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Hamilton College Library "Home Notes"

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Hamilton College Library “Home Notes”

Hamilton College Library Acquires *The Shaker Messenger Archives*

Hamilton College Library is pleased to announce the acquisition of the publication rights and title to *The Shaker Messenger*, along with its predecessor *The World of Shaker*, and its successor, *Shakers World*.

The World of Shaker was published by the Guild of Shaker Crafts located in Spring Lake, Michigan. The Guild, established in 1965 by Betty and Ken Kammeraad, came out with the first issue in 1971. The eight-page folios were published quarterly and included articles on all aspects of Shaker history and culture, news from Shaker communities and museums, and articles on Shaker antiques, auctions and collecting. The last issue was published in November 1977.

The quarterly was resurrected in 1978 by Paul and Diana Van Kolken of Holland, Michigan. Renamed *The Shaker Messenger* and somewhat expanded in scope, its stated intent was to keep readers “up to date on current events in the world of Shaker with reports from Shaker communities, restorations and museums; book reviews, study papers, antique shows, songs and seminars.” In early 1996, Karl and Alana Parkinson, of Manchester, Connecticut acquired the journal from the Van Kolkens and changed its name to *Shakers World*, continuing the publication through 1998.

Since *Shakers World* and *The Shaker Quarterly* (the other major Shaker quarterly journal of that time) ceased publication in the late 1990s, the only scholarly publication devoted to communal studies has been the journal *Communal Societies*, published annually by the Communal Studies Association. The founding of Hamilton College Library’s *American Communal Societies Quarterly* was at least in part an attempt to fill the void left by the disappearance of these other quarterly publications. It is, therefore, especially rewarding to join the resources of *The Shaker Messenger* with those of the *ACSQ*.

As part of their agreement with Hamilton College Library, Karl and

Alana Parkinson are donating the entire archive of the *Shaker Messenger* to the Library. This extensive archive contains almost thirty years of unpublished articles, correspondence, museum brochures, business records, and other material. The Library is grateful to the Parkinsons for their generosity, and is pleased to add these archives to its Communal Societies Collection.

Our plans for this new acquisition are several. First, we will open the archives and make them available to scholars and researchers. Second, we will reprint some of the most important articles from *The Shaker Messenger/Shakers World* in future issues of *ACSQ*. Third, we hope to publish an index to the entire twenty-seven year run of the journal. In these ways we hope to continue its legacy and bring new life to the rich resources found there. Finally, we will investigate the possibility of digitizing the contents of this important Shaker journal as we did with the *Shaker Manifesto*, making this resource even more accessible to researchers.

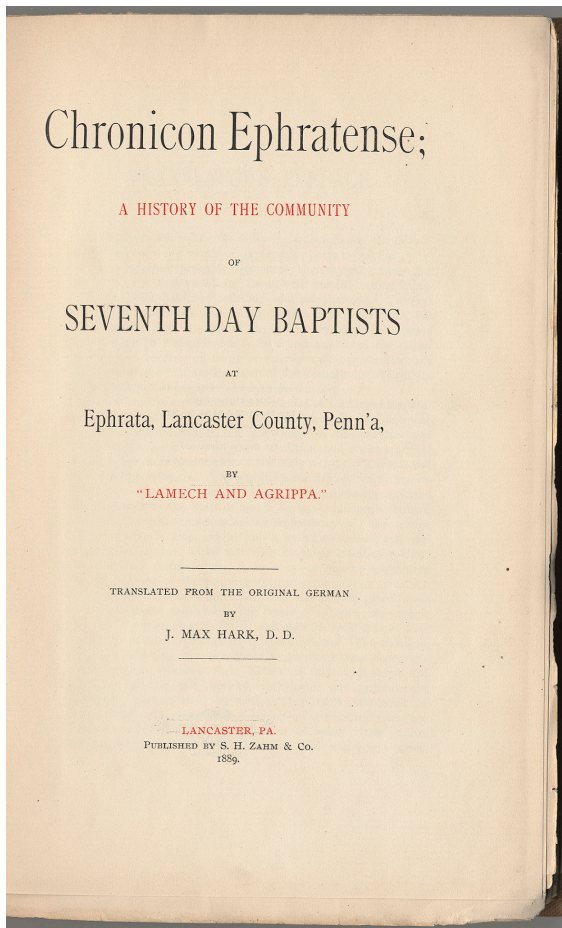
Anyone who has used *The World of Shaker* is well aware of the fragility of its pages. The journal was printed on highly acidic newsprint, which rapidly browns and becomes brittle. Mary Richmond noted in her bibliography (no. 2959) that she had not recorded the articles from *The World of Shaker* because of their fragile nature, implying that they would not long survive. At Hamilton we have deacidified three complete runs of the journal and placed each issue in protective mylar, all stored in custom-made clamshell boxes. While this will not restore the paper to its original quality, it will prevent further deterioration.

