

Birth, Life, and Death of Olive Branch, 1896-1924

By Rev. Vernon Squire

For those who are just beginning their searches and studies about Shakers, the title might seem to suggest that this article is about a Shaker named Olive Branch. For those more experienced in Shaker studies, they will recognize that Olive Branch refers to the Shaker community in Florida, which existed from 1896 to 1924.

At the outset, it may be helpful to examine some of the background leading up to the birth of Olive Branch. Most of us are aware of the decline in membership among Shaker communities around that time. We may also be aware that the population of Shakers was aging, making a warmer climate attractive.

There were factors outside of the Shakers that also contributed to their looking towards Florida. It was in the late 1880s and early 1890s that Henry Plant began operating a railroad from Jacksonville down across the state to Clearwater and Tampa where he built an elegant and elaborate hotel dubbed “Plant’s Palace.” A spur of the rail line brought the train up to the west front entrance of the hotel so guests could disembark and walk directly into the lobby. On the east coast of the state Henry Flagler was building his Florida East Coast Railway into St. Augustine, Palm Beach, and Miami. Florida was beginning to stir and tourists were beginning to arrive.

Our point of interest is the small village of Narcoossee, near St. Cloud and Ashton, which were about twelve miles east of Kissimmee (which most people recognize as being close to present-day Disney World).

Narcoossee wanted a share of the visitors from the North, and to attract them sent out flyers and invitations announcing that land was available for sale. We can imagine that some of this information arrived at the North Family of Shakers in Mount Lebanon.

In 1893 a financial panic hit with even greater force and disruption than the recession of today, and land prices in Florida fell. In 1894 three

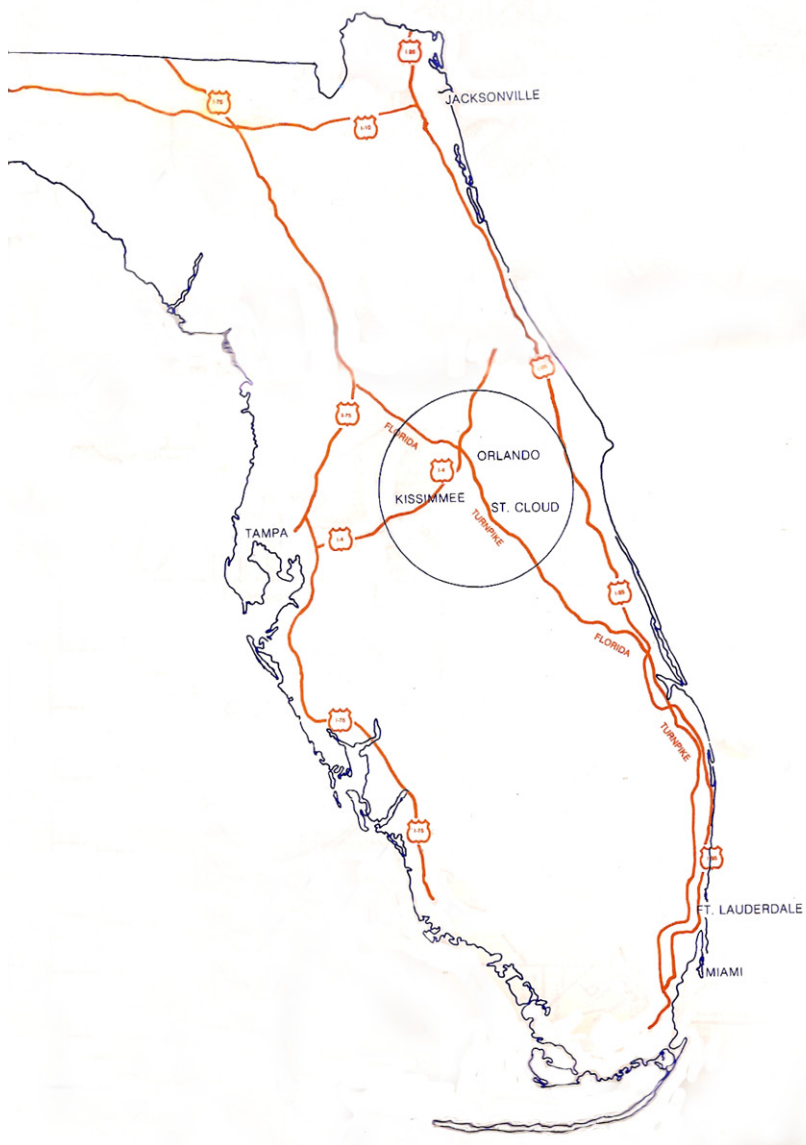


Fig. 1. Map of Florida showing the location of St. Cloud.

men from the North Family—Benjamin Gates, Charles Weed, and Andrew Barrett—went to Florida to investigate the possibilities there.

