

Half the Sky: Men, women and feminism in New Hampshire

"Women hold up half the sky." – Mao Zedong

There is one building in the center of New Hampshire that stands as an architectural marvel and metaphor for gender equality, the Meetinghouse at Canterbury Shaker Village, built in 1792. The meetinghouse, with its symmetrical design centered on two separate identical front doors, one for men and one for women, may have more to say than appears at first glance. The inward convictions of this celibate community centered on the seemingly paradoxical concepts of community and celibacy dwelling side-by-side, a community founded by a woman, Mother Ann Lee.

The Shakers give us a



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vivid example of community in which men and women are total allies, with the gift or the torment of sex, left out of the equation. The Shakers were such allies that, as Shaker diaries record, this meetinghouse – the first and most important building built in a Shaker community – was framed

WHITNEY | PAGE A5



The Meetinghouse is located at Canterbury Shaker Village. It was built in 1792.

Courtesy photo