but pointedly treat the whole with disdain, & contempt; and yet they are so blind as not to see it.

After meeting we for the first time opened our mouths (since we came from Lebanon) respecting our faith, & spake a very few words, by which they might in a small measure feel that they were comprehended. This was now 883 miles South West from Lebanon; & after this we saw no exercises more extraordinary, than those at Dobbsons in Tennessee, except such as appear to strengthen credible reports, such as "A man in Tennessee about the first of February gave orders to his family that if ever he took the Jerks they should bind him. Not long after he took the Jerks, & while they were obeying his orders he expired in their hands!"<sup>24</sup> And it is evident by what we have seen & heard from persons themselves who were exercised by the Jerks, that the Jerks will not be confined in any degree, but the creature must be perfectly passive in order to escape hurt. Those who even fight against them in their minds, appear to be more evidently racked with groaning tortures, & their countenances appear awful. Whereas the exercises of those who are fully reconciled are more beautiful & solemn. It is said, (& we have reason to believe it) that many curse the Jerks while they are on them, that is, when they can have an intermission long enough so to do, for some are so powerfully wrought upon that they can neither act, nor speak anything of their own for a long time. Some of this sort have been deprived of laying peacefully in bed one minute, or of eating a single mouthful of any kind of food for 5, 6, & even 9 days! All these things appear like preludes to more extraordinary things yet to come! But who can tell?

In Kentucky, & Ohio, the Exercises have much abated; but in the lower parts of Tennessee, particularly in Blount county, about 60 miles South of Beans Station, & also in Old Cumberland South of Kentucky where the very first of all this work began, they are still prevalent; though not so much in the latter, as in the former. Exercises that are stated to us as being prevalent in Tennessee, & which we have not yet seen, are such as, Motions for war, or Shooting, Running up trees like squirrels, and jumping down without hurt! Fighting, & even Swearing!<sup>25</sup> Many more strange & extraordinary things might be related of these irresistible & very wonderful exercises, but our time is short, & we must leave some room for matters which we consider of greater importance.

<sup>24</sup> For the source of this strange report see, JBY Winterthur, 29.

<sup>25</sup> Presbyterian minister Gideon Blackburn (1772-1838) of Maryville, Tennessee, described several of these rare physical exercises in a letter published in *Glad Tidings. Or An Account of the State of Religion, Within the Bounds of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1804), 44-48.

From Dobbsons in Greene county we went on 26 miles to Beans-Station, which is at the entrance into the Wilderness of Kentucky, & is on the main Post road from Washington City, to Louisiana, leading through Virginia, Tennessee & the Mississippi territory. Our general course to this place, from New Lebanon has been nearly South West except such necessary windings as we have made in this State to satisfy ourselves respecting the people, & in this we went as far as our feelings would admit of, so that our minds were now fully bent on Lexington in Kentucky. On Saturday 23d, We left Beans Station, Set out a North West course & traveled through a Wilderness of very tedious Mountains, & lonesome rivers, & some disagreeable inhabitants, for the distance of 122 miles to the Crab-Orchards on the border of Kentucky Settlement, where we came on Friday, March 1st.

On Sabbath morning we left the Lexington road & went to a place called Paint-lick Meeting-house, in the county of Garrett, 15 miles from the Crab-Orchard. Here we found one M. H. giving good reasons to his congregation for renouncing the Calvinistic doctrine. He is the last of Seven Presbyterian Preachers who have all broke off from the Synod of Kentucky.<sup>26</sup> With this man we had several agreeable interviews, & his feelings were, & as far as we know still remain very tender. On Thursday March 7th, a collection of about 150 persons were made at the Meeting-house, to whom we spoke, & read the Letter from the Church.<sup>27</sup> At first the people appear'd very hard; but before meeting was dismissed they felt very solemn, & many were in tears. In these parts we visited familys, & attended several Societys, speaking our faith, & they were a people who felt nearer to us than any we had yet found, Are separated from the Presbyterians, & will own no other name than that of "Christians" though they had never yet found anything against the flesh! But they may with great propriety be called "New-Lights."

On Saturday 9th, we left Paint-lick; & on Monday 11th came to Lexington, which is 46 miles from the Crab-Orchard. And on Wednesday 13th, we came to Cane-ridge Meeting-house, in the county of Bourbon, 29 miles a little East of North from Lexington. This is the place where the

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<sup>26</sup> Born in Rockbridge County, Virginia, Matthew Houston (1764-1848) graduated from Liberty Hall Academy (now Washington and Lee University), moved to Kentucky with his wife, Margaret (Peggy) Cloyd (1774-1862) and two children, and was ordained over the Presbyterian congregation at Paint Lick in 1797. One year after his fateful encounter with Meacham, Bates, and Youngs, Houston converted to Shakerism along with dozens of former parishioners. The Houstons dissolved their marriage and remained among the believers for the rest of their lives. Matthew eventually rose to the rank of elder at North Union (now Shaker Heights), Ohio, and Peggy became eldress and deaconess at Union Village. *Catalogue of the Officers and Alumni of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia, 1749-1888* (Baltimore, 1888), 51; Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier*, 2:168, 197-99, 316, 320-21; Shakers-South Union, Kentucky, "Record Book A (including Autobiography of John Rankin Sr.)," 1805-1836, 52, Shakers of South Union, Kentucky, Collection, 1800-1916, MSS 63, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green; Wallace H. Cathcart, Shaker Membership Card File, nos. 007379, 007382, microfilm, reel 123, MS 3944, Shaker Manuscripts, WRHS.

<sup>27</sup> For the full text of this letter see, Stenstrom, "Church of Christ unto a People in Kentucky," 132-34.

greatest Camp-meetings were held, that ever were held in this country. In this neighbourhood we spent some time; particularly with B. W. S. another of the 7 with whom we had a free conversation at his house.<sup>28</sup> But not feeling yet satisfied to tarry in these parts, On Friday 15th we left Cane-ridge, & went about a North West course Down Licking River, 82 miles to Cincinnati in the State of Ohio (& on the North banks of that River) which is in what is called the Miamia country, & is bounded by the Indians on the West & North. Here we came on Teusday 19th, & from thence went North 30 miles to Turtle-creek in the county of Warren, (4 miles West of Lebanon the county town), where we came on Friday March 22d, & entered into the house of Malcom Worley.<sup>29</sup> The next day we went to Richard McNemars another of the 7.<sup>30</sup> At first he opposed us with hard judgings, but being a man of Sincerity & great penetration, he observed with diligence the effect it had, both on himself & us, & found something in the testimony, which he never had met with before, so that 4 weeks after our first interview with him he opened his mind. He is a Metaphorical Preacher, was born in Pensylvania, (an Appolos

<sup>28</sup> Virginia native Barton Warren Stone studied at Guilford Academy in North Carolina, experienced a wrenching conversion, and received his preaching license from the Orange Presbytery in 1796. Ordained over the church at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, two years later, Stone played a prominent role in the Great Revival and hosted the famed "Great Meeting" at his massive log church in August 1801. After cutting ties with the Kentucky Synod in 1803, he assumed a leadership role within the Christian movement and spent the last decade of his life organizing a network of nondenominational churches in Kentucky and Illinois. Matthew D. Smith, "Barton Warren Stone: Revisiting Revival in the Early Republic," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 11 (2013): 161-97; D. Newell Williams, *Barton Stone: A Spiritual Biography* (St. Louis, 2000); "Stone, Barton Warren (1772-1844)," in Douglas A. Foster, et al., ed., *Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), 700-20.

<sup>29</sup> Malcom Worley (1762-1844), the first Shaker convert west of the Appalachians, was born in Botetourt County, Virginia, and immigrated to Kentucky, with his family during the 1780s. Although never ordained, Worley graduated from Liberty Hall Academy (now Washington and Lee University), and served as an elder in the Presbyterian church at Turtle Creek, Ohio. At the time the Shakers arrived, Worley was living with his second wife, Miriam (Peggy) Monfort, and five children from his first marriage, all of whom converted to Shakerism. H. Clark Dean, "Caleb Worley (ca. 1730-1790) of Virginia and Kentucky, Grandson of Francis Worley of Pennsylvania," *American Genealogist* 70 (April 1995): 77-80; *Catalogue of the Officers and Alumni of Washington and Lee University*, 52; Hazel Spencer Phillips, "Malcolm Worley Bible Record," *Kentucky Ancestors* 2 (January 1967): 109; Cathcart, Shaker Membership Card File, nos. 016607-016610, 016615, microfilm, reel 123, MS 3944, Shaker Manuscripts, WRHS.

<sup>30</sup> Richard McNemar (1770-1839), the Shakers' most prominent western convert, was born in Pennsylvania and moved west with his family. He worked as a schoolmaster and studied theology before receiving a preaching license from the Transylvania Presbytery in 1795. Ordained over the Presbyterian Church at Cabin Creek, Kentucky, McNemar zealously endorsed the most radical innovations of the Great Revival, including the jerks and other bodily exercises. Several months after the Cane Ridge sacrament in August 1801, he became embroiled in a series of theological controversies that led to his removal to Turtle Creek, Ohio, and his decision to withdraw from the Synod of Kentucky with Stone's New Light faction. Following his conversion to Shakerism with his wife and children, McNemar devoted the remaining three decades of his life to promoting the believers' faith through his missionary work, ministerial leadership, legal advocacy, and numerous publications. J.P. MacLean, *A Sketch of the Life and Labors of Richard McNemar* (Franklin, OH, 1905); Mary L. Richmond, comp., *Shaker Literature: A Bibliography* (Hanover, NH, 1977), 1:122-37; Christian Goodwillie, "Custos Sacrorum: Richard McNemar as Curator and Printer," in Medlicott and Goodwillie, *Richard McNemar*, 1-24.

indeed) mighty in the Scriptures, has had true light respecting the works of the flesh, & has truly been an instrument in the hands of God of doing much good, especially in this revival.<sup>31</sup> He was the first & principal breaker, in all this separation which has taken place in Kentucky, & Ohio, since the summer of 1801. Since March 27th to the present date about 30 persons have opened their minds; & it is with satisfaction that we see the man & woman coming in together in about every instance. Believers appear to increase in faith & number, And so also do evil reports, tumults, & commotions!

God only knows what he himself will do; but by all that we can hear, & feel, we do not conceive that the Gospel in this part of the world will be confined to a small place, or to any small number of people, but will spread far & wide. In all places that can hear from the conviction of sin continues to increase, a conviction that all that is of the world, flesh, & devil, must be done away & have an end, & that this must be attained unto in this world in order for Souls to be prepar'd to inherit the kingdom of God. Those who have broken off from their former connections, boldly testify against the mistaken notions, & vain flatterys of those who imagine that they are going to be sav'd from the punishment of their sins, without being first sav'd from the practice. The Calvinistic doctrine is pointedly detested. Many of them place no confidence in anything they have received in time past, but believe that they must press on to perfection, to be completely purified, & redeem'd, not only from actual practice, but from the very spirit & nature of sin, in thought, word, & deed; & that in this world. And the main thing that seems to be in the way, is the question, How, & by what means these things are to be attained? Some are laboring & striving hard to gain it on their old ground, without confessing their sins, & taking up a full cross against the actual works of the flesh. Others begin to be convicted that they can never obtain it in that way, & that they must come in at the door. Thus the multitude is divided. Some in this country have received special light & conviction respecting the carnal works of the flesh, & have been expecting that God would open some way for their deliverance from these things. They believed the time was short when there would be no such thing as marrying, nor giving in marriage, but how these things were to be brought about they could not tell. These convictions appear to be growing in different parts of Ohio, Kentucky, & we believe also in Tennessee. Commotions of a religious nature appear to be considerable, in North Carolina, & in Cumberland in the Tennessee, as from both those places they have sent to Kentucky, to those who are broken off, for Preachers. We also learn that a work has broken

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<sup>31</sup> Acts 18:24.

out among the Tennessee Indians.<sup>32</sup> Thus what a large field is opened, & an extensive harvest a ripening, & how shall three weak children be able to secure all this, that nothing be lost? We humbly trust that it will be seen, & felt, how needful it is that more labourers should be sent to the harvest. But who, or how many shall come, is not for us to say, for we feel ourselves unable to judge; & therefore are willing to submit to that gift that may be felt in the Church. But if we had one more brother with us it would seem in a measure, to supply the present lack, for then we might be labouring in different parts & yet not be alone, but as it is now, some one of us has to be alone most part of the time. But perhaps it may not be thought proper or expedient for one to undertake such a journey alone, & probably it may be, that by the time that any could arrive here, neither one, nor two would be able to supply the want; but of these things we cannot judge, nor tell beforehand what will be.

As we expect that you will desire to know how the work goes on from this time, we shall endeavor to write again soon. You may therefore look for another letter in about a month from the time you receive this, or, two months from this date; as we expect that letters will be nearly, or quite a month on their passage. And we shall also have a great desire to know whether this letter is received or not, for we think it a matter of importance for us to know, & we shall be thankful to be informed by letter as soon as may be. We have a great desire to hear from our Brethren & Sisters, & to know how they do. It does not appear as though any one of us could at present be spared to return back; but if on any occasion it is thought best for either of us to return, we expect it will be signified.

We should all be very glad to return to our brethren, if we could be justified in so doing, but we believe that if we seek altogether to please ourselves we shall not please God. And we believe it will be for our best good to take up our cross, & labor to be reconciled to the mind & will of God in all things, though we should see New Lebanon no more; for we believe that however distant fields we are called to labour in, in this world; when the time is come for the fruits of our labors to be gathered in, God himself will cause us all to rest, & rejoice together. Yet, we comfort ourselves with the pleasing hopes that we shall yet have the privilege of seeing our Brethren, & Sisters, once more in this World. We feel ourselves dependant on the Church of Christ for strength & council, & we sincerely desire an interest in all their prayers to God.

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<sup>32</sup> No evidence suggests that the Cherokees experienced a religious revival in 1805. Instead, Meacham, Bates, and Youngs may have been referring to Gideon Blackburn's school for Cherokee children, which opened on the Hiwassee River the previous winter. For Blackburn's early missionary activities see, William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (1984; Norman, OK, 1995), 54-81; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton, 1986), 74-76; James Allen Bryant Jr., "A Kind of Pious Davey Crockett": The Reverend Gideon Blackburn and Cherokee Education," *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 89 (2017): 12-15.

We Shall look for a letter in about two months from this date, & if one is sent it may be directed, to Malcom Worley, near Lebanon Post-Office, in the county of Warren, & State of Ohio. This Worley was formerly from Virginia, & a noted man, has a great part of his days been a teacher of the languages, was a number of years a member of the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky, untill this revival, in which he has been very forward, & in a remarkable manner, deeply convicted of the works of the flesh, previous to our coming. He received us with gladness, was the first who opened his mind, & at present has an unshaken faith. He will deliver the letter to us unopened.

It is now Saturday evening near Sunset, & this letter must yet be taken to the Post-office, yet, we shall mention one, of two things more, which deserves a place among the treasures of Gods Prophets. The first of this great work began in Cumberland in Tennessee State. Two children there were taken with the Power of God, went into the woods, & there took hold, & held fast of each other so powerfully that none could part them. They spoke in unknown tongues, & then would interpret. Some of the interpretations was this "that God was about to raise an army, that would take the earth! And that Malcom Worley would be at the head of it!" This name was unknown & unheard of both to the children & people. It has but lately come to our hearing, & remains as yet a secret, even to the person whom it respects.

John Meacham  
Issachar Bates  
Benjamin S. Youngs

The distance that we have come to the Miamia country by way of the wilderness of Kentucky, is 1217 miles, but probably the way from Albany by Fort-Pitt would not exceed 900 miles, if so much.

The Post road from Pitt to this country is first to Wheelan, & from thence to Chillicothe, the seat of Government in Ohio, & from thence to Lebanon. The whole distance from Fort-Pitt to Lebanon by land does perhaps not exceed 300 miles. By water it is 500 miles to Cincinnati & 30 from thence to Lebanon, or Turtle-creek.

The horse we brought with us, we have left at Caneridge in Kentucky. He had been a burden to us ever since we left Abingdon, though in crossing bad waters he frequently was a benefit.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> One year after the Long Walk, John Meacham informed the Shaker ministry at New Lebanon that the "horse we first brought into this country died near Lexington in Kentucky January 26th. He died in great distress, & from all we could perceive he was poisoned, for he was well & in good order the day before." David Darrow and John Meacham to [David Osborn], March 19, 1806, no. 245, Shaker Collection of Records Concerning the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, 1676-1937, MSS 39552, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The Pamphlet containing Elder James' letter, Benjamin would be glad to have it sent if ever a suitable opportunity offers.<sup>34</sup>

N.B. We are all in very good health.

[Addressed:] Lebanon Ohio May 13th 1805      75  
To David Osborn at Watervliet near Albany<sup>35</sup>  
In the State of New York  
To be left with G. W. Mancius Post Master in Albany<sup>36</sup>  
Tribble<sup>37</sup>

[Endorsed:] From Ohio, May 13, 1805

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<sup>34</sup> Penned by John Meacham's father, Joseph, *A Concise Statement of the Principles of the Only True Church* (Bennington, VT, 1790) contained a 1785 letter by Shaker elder James Whittaker to his family.

<sup>35</sup> David Osborn (1753-1834) converted to Shakerism during the 1780s and moved to the believers' village at Watervliet, New York. He served as deacon for more than three decades, overseeing the community's various business operations. "David Osborn's Declaration," in Glendyne R. Wergland and Christian Goodwillie, eds., *Shaker Autobiographies, Biographies and Testimonies, 1806-1907* (London, 2014), 1:113-15.

<sup>36</sup> Merchant George W. Mancius (1767-1823) served as the Albany postmaster from 1792-1814. Stefan Bielinski, "George W. Mancius," *Colonial Albany Society History Project*, New York State Museum, Albany, <https://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/m/gwmancius6624.html>.

<sup>37</sup> The word "Tribble," along with the number 75 written above the address line, indicates that the Shakers paid a \$0.25 at triple rate, or \$0.75 in total, to mail their letter more than 500 miles from Fincastle, Virginia, to New Lebanon, New York. For postal rates see, *The United States Almanac, for the Year of Our Lord 1806* (Elizabethtown, NJ, 1805).