Communal Societies Collection: New Acquisitions

Lamech, Brother, Johann Peter Mill, J. Max Hark. *Chronicon Ephratense; A History of the Community of Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata, Lancaster County, Penn'a. Lancaster, Pa.: S. H. Zahm & Co., 1889. xvi, 288 p. 26 cm.*

One of the earliest American intentional communities was the Ephrata colony, more formally known as the Solitary Brethren of the Community of the Seventh Day Baptists. It was founded by Conrad Beissel, a German pietist who traveled to America in 1720 to join

the mystical group "Woman in the Wilderness." When Beissel arrived, he found the group scattered and in disarray; consequently he associated with other separatists and formed a celibate and hermitic congregation in western Pennsylvania. By 1732, he and other Palatine Germans moved east to the Ephrata site to form the "Camp of the Solitary." There, under Beissel's mystical leadership, they erected a common house, and later established separate celibate orders for men and women. Their dress was simple and uniform, and they labored



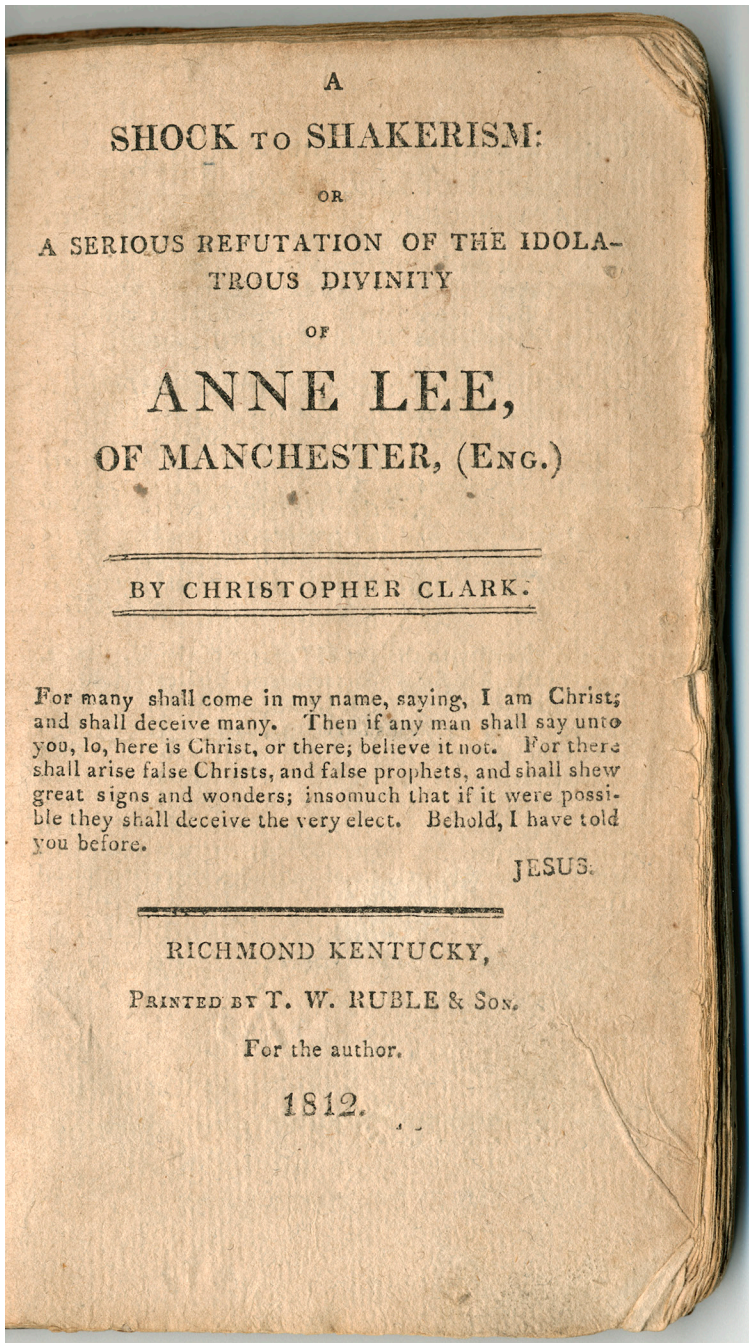
and worshipped in silence.

