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## Document: Diary of Virginia H. Andrews of a visit to Mount Lebanon, New York, Shaker community, 1892

Virginia H. Andrews

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## **Document: Diary of Virginia H. Andrews of a visit to Mount Lebanon, New York, Shaker community, 1892.**

Koreshan Unity collection N2009- 3, Papers, ca 1887-1990; Box 236, folder 6, State Library and Archives of Florida.

*Editorial note: We present here a transcription of a diary attributed to Virginia H. Andrews, recently uncovered by Adam Morris. Andrews is known to have visited the Mount Lebanon Shaker community in company with Annie Ordway (aka Victoria Gratia) during this time. See Christian Goodwillie, "Heaven in a Hollow Earth: The Shaker Koreshan Connection," American Communal Societies Quarterly 3, no. 2, (April 2009), for a full account of this trip, as well as images of Ordway and Andrews's signatures in the North Family's guest register. Transcription by Mark Tillson, misspellings as in original.*

Detroit Mich June 27, 92

We left Chicago last night. Arrived here at 9:30. A lovely day - & feeling better than when I started. Wrote a card to Beth Ophrah. Tried to mail it at Detroit but too late - Then when I reached Windsor Canada I ran out to mail it & the official informed me it would not go without a Canada stamp. Finally mailed it at Buffalo

Chatham 53. AM

Am waiting for the train to Lebanon - We sent another card to Beth Ophrah.

At 9 reached New Lebanon & Daniel Offord met us at the depot with a wagon & drove us through a lovely country road and up through a charming hill country to Mt. Lebanon.

June 28

We have finished our first day among the Shakers and a most enjoyable day it has been - We have met a number from the other home. The two ministers Sisters Harriet & Augusta spent part of the aftn with us & Elder Fredk made us a call - Told one of the sisters as he met them on going out - that the Chicago sisters were "bright intelligent women."

June 29-

We went out to the strawberry patch this am - then to the dirty laundry & wash room- where every convenience goes to make work a pleasure.

At 11 Elder Evans came & had a long talk, touched on some tender points & V. shed some tears & I bore her company from sympathy. I think he was touched & he came again with some pleasant words of greeting. One sister said of him "He liked to trim trees - & people".

Br Benjamin Gates also called after dinner we went to bed used up, but had a visit from Sister Harriet & three others. helped hull berries, investigated the kitchen & culinary department generally then after supper went to the younger sisters meeting. A lovely treat - A company of 18 held a literary society, show much talent & a pure sweet spirit.

June 30, 92

After finishing my letter to Beth Ophra I was quite taken by surprise by Sister Catherine asking to hear it- however I read it to her & evidently pleased her which it could hardly fail to do as I expressed only the love & gratitude we really felt for them with out dreaming she would ever hear it - Elder Evans came in later & said he must apologize for his talk yesterday - he was tired & ~~sometimes~~ and used more words than wisdom. I told him we were tired too & therefore perhaps too sensitive so it was all made it all right.

Visited the shirt shop & saw the cheese making & then went to all the other sewing shops, the school, and the barn and watched the cows come in to be milked. 25 beauties that walked into their own particular stall where the name of each was printed in large letters.

Eldress Anna came to us later & said if agreeable she would like us to meet the whole family tonight & have a general talk. This filled me with dread, and when we were led up to the meeting room where the sisters and bros were seated in a semi circle & we were appointed two chairs in front of the pulpit I wished I could melt away out of sight -

Elder Evans came in with the brothers, and I did not know but we were to have a fearful ordeal of questions but ~~our~~ any fears were groundless. They asked us to tell of our persecution & of the moving of our Societys ~~moving~~ so Victoria did the talking and told it all in a bright entertaining way - Then they wanted to sing with us & we sang two of their hymns "No surrender & Sweet angels come nearer"

At its close Sister Annie knelt & they all knelt with her & sang it through

softly, it seemed that the angels were really there - Then Bro Daniel spoke and & Sister Anna & the 2 ministers Harriet & Augusta welcoming us most cordially & expressing so much love & affection. Others followed & we replied. Bro Daniel felt so happy he almost shouted as a Methodist would - & there was a lovely spirit manifest - They all said they loved us so as they parted from us for the night.

July 1<sup>st</sup>

We had a lovely ride to Canaan this am with Bro Daniel & Sister Anna White. found a beautiful family there, all so pleased to see us. 6 industrious boys that cultivate 97 acres besides milking 17 cows, tending 5 or 6 horses - 45 ~~chicks~~ hens & 85 chickens. The oldest 16 & the youngest 7. They sang for us sweetly - The girls did also. Then we went into the meeting room & we talked with all.

