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The Story Of The Shakers (Revised Edition)



Synopsis

Featuring a new introduction, a compassionate look at a religious movement that shaped America—“Put your hands to work and your hearts to God,” Mother Ann Lee told her spiritual children more than 200 years ago. Today, as the number of Shakers has dwindled to only a handful, the story of the Shakers has never been more important to record and understand. In this classic book featuring a brand-new introduction, Flo Morse offers a stimulating, graceful summary of Shaker beliefs and the way of life that still endures among a chosen few.

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Customer Reviews

I recently downsized and gave a reproduction of a Shaker box to a friend. The brochure was still inside of it from 20 years ago when I bought it. I read the brief background of the Shakers it included and became fascinated by the Shaker history and life style. Is book is a great overview of their beginnings and voyage to America to live out their beliefs.

Tells the story of a faith that originated in Europe and was brought to the United States in the 1770's by nine people. Their faith spread out mostly in the Eastern United States with several communities. They did not believe in marriage and took in orphans to raise. B/W drawings appear of their worship and their beliefs are explained. With the Industrial Revolution their ranks shrink to just a few that are left. Includes a map of where their settlements were located and the years they were active. Insightful.

The Shaker Story by Flo Morse may not be a large book, but it provides a wealth of information about this little known and oft misunderstood religious group. Some people confuse them with Quakers. Others think they were simply manufacturers of furniture. Morse sets out to fill in the gaps. The Shakers were founded in 1772 and thrived into the 1800's. They believed that you didn't have to die to enter heaven. Rather, heaven could be found right here on earth if you lived a simple and virtuous life. Shakers were required to live in villages, where they were totally self-sufficient. Couples had to disavow marriage vows, and men, women and children lived apart from each other. They did interact during worship where they sang and danced (or "shaked"). They produced seeds, herbs, hats, cloth, thread, brooms and furniture, and sold these items all over the country. The Shakers were also prolific songwriters, and they composed over 30,000 hymns and songs. Music was an important component of their worship. Only one of their songs, A Simple Gift, has gone mainstream. Aaron Copland included it as the main melody in his well-known classic, Appalachian Spring. You might wonder what would entice adults to live a celibate life. But this was often more appealing to women-rather than marrying an abusive or undependable husband. Women had an equal say in village life, and some villages even welcomed blacks as equals. Many unwanted children were dropped off at Shaker Villages, where they were raised to adulthood. The Shakers started to fade after the Civil War for a variety of reasons. First, factories started mass-producing the same products the Shakers made by hand, but for a fraction of the cost. Since members didn't procreate, new generations were not born to replace older generations as they died off. And public orphanages meant less unwanted children coming to Shaker Villages. One by one, the villages were dissolved and closed. Several have become National Historic Sites, and it is fascinating to see how Shakers lived, worked and worshipped. Still, there are a handful of Shakers in the United States (less than a dozen at last count), although the Shaker glory days appear to be over. So, if you can't visit a Shaker Village (such as Pleasant Valley Shaker Village in Kentucky), pick up Morse's book. She provides a good look at this fascinating group.

A great read! I got this book at the Enfield Shaker Museum in Entfield, N.H. It was such a nice read! If you want to learn more about the Shakers without having to read hundreds of pages, this is the book you're looking for!

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