Charles Hubert Watkins, the senior author, was a school teacher at one time. Floyd C. Watkins, his son, is an English professor. Consistent with their backgrounds, the treatment in Hills is more literary than folkloric. There is no overview of the community—historical, demographic, or otherwise. The overall organization is contrived: alternating cameos of memorable individual(s) with discussions of broad neighborhood themes. The characterizations, for example, of conservative farmer General Wheeler, overly attractive shape-note singer Viola Sexton, and misplaced mountain preacher A.L. Murphy resemble almost stereotypic literary creations. The accounts of writing with slate, plowing early in the day, and some other descriptive passages sound like the careful prose of James Dickey or Flanery O'Conner. To top it off, the authors' introduction and acknowledgements imply that they have made no great effort to adhere to facts, as much as stating that an accurate representation of life in the hills would be impossible.

Thus, this book is more a portrait than a documentary. While the main purpose of the work is never directly stated, Hills clearly pays tribute to the Watkinses' native culture. Those wanting a close look at a traditional society may be disappointed by what this father and son offer. We must thank them, however, for reminding us that there are places between the Appalachians and the deep South which have still not received adequate attention from folklorists.


Review note by Peggy Bradley Boaz.

A reprint of Edward D. Andrews' The Community Industries of the Shakers is now available from Emporium Publications Inc. (78 Slackville Street, Charlestown, Massachusetts 02129). A valuable asset to anyone interested in regional folklore or material culture, Industries of the Shakers covers the industries of weaving, broom making, chair making, and the tin, seed and herb processes. Beginning with the rise of Shakerism and Mother Ann Lee, the reader is acquainted with the historical background in the initial development of the United Society of Believers. In 1758 Mother Ann joined the religious society and was soon the accepted leader. Arriving in America in 1774, the Shakers began a new way of living and they flourished in the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire and New York.
These religious societies played a great role in the formation of industrial systems because of a well-known Shaker motto—"Put your hands to work and your hearts to God." Many of the communities were specialized with their own processes: Mt. Lebanon, Maine produced chairs; South Union, Kentucky preserved fruits; Canterbury, New Hampshire processed maple sugar.

The Shaker furniture was designed for utility and appealed aesthetically. Rooms had pegboards on the walls in order that chairs could be hung up to permit cleaning. Benches were enlarged to become tables and large wooden rollers were also attached to beds for mobility.

The illustrations included within Industries of the Shakers provide excellent examples of varieties of Shaker housing and various crafts, such as long-stemmed pipes, straw and wooden hats and bonnet molds. The division of Shaker activities, the selected bibliography and index are logical and of great use to the scholar. Industries of the Shakers is a good book for persons interested in American folklore, history, and utopian societies.


Reviewed by John Michael Vlach.

This book is an introduction to West Indian song behavior and will be particularly useful to the specialists in folk song and Afro-American studies. Abrahams presents, in three brief essays, a history of shantying as well as forty-five song texts with a description of their social context. Since this is a very short book (118 pages), the treatment of the subject matter is understandably descriptive.

In the opening essay Abrahams explains that a shanty is more than a seasong. It is the "sung dimension of virtually any group effort calling for the coordination of strength (p. 3)." This is not a completely successful definition since shanties are also used at wakes, ring parties, and in children's games. But shanties are often used for such land-based work as house moving and coal hauling and thus are connected to the work song traditions of West Africa. However, Abrahams does not follow up this point by citing any African analogs such as the field songs of the Fon of Dahomey. Although the question of origins is still unresolved,