It is fair to assume that they went to Narcoossee because they had seen the information about land being available, and after the financial panic land was cheap. When they arrived in Narcoossee, they were certainly dressed differently than Floridians and stood out among the locals. The local people, in spite of wanting to sell land, viewed these three Shaker men as potential land speculators, and were not too warm in their reception.

The three men returned to Mount Lebanon, and on December 2, 1894, there was a meeting of the covenant members of the North Family to discuss the Florida potential. Some descriptions of that meeting suggest that “Florida fever” was taking hold. In view of declining membership and the closing of villages, it seemed like a good opportunity to perhaps gather some of the new arrivals to Florida into a new Shaker community.

Eldress Emma J. Neale voiced her disapproval and opposition to the project, and at the same time removed Benjamin Gates from having any authority in that area. There seemed to be support for the project among members of the North Family, but the financial aspects were daunting. Discussions with Watervliet took place, to explore whether together they might be able to finance something in Florida.

By January 20, 1896, Brother Andrew Barrett, one of the original three who went to Florida to investigate, was beginning to have some reservations about the project. He wrote to Elder Joseph Holden:

We are not building a spiritual house as well as a temporal building. When I see the greed of money step in and engross our whole attention, I begin to think we have forgotten the primary object of our exit into Florida.... To me this was not intended as merely a speculative scheme for a quiet and comfortable home with a chance to make a few dollars to keep the thing running. IF God is in it, I don't believe He wants any such business.

On November 2, 1896, the Disston Land Company of Florida sold to Isaac Anstatt of Watervliet, Albany County, in the State of New York, just over seven thousand acres of land and water for \$94,500, amounting to \$13.38 per acre. It is of more than just passing interest that even though he was present, there is no mention of Benjamin Gates in the deed or sale document as recorded in court records, nor of Egbert Gillette (who was to later play a very important part in the life of Olive Branch). Also not mentioned is anything about the property being purchased by the Shakers! It sounds almost like business deals that take place today, where businesses

buy property under the name of some individual. Also of interest is that until 1914, when the first parcel of property was sold, the deed and title remained in the name of Isaac Anstatt, who was an elder or trustee of the West Family in Watervliet.

The acreage they bought contained five lakes: Trout Lake, Lake Lizzie, Live Oak Lake, Sardine Lake, and the upper portion of Alligator Lake. Canals built by the federal government connected these lakes. The Shakers were able to go from their buildings to these lakes without leaving their property.

On the map in figure 2, you can see Section 8, on which the Shakers built their two homes close to Alligator Lake. You can also see their proximity to St. Cloud and Ashton. They received mail in Ashton, which had a train station, and the Shakers had business dealings in St. Cloud.

The Shakers erected two buildings for residences, one for women and one for men. From other references, it would appear that the men's residence is on the left. The women's residence was the larger of the two, and according to another account, Elder Egbert Gillette apparently lived on the first floor of the two-story men's residence. Also of some minor interest is the balcony on the second floor, which may reflect what in Florida is called a "possum run" which is basically the means of catching any ambient breezes and keeping the house as cool as possible.

Living at Narcoossee at the outset were Benjamin Gates, Andrew Barrett, Charles Weed, Nancy Dow, Elizabeth Sears, Amanda Tiffany, Nancy Lane, and Charles Preston. It is notable that neither Isaac Anstatt (in whose name the property was deeded) nor Egbert Gillette is listed among the inhabitants. Gillette's name does appear in other places, but not at this particular point.

By 1898 some of the Shakers from the North had come to Florida to visit, among them Joseph Holden, Harriett Bullard, and Emma J. Neale. It is not clear whether they wanted to see how things were going in Florida, or whether they wanted to relax in a sunny, warm climate.

