



# Wisdom's Paradise: The Forgotten Shaker's of Union Village

*Robert Portman, Cheryl Bauer*

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Ohio Congressman Rob Portman, a life-long Shaker enthusiast, and freelance writer Cheryl Bauer, co-authored *Wisdom's Paradise*, the story of the first western Shaker settlement, founded in 1805. It was here that missionaries from eastern communities joined with zealous wilderness reformers to create a utopian haven commonly called Union Village, now Otterbein-Lebanon Retirement Community, near Lebanon, Ohio.

Here, Shakers tried to create a new heaven-on-earth but found that, even in paradise, perfection came with a heavy price. They contended with hostile mobs, the state legislature, and a newspaper publisher who deemed them satanic. Despite the chaos, the Shakers succeeded as religious publishers, innovators of garden seed and herbal medicine, and livestock breeders. They grew to be one of the most influential Shaker settlements in America. And then they were gone.

What happened? Why did the community and the Shaker faith fade in the West after seemingly triumphing over suspicion and prejudice? *Wisdom's Paradise* answers these questions, and describes the struggles and successes of the people who called themselves the Believers.



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