This book is the first English translation of *Chronicon Ephratense*, first published in German at Ephrata in 1786. It furnishes an abstract of the diary of the Brotherhood, but is primarily a biography of Beissel. It remains the principal source of information about this remarkable community. The translation was by J. Max Hark. The Hamilton College Library example is still partly unopened, and retains its original linen covers. It is number 151 of the 1889 limited edition of a presumed 200 copies.

Clark, Christopher. *A Shock to Shakerism: Or A Serious Refutation of the Idolatrous Divinity of Anne Lee, of Manchester, (Eng.).* Richmond, Ky.: Printed for T. W. Ruble, 1812. iv, 114 p. 20 cm.

Shaker missionaries were dispatched to the western states in 1805 to carry Mother's gospel to the subjects of the Kentucky Revival. By 1810, hundreds of converts in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana were gradually transitioning into communal societies, much to the dismay of the western Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists. That same year the first western anti-Shaker publication was published, written by the legendary frontiersman James Smith and titled *Remarkable Occurrences [!] Lately Discovered among the People Called Shakers; Of a Treasonous Nature, or Shakerism Developed*. During the next twenty years, a flurry of anti-Shaker pamphlets and books flowed from the western presses. Clark's *Shock to Shakerism* is typical of many western anti-Shaker works, written not by apostates (as was the case for most eastern anti-Shaker diatribes) but by outsiders. He viewed Shakerism as "a fountain of error, evil and delusion" and deemed the Shaker *Testimony* to be outrageous blasphemy.

This volume is a very early Kentucky imprint and a product of the frontier. The printing is primitive, it is stab-stitched into a soft pigskin cover, and pages cut from an 1813 issue of the Hopkinsville, Kentucky *Western Eagle* serve as endpapers. (The endpapers and pigskin cover were a later addition to the original publication, though probably done the following year given the date on the endpapers.) It is an exceptionally rare work with OCLC WorldCat recording only two other surviving copies (Library of Congress and University of Kentucky Library). Richmond (*Shaker Literature*, no. 1963).



Noyes, T. R. (M. D.). *Report on the Health of Children in the Oneida Community*. Oneida, N. Y.: [n. p.], 1878. 8 p. 22 cm.

The Oneida Society of New York, the largest and most successful of the Perfectionist communities established by John Humphrey Noyes, was arguably the most radical and remarkable American community of its day. The community was first organized in Putney, Vermont during the 1830s, removing to Oneida in 1848. It was organized around a system of “complex marriage” whereby individuals could select sexual partners based on love and attraction rather than being bound by the restrictions of conventional, monogamous marriage. One of the most controversial practices of the Perfectionists was a program of eugenics, initiated in 1869. Termed “stirpiculture” by Noyes, it was what one historian calls “the first systematic attempt at eugenics in man’s history.” That year, the society decided to raise “children of its own, instead of depending on taking in new members with children, as is the custom with the Shakers.” They also decided to experiment with “some [of the] radical ideas about scientific propagation.” This report by Noyes’ son Theodore, a physician, was published nine years after the practice was adopted. It is a study of the fifty children born after stirpiculture was introduced and includes an assessment of their health and physical condition. This is the only edition published, and retains its original brilliant blue printed wraps.

Harter, Mrs. J. H. and [Harvey L. Eads]. *True Religion. A Poem, by Mrs. J. H. Harter, Auburn, N.Y. and Rhymes on Shakerism by Mrs. Harter and Lizzie Morton*. [n.p: n.d.]. 20 p. 15 cm.

This curious work was authored by Shaker elder Harvey L. Eads of South Union, Kentucky (using the pseudonym ‘Lizzie Morton’), and a Mrs. J. H. Harter of Auburn, New York. Both *True Religion* and *Rhymes on Shakerism* are in verse—the latter work a vigorous yet civil debate between Sister Lizzie (i.e., Eads) and the reform-minded Mrs. Harter on Shaker doctrine. Bibliographer Mary Richmond was unaware of its date of publication and source, but an entry in the National Union Catalog furnishes the date of 1879 and adds that it “was read at the dedication of Lyceum Hall at Freeville, New York, August, 1879.” Harter was well acquainted with Mount Lebanon’s elder Frederick Evans and his progressive interests, and it is possible that Evans may have attended the dedication service. This was not the first time that Harvey had engaged

in a poetic duel about Shakerism using the pseudonym of a Shaker sister. His *Answers to 'Lines [in Verse] by Charlotte Cushman,'* first published in 1846 and signed "a Shaker Girl," was a spirited reply to Cushman's gentle criticism of the Shaker faith. *True Religion* is among the scarcest of imprints associated with Harvey Eads. Richmond (*Shaker Literature*, no. 769) locates only the copy at the Western Reserve Historical Society. OCLC WorldCat locates three other holding libraries (Amherst College, Syracuse University and Cornell University).

Collection relating to "The Children of Light" (an intentional community established about 1950 and located at Dateland, Arizona since 1963). [Correspondence, photographs, hymnody and poetry, sound recordings, newspaper photocopies and transcriptions, and ephemeral items].

The Children of Light is a communal group with origins in the small isolated fruit farming community of Keremeos in southern British Columbia. The group was organized by Grace Carlson (since 1951 known as Elect Gold). She had a series of visions beginning in 1949, which led her to preach to members of the local Assembly of God Church. By June of 1950, the Carlson faction had withdrawn from that church and embraced communal principles and celibacy. Accounts vary, but it appears that between two and three dozen adults embraced Carlson's visionary doctrines. Shortly after Christmas in 1950, the members withdrew to a stone cottage on the outskirts of Keremeos, sealed the windows and doors, and remained there for several weeks—to await, say some, the end of the world. What is remarkable is that the Carlson group was able to attract numerous children and young adults. Their "retreat" became a standoff with the Keremeos community, and the story was widely covered by Canadian newspapers. Some parents attempted to physically remove their children from the stone cottage, some succeeding with the help of law officials. Members of the Children of Light, however, felt that they were victims of persecution, and shortly thereafter created a common fund, purchased supplies and departed Keremeos, never to return. Thus commenced a twelve-year period called "the traveling," during which they journeyed in an automobile caravan throughout the Canadian provinces and all of the continental United States save Maine and New Hampshire. During the early 1960s the group was

in Texas where they attracted a number of converts. By early 1963 they had wandered westward to southern Arizona. In the dry desert regions of the Agua Caliente region, Elect Gold had a vision that “this was the place,” and on May 21 of that year they “came on land,” and declared that they had come home. The Children of Light have remained at their Dateland, Arizona commune since that time. It is a comfortable communal home sustained by the community’s date and fig industry.

Much of the correspondence in this collection dates to 1992 and 1993, when five sisters and three brothers resided there (including Elect Gold who then was 103 years old). Little is known about the Children of Light. No history has been written and there is scant information in print, save for the occasional newspaper article. The church has not been inclined to publish its faith and testimony. This collection is, therefore, a valuable resource pertaining to this heretofore virtually unknown American community.



From l. to r.: Elect Beryl, Elect Star, Elect Gold (seated), Elect Lydia.
Members of the Children of Light, Dateland, Arizona, March 1993.