Benjamin Gates traveled frequently between Olive Branch and Mount Lebanon. He enjoyed a good reputation in St. Cloud and was known locally as "the Shaker," "the Venerable Shaker," and "the Shaker of Narcoossee." When he died in 1909, at the age of ninety-two, Elder Ezra Stewart sent a letter to the editor of the *St. Cloud Tribune*, which read in part:

Brother Benjamin was a prime mover in the selection and purchase of the Shaker estate near St. Cloud, in Florida, and was for several years a

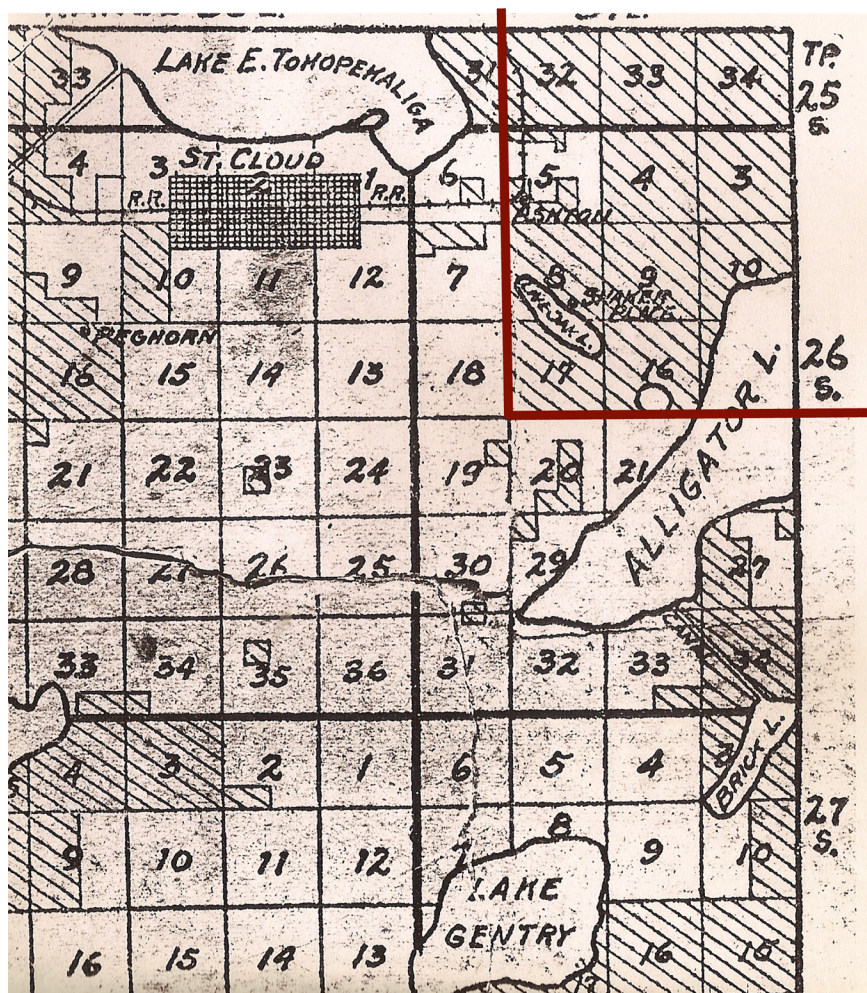


Fig. 2. The Shakers built two homes in Section 8, close to Alligator Lake.

well-known figure in Osceola County. For years Brother Benjamin had it in mind to plant an infant colony in some more salubrious climate than that of the frozen North, and when the opportunity came, in 1894, to purchase a tract of land in South Florida, his years of practical experience in handling landed properties stood the Shaker Society in good stead. Altho the wisdom of the move was at that time doubted by some, experience and time have fully justified the remarkable, almost

prescient, faith which Benjamin Gates always had in this section of Florida.

At the memorial service held in his honor at the Church Family, Mount Lebanon, N.Y., many beautiful and noble tributes were paid to his character and life work by those who hold him in grateful remembrance as a wise guardian, a faithful friend, and a living father. Many were the expressions of esteem and friendship offered by friends and neighbors.