George Scott was a little ~~sarcastic~~ satirical, said he had 5000 or less questions to ask. When he asked about ~~the~~ cosmogony I got warmed & Victoria said she found I could talk - I could not help myself - I felt so intensely but it his opposition did me good. I have not felt as well since I have been here as after that talk & he entirely changed his tactics & was very respectful & hospitable to us & sent messages of love to Cyrus.

¶ We had a lovely ride home through the Shaker village. Then rested & ate supper.

We felt as tho' we had gotten home again - & they all seemed so glad to see us. After ten we walked through the orchard & to see the hens with Isabel, Grace & Lucy - All such sweet girls.

Met an old lady over 82 in the Rye field gathering rye straw for bonnets. She was as sprightly as at 30 ~~or 40~~.

Sat in the arbor half an hour with a dozen of the sweetest girls who wanted to sit right in front of us & "look at us they said, all they wanted to" - It was principally Victoria they wanted to look at & I did not wonder, she looked so queenly among them - They gave us such loving hugs & kisses when Sister Catherine came to have us say good night - lest we should get the rheumatism.

July 2 Thermometer 42° - Pretty cool for July - so Bro Daniel turned on the steam heat for us & warmed us up.

At 1 Sister Catherine took us on a tour of investigation through the dwelling house and at night there was a Society meeting in the meeting room that

we attended and witnessed their exercises – joining in with Sister Cathrine & Sarah Jane in the last march.

Sabbath day July 3<sup>rd</sup> 92

Was a very eventful day and I hope fraught with ~~us~~ much of good for us all. Elder Fredk came in the am while it was raining & as we wanted to go the Meeting House he said he must go and see to the weather –

In ten minutes the sun was shining brightly and we had a lovely day for our service. We went to the meeting House with Sister Catherine – It was a beautiful sight to see the rows of sweet Shaker faces in their quaint Quaker dress & white silk kerchiefs folded across their bosoms. A loving sweet spirit prevailed & their singing & marching was interspersed with remarks & experiences, many as they sang “Your God shall be my God & Your interest our call” coming to us & taking us by the hand with expressions of love. Before the close Eldress Annie came & took Victoria by the hand & introduced her as a sister from Chicago & she addressed them in a beautiful manner saying just the right thing & very acceptably as we heard afterward.

In the afn it rained but many came in to see us & at night at a singing meeting Elder Evans told them to sing “Joy – Joy let us have joy and angel of God has come on 53 p of the Shaker Book “Because said he, “our sisters have come among us and brought us joy.” It was very lovely of him. Afterward Annie Lane of Binghamton came over and I told her some things about Cyrus’ history that refuted the stories in the B. papers that she had circulated. Elder Fk ~~Said~~ tonight is when I asked him about not getting out to meeting today – said humorously, “Well it takes a good deal of strength to take care of the weather”

Monday, July 4<sup>th</sup> 92

An eventful day with me for it is the day when I became a Shaker with Eldress Anna for my spiritual mother – ~~my~~

We have had visitors all day, and several presents from our dear Shaker friends. We shall always love them with a great love – Tuesday July 5<sup>th</sup> Bro Off from breakfast - to see Levi

“ “ Bro Daniels milk tester

“ “ Janes dairy & cheese

“ “ Cecilia

“ “ Cora

“ “ Martha

“ “ Sarah

“ “ Julia

“ “ Christine

“ go to bed to rest till noon

Then Grace came

After we all went up in the mountain - & Bro Dnl gave us a row on the artificial lake & they sang. Had a magnificent view of the hills – A ramble back through the fields & orchard then an exhibition of the fire department by Bro D. A good rest & then we packed for N.Y.

After the Elders & Eldresses spent a pleasant evening with us & so closed our last day at Mt L.

Wednesday July 6<sup>th</sup>

Had touching goodbyes from all the dear sisters with many little tokens of their ~~love~~ & regard – They hung around us like bees in the clover and declared they had never met any one they loved so well. We hated to say goodbye. Bro D. drove us to the station. We took the cars to Hudson, then filled in an hour by a street car ride. Took the Albany boat “New York” when it reached H. & with lovely weather & perfect scenery – enjoyed our day to the full. Christian Endeavors going to the Convention filled the boat – Bro Benj Gates met us at the wharf & took us to St. George hotel where we saw Mrs. Mac Whorter. After tea called ~~with~~ Mrs. Menning. Then went to an entertainment - & back to the hotel.