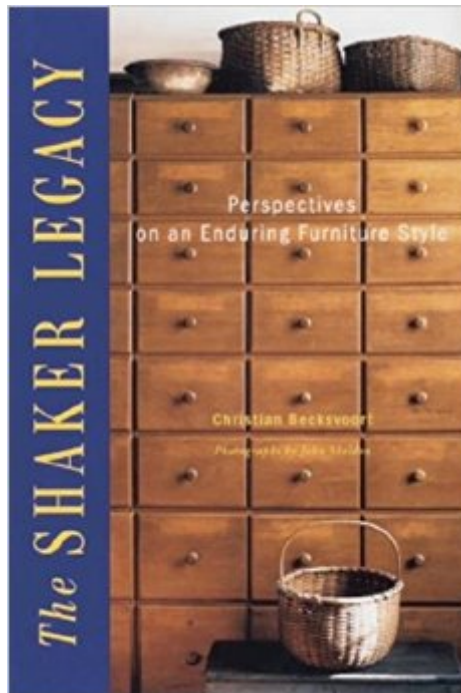


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# The Shaker Legacy: Perspectives On An Enduring Furniture Style



## Synopsis

Solid construction and honest functionality make Shaker furniture one of the most popular and timeless design categories. Based on extensive research and personal experience with the last working Shaker community in Maine, this book traces the roots of Shaker design to Shaker belief, which inspired the clean lines, careful craftsmanship, and signature details that define the style. The author also discusses the less known Victorian period of Shaker design and shows how this style has influenced subsequent ones. A bibliography, glossary, and index are included.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a truly excellent book that should be on the shelves of all who work with wood, even those of you who, like myself, are not particularly keen on shaker furniture. The first part of the book overviews the Shakers and their attitudes to working with wood, their seeking of elegant simplistic functional beauty and their enjoyment of the process of working with wood - these are an inspiration to the modern woodworker, all of whom I suspect share the same enjoyment of the process and attention to detail, regardless of their chosen style. The Shakers themselves are quite interesting, and their attitudes of constantly improving and making work easier, more joyful and freeing time for better pursuits than toil are a mantra we all should live by, perhaps. Although the Shakers were very minimalist, I believe many other great craftsmen of the past shared their attitudes and enjoyment of the process of making furniture. The second part of the book details many fine examples of Shaker

furniture. These are great items, well made, well designed, and even if the style is not your preferred one, they still may inspire you. Note that it is NOT a "how-to" book as another reviewer pointed out, although if you have some skill you could easily reproduce the items in it ? more importantly, be inspired by them. I have an extraordinary library of woodworking and furniture books covering all styles and all ages and I would definitely recommend this one as being in the top 10% - but I have to stress, it is not a how-to book, look elsewhere if you are looking for that. Finally, thanks to all the other reviewers here who convinced me to purchase it, I had seen it in the shops before but passed it over (not preferring Shaker style). I will now go tick all your reviews as being helpful. Did I mention it is absolutely full of colour photos, sidebars of interesting information and very readable and interesting?

The Shaker Legacy does several things beautifully. First there is the history of the Shakers which looks at the sect as a part of the history of our country and of the expansion of the European culture westward. Next there is the comprehension of the intense feelings which attended the creation of furnishings used by this unusual group. Further there is a delightful section which compares the influences of what we think of as Shaker Style with other spare and pristine styles from Norway to Japan and back to America. Finally there are the photos of familiar and of never before photographed pieces which bespeak the dedication of the creators. From these photos a competent woodworker could design his or her own tribute to the Shaker Legacy. Truly a pleasure to read and to return to time and time again.

Christian Becksvoort's book is a bit surprising in that the first third of the book (a full ninety pages) addresses Shaker philosophy more than furniture design itself, but the reading is well worth it. Each piece of furniture is shown by only one (terrific) photograph and is accompanied by very limited information. Additional pictures of some of the construction details would have been well worth it. Having read the book, however, one should be able to understand the Shaker philosophy of furniture design well enough to develop the construction details in an authentic manner.

" author Christian Becksvoort, a contributing editor of Fine Woodworking magazine and an experienced custom furniture maker and restorer who's worked for the last remaining Shaker community at Sabbathday Lake, Maine, examines the Shakers' faith in relation to their furniture." ~ review  
This attractive volume does not attempt to give directions on how to build Shaker style furniture. What it does do, and does it very well, is to describe the philosophy of the Shakers in

relation to their work. The book has as its focus the Shaker's most visible and well-known product - their furniture. Each piece in the book was carefully examined by Mr. Becksvoort and photographed by Mr. Sheldon. Some pieces are not available to the public. Construction, finish, and accurate description of each piece distinguish this work. Mr. Becksvoort knows what he is looking at, he has had the privilege of restoring and closely examining the furniture of the Sabbathday Lake, Maine, Shaker Village. What he does not do is tell you how to build each piece. But if you are a clever and intelligent woodworker, perhaps you will be inspired to design your own project with an eye to the timeless design of the Shakers. Take the challenge, inspire yourself!

Wow! I read a review that stated, "If you never buy another book on Shaker furniture, this is the one to have on your bookshelf." I agree wholeheartedly. Not only is it full of wonderful photos of antique Shaker furniture, there's a section on modern interpretations and how Shaker furniture has influenced many styles. Best of all, this book explains the philosophy of the Shakers and their furniture and gives us the history of the Shaker movement. It's not just a "book about furniture." A well written, thoughtful, and thought provoking book.

"The Shaker Legacy" is must buy for lovers of the Shaker furniture style. This book has class. The cover draws your attention immediately and from the book's Table of Contents to the picture on the end page I was in awe of the format and the unbelievable pictures. It is a book I will return to many times. Striking my attention immediately was a section on the parallels between Shaker furniture and Japanese design. As an owner of several tansu chests, I was fascinated how two cultures would come upon the very same design principles. This book is a wonderful addition to the collection on Shaker furniture and has a special place for those of us who live in Maine!

This book is an interesting and pleasant blending of American history, philosophy, furniture design, and woodworking. I have read/studied several other books concerning Shaker furniture. This hardcover printing of Mr. Becksvoort's book has, by far, the finest and clearest photography and printing.

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