(signed) Ezra J. Stewart

In contrast to the Shaker villages in the north and west, which engaged in various industrial activities (furniture making, fancy goods, seeds, etc.), Olive Branch did not do any manufacturing. One of their ventures was the raising of beef cattle. Some of the northern families raised dairy herds for milk, but not for beef. The historical novel *A Land Remembered* describes this era in Florida as one of cattle rustling and cattle drives to Tampa for shipment to Cuba. The Shakers engaged in this lucrative cattle business as well. They also rented out some of their land to other cattle farmers for ten cents a head.

The Shakers did grow some orange trees, as well as persimmons. They had an irrigation plant which supplied five acres of their land with water. By 1900 they were cutting and selling trees for telephone poles, and they themselves had telephone service. The Shakers also had a steam-powered sawmill, which was able to cut four thousand board feet per day. This work required the hiring of an extra man.

In 1901 the local newspaper reported that the Shakers had put in a new pinery, covering about an acre. By 1907 they were sending pineapples to Cuba and they won a Pineapple Gold Medal at the Jamestown Exposition. The Shakers also grew sugar cane, from which they made syrup. A 1904 advertisement read: "From mill to can our syrup passes through 3 filters, & no convict spits on it. Our syrup is made on honor." Bananas also became a good cash crop.

At this time, St. Cloud was becoming a tourist destination, and the Shakers were able to take advantage of this development. They built a boat and offered boat rides on their several lakes. They also offered chartered fishing parties for visitors. In addition the Shakers caught and sold fish from their lakes. On one day Egbert Gillette is reported to have caught 2,800 pounds of fish. At times he worked alone, and at other times he worked with four other men. On another occasion Gillette caught a ten-foot alligator and sold it for \$18.75. It was reported that the people of



Fig. 3. Shaker Colony near St. Cloud.



Fig. 4. Pineapple grove at Shaker Colony, near St. Cloud.



Fig. 5. Orange grove at Shaker Colony, near St Cloud.



Fig. 6. Banana grove at Shaker Colony, near St. Cloud.
(Richard Brooker Collection, CSC, Hamilton College)

the area valued their relationship with the Shakers, and appreciated what they did to encourage visitors to make St. Cloud a tourist destination. The Shakers also sold chickens and eggs as well as some vegetables to the local people.

From all of this one has to ask the question whether this sounds like a struggling concern. A quote from the *Shaker Manifesto* seems to suggest a prosperous community: "There is a splendid domain known as Olive Branch, contains nearly 7,000 acres. To call it a farm would belittle it. This in a place where farms are all small, there are 1,600 acres enclosed with a fence." Now contrast all this with a Mount Lebanon Journal entry from June 1903. "Meeting what is best to do about branch colony in Florida. They do not increase in numbers, and are low in health and financially embarrassed. It is concluded to send them some money each month as present relief." One might wonder if the Florida Shakers were "working the system!"

The 1900 census does not include data on financial resources,



Fig. 7. Ezra Stewart among the sugar cane.

but it certainly indicates a lack of increase in members at Olive Branch. The census lists only five Shakers living there at that time: Andrew Barrett, age 62, head of the colony; Eldress Elizabeth Sears, 60; Brother Egbert Gillette; Sister Anna Lane, 41; Sister Minerva Reynolds, 80; also a boarder, Melissa Lane, 60. All of them were listed as having been born in New York or New Jersey. Notably missing from the list are Benjamin Gates and Isaac Anstatt. It is quite possible that when the census was taken, Gates was on a trip back to Mount Lebanon.

Shortly after the turn of the century some of the older members and leaders from Mount Lebanon, including Eldress Emma J. Neale, were taking winter vacations in Florida. A doctor was noted as having said that "Alonzo Hollister would live longer if he lived in Florida rather than in New York."

In 1908 Elder Ezra Stewart was hired by the Osceola County commissioners to go to the Florida State Fair in Tampa representing all the farmers in Osceola County. This suggests that by this time the Shakers had achieved a considerable reputation in the area, and it also indicates that Elder Ezra Stewart had some connections in the political sphere. As the Osceola County representative, he displayed pineapples and syrup,



Fig. 8. Shakers providing boat rides to tourists.

vegetables and fish from both the Shakers and county farmers.

