



Submitted by F. Daniel Kent on Thu, 05/19/2011 - 3:24pm



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Andrews Shaker Collection,
Touring Exhibits, Frist Center for
the Arts, Nashville Arts, Art
Review

Starting May 20, Nashville's
own **Frist Center for the
Arts** premiered the fascinating
exhibit ***Gather Up the
Fragments: The Andrews
Shaker Collection***. The title
comes from the mandate from
Christ to his disciples described in
the Gospel of John chapter 6,
verse 12: "*When they were filled,
he said unto his disciples, Gather
up the fragments that remain,
that nothing be lost.*" (KJV)
Posted in their dining rooms, this
verse was a central tenet of this
religious sect's faith reflected in
almost every aspect of their
fascinating existence.

Shaker scholars **Ted and Faith Young Andrews** took this verse to heart reflected in 1937 with their seminal book *Shaker Furniture* in which the astute couple demonstrated their awareness of the marriage of spiritual and material in the Shaker lifestyle. This was but another stepping stone in their quest to "gather up the fragments" of Shaker culture as it began to deteriorate in the early decades of the 20th Century. From 1923 on until Faith's death in 1990, they built the first, largest and most comprehensive collection of Shaker artifacts in existence.

Their story is but a framework which contains the story of a peculiar group of people called **The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing** or simply the Believers. Originally a derogatory

term aimed at their trembling dervish-like behavior during frenzied worship services, The Believers adopted the term Shakers as their own.

Complex in its simple beauty, *Gather Up the Fragments* is an inspirational tour de force spotlighting a culture all but gone. It is a journey into the psyche of men and women living their calling with intent, dreaming of Heaven on Earth and dedicating themselves to using every fiber of themselves to make that happen.

In a world where "Hope" has become a sound bite, the message of the Shakers delivered through time by the *Andrews Shaker Collection* is clear. There is still hope. People can choose to do good. People can choose to beat their swords into plowshares. People can choose Heaven on Earth if they only put their mind to it.

As we watch our own culture become more complex and more polluted *Gather Up the Fragments* is a sobering reminder of what human beings have allowed to slip away in his quest to take dominion over the earth. The exhibit invites one to take a moment and take it all in while we are screaming at the microwave to hurry up. The tradition of the Shakers is an example of the good that can be evident in man when he takes the time and effort to make it happen.

From textiles to boxes to high quality furniture and beautifully detailed spiritual artwork, The Shakers made everything themselves and made it to last and over 200 examples of this dedication to simple but sturdy design exist in this collection.

Gather Up the Fragments: The Andrews Shaker Collection will be at The Frist Center for the Arts until August 21, 2011. Check [online](#) for hours.