While at the fair, Elder Stewart also made some connections with outside people, most notably Carrie Nation. He escorted her around the fairgrounds, and on one occasion she saw a man smoking a cigar and forcibly removed it from his mouth. When the man complained that it cost him fifteen cents, she responded, "Yes, and it would have used up fifteen cents of your brain had you finished it." She also demanded the removal of nude or nearly nude women and pictures that were on display. Elder Stewart commented, "This is one Nation not welcomed in the White House."

Elder Stewart invited Carrie Nation to speak at Olive Branch. She considered this invitation until she learned that there was no auditorium at the Shaker community large enough to hold several hundred people.

Elder Stewart also made contact with people from the Koreshan community located in Estero, which was located on the Gulf Coast, down near Ft. Meyers. Dr. Cyrus Teed of Chicago founded the Koreshan community (Koreshan Unity) in 1893. The name Koreshan comes from the Hebrew "Koresh," or Cyrus. Interestingly, Teed died in 1908, which is the same year Elder Stewart made contact with the Florida group.

Some of the Koreshan literature indicates that the Koreshans had three groups in the Estero community. One was made up of non-believers who were willing to work for the community. A second was made up of married believers who were permitted sexual relations for reproduction. The third group—the inner core—was comprised of members for whom marriage was not allowed, although Teed was known to have a consort.

Teed convinced his followers that he was immortal. They also believed that the real world existed in the center of the earth. In Estero there was an emphasis on culture and cultural programs. Similar to the Shakers, there was a strong belief in the male-female deity.

Beginning with his encounter at the state fair, Elder Stewart made several trips to the Koreshan community. He described Koreshan Unity as a "racket," but hoped to "gather some of them" into the Shaker community. Apparently the Koreshans had similar hopes of attracting Shakers to Estero. One of the Koreshan women, Mary E. Daniels, did join Olive Branch. One of the leaders, Edgar S. Peissant, also showed interest. He was given a copy of the novitiate covenant and indicated thorough agreement; however, when he arrived at Olive Branch, he found it unacceptable. Elder Stewart wrote:

As a result of interview here ... it was thought best that Edgar should depart for Estero next morning by train. As his views were found to be quite different from ours. He evidently hoped to set up a little kingdom here with himself as leader. He wears finger rings, and has much distaste for work, although he is fairly strong and in good health.

Some time around 1914 or 1915 the Shakers sold a portion of their real estate to a group engaged in land speculation and development. The property was called the Shaker Colony Subdivision, identifying the land as coming from the Shaker property. Elder Stewart had become enamored with real estate ventures. In 1908 he had written to Brother Alonzo Hollister:

As you know, I have always entertained grand notions about living in a fine house, but thus far circumstances and the devil have conspired to thwart all aspirations in that direction. Perhaps we poor folks will have an inning some one of these fine days, after all.

In 1910 he bought two lots in St. Cloud and he purchased an additional two lots in the Shaker Colony Subdivision in 1915 and 1917. By this time Elder Stewart was not only selling real estate, but also managing real estate and apartments in St. Cloud.

In 1905 a tuberculosis sanitarium was built in nearby Narcoossee. Sadie Marchant came from Providence, Rhode Island, on January 23, 1905, with a life expectancy of only four months. She may have had a brother who was a Shaker living in Mount Lebanon at that time. Instead of four months, however, Marchant managed to live for six years.

Sister Elizabeth Sears was elected to the board of directors of the sanitarium and often visited with Sadie Marchant while she was a resident in the sanitarium. When the State closed the sanitarium in 1910, Marchant was penniless and had nowhere to go, so she went to live at Olive Branch. As she was too ill to work, Brother Egbert Gillette and Sister Elizabeth Sears brought her meals and provided medications to make her as comfortable as possible. During the next year her condition deteriorated, and Marchant became not only very ill, but was also in much pain and distress.

Finally on August 20, 1911, the pain and discomfort was more than Marchant could endure. She asked Gillette to go into St. Cloud and buy some chloroform to ease her pain. Gillette returned and gave her a light dose of chloroform. Marchant requested more, Gillette declined, but because Marchant said she couldn't endure any longer and wanted to die, he gave her the requested additional dose. Marchant quickly slipped into a

state of unconsciousness and died.

One of the other residents living there, a William Bracken, who was not a Shaker, reported to the sheriff what had happened, and the sheriff arrested both Egbert Gillette and Elizabeth Sears on charges of murder.

Reporters came from Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, New York, as well as Orlando, Cincinnati and Cleveland to cover the case, which attracted national attention. Not all the reporting was accurate demonstrates. While the headline in figure 7 says Gillette was found guilty of murder, there never was a trial. A grand jury was convened, but refused to indict. The district attorney impaneled a second grand jury, which also failed to indict. It was also erroneously reported that "Egbert Gillette is Ruler of the Colony, whose word is Law to the Members. His First lieutenant is Eldress Elizabeth Sears, who is 74 years old." In fact, Ezra Stewart was the elder in charge of Olive Branch, and Gillette was in no way "ruler of the colony."

Elizabeth Sears was released from jail the day after her arrest, and Gillette was bonded out the following day. Florida's governor spoke to the conference of Governors, indicating that he felt confident that Sears and Gillette would never be indicted, which proved to be accurate. Local newspapers were overwhelming in their support of the Shakers.

Not long after the end of the "trial" that never took place, rumors began to circulate that Sadie Marchant (who was in her seventies) was pregnant and that was why she was murdered. Marchant's body was exhumed, and the coroner announced that she was "as virgin at the day she was born."

Egbert Gillette married Mabel Marston and they lived in St. Cloud. When Gillette died, the funeral director in St. Cloud sent his cremains to Hancock Shaker Village for burial in the Shaker cemetery. Unfortunately the funeral



Fig. 9. *New York Times* headline.

director was unaware of the comment made by Gillette, “I don’t want to be buried where the snow falls on my face.” Mabel had died a year earlier.

In 1915 the entire tract of land at Olive Branch, except for Section 4, was placed in the hands of Eldress Emma J. Neale of Mount Lebanon. Eldress Elizabeth Sears died in 1916 and was not replaced. The Shaker Colony Subdivision failed, and in 1917 the mortgaged lands, with an outstanding indebtedness of \$85,000, were taken over by James A. Van Toast of Schenectady as trustee for the Shakers. It was reported that in 1920 a picnic was held on the Shaker land, and again in 1921 another picnic was hosted. A 1923 picnic was attended by 343 people.

On May 8, 1924, the Mount Lebanon ministry ordered Amanda Tiffany and Benjamin DeRoo, the last two members of Olive Branch, back to Mount Lebanon, thus officially closing Olive Branch. On April 15, 1924, a group of investors, led by Mr. and Mrs. George Rickard and Dr. Charles Ross of Alliance, Ohio, bought the land held by Van Toast, and sold it for \$150,000. They did not have a safe enough margin however, and when land values collapsed in the late 1920s the land again went back to the Shakers. Various other offers were made and rejected or fell through. As late as March 1935 Emma J. Neale rejected an offer to buy a parcel of the land. She noted:

If selling I would prefer to sell the whole at a fair price as possible on everything. I know our holdings have a future. The new State Road and so near a growing town and ever increasing tourists going to Florida every Winter it can be made a good investment in the near future be enterprise. Were I younger and not so many cares, I would not sell at all.

William Beck now owns the property on which none of the Shaker buildings remain. It is now an orange grove and is protected by a large “NO TRESPASSING” sign and warnings about guard dogs. Bill Cullen, from Kissimmee, has on occasion had access to the grounds and conducted tours. There is really nothing to see, except to “feel” the presence and atmosphere of where Shakers lived in Florida.

It would seem that in a curiously prescient way, Olive Branch fulfilled the fears of Andrew Barrett about land speculation, and that of Emma J. Neale who had opposed the whole affair from the start and became burdened with its aftermath.

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Appendix¹

In 1901, the Shaw family, consisting of Mrs. Shaw, a widow from Indiana, and her five children (two sets of twins—Howard and Marie, Charles and Perce—and Virgil) learned of the Shaker community in Florida and went to live at Olive Branch.

The following journal account of the Shaws' arrival at Olive Branch and some of the daily activities of life there was written by Charles, one of the sons. It was written sometime after the family left Florida when they went to join the Shakers at Watervliet.

Charles and his twin brother Perce were born May 5, 1887. They lived at the Florida Shaker colony around 1901-1902, and stayed with the Watervliet community from 1903-1908. No member of the Shaw family converted to Shakerism. Charles was married in 1914, and he also helped care for his mother.

This journal is the possession of Charles Shaw's daughter, Mrs. Grace Clement, who lives in the Albany, New York area. Through her generosity we are given a glimpse of what life was like at the Shaker colony, as well as what life was like for many pioneer Osceola County families around the turn of the century.

1. This account of life at Olive Branch was provided to Rev. Vernon Squire, who shares it with *ACSQ* readers.

An Account of Life at Olive Branch by Charles Shaw

Florida

1901

It must have been quite late in the night when we arrived in Kissimmee. Elder Egbert and a one mule wagon pulled by old Ned could only go at a slow pace. A slow walk for thirteen miles brought us to the Live Oak Community of Shakers on Live Oak Lake. Mother sat on the only seat with Elder Egbert. We tired kids were soon asleep in the back of the wagon. Elder sang songs, I reckon to keep awake but they put me to sleep. I think I even remember one:

Every rose has a thorn, and each pleasure a sting,
the hopes that we cherish fade away –
terrestrial joys like the morning wing,
mortality has but a day.

I woke up before daybreak with a bright full moon shining through a wide open window. There was a constant breeze. I don't recollect ever hearing any mosquitoes singing for their breakfast, dinner or supper as they did in Kinderloun. Our room, built on another, had outside stairs. The room under us was the Elder's. We were next to the big house. A hundred yards down on the edge of the lake was a tall windmill topping all sugarcane stalks. The Tops were laid in plowed furrows. It takes almost a full year to grow cane.

There was an acre plot covered with lath. Under it grew rows of pineapple called "suckers." New shoots were planted at different times so that ripe ones were ready anytime of the year, but the cottontail rabbits liked them for free. We sliced nice juicy pineapples, put poison on them and laid them in the rows. We also planted strawberries, but it was really transplanting suckers from already grown vines. We picked berries from new patches about every forty days.

There were five lakes joined by government built canals. Water lilies were so thick that one could hardly row through them. Perce and I made many trips, rowing three miles down half the length of Live Oak Lake, through a canal, across Sardine Lake which was the smallest, through another canal to Alligator Lake, across one half mile to load fish offal in two barrels. We used it to fertilize the soil. It had to be plowed under pronto because the buzzards were already sitting along the fence.

The fishermen fished the lakes with a 1200 foot seine for catfish. They cut up shad for bait and sprinkled it around in a cove. They would sleep in their tent for three hours and then, with seine attached to floats, they would start from one side of the cove with the dory and drop the layers in an arc to the other end. With an oar stuck through, the two would walk along the lake's edge 'till they came to the side they starting dropping the seine. Then they would start pulling the seine until they reached the pocket full of fish. The lake trout made the biggest fuss and maybe a 'gator would be floating above all the commotion. They would rope him and drag him out and then cut the base of the tail with an axe. That's what he tries hitting with. It is said he can knock a cow critter into the lake and drown it. There were big soft-shell turtles that were as big as washtubs. They would cut a slit in their soft shell and tie them to a stake on the lake's edge. We tried making turtle sausage. You can get tired eating turtle quicker than any meat that ever graced a menu. Those lake trout were sure good. We had turnip greens, cow peas, corn bread and plenty of fish.

We had only one cow pony, "Fanny," who never had a harness on her. She never knew what "git-up" or "whoa" meant but was most sensitive to any pressure of the reins. I reckon she could round up a bunch of cattle by herself. I know that in the beginning, Perce and I took turns. I just don't remember how come I was doing the riding. It could have been the Elder's choice. We used to get our mail once a week. It was 13 miles to Kissimee and then on the St. Cloud to ... a little store and post office. Later they started a settlement for G.A.R. veterans on Lake Tohopatolaga. It was so beautiful and round. There were thousands of acres around these parts that were owned by the Diston Saw Co. I was told that cleared land sold for five dollars an acre.

I am thinking of the old wood burner engine that came by Ashton. There was a woodrack station about a mile or so from where we lived. If locomotives sold for five dollars, you couldn't buy the sound of it's whistle. As the Shaker song goes: "The hopes that we cherish fade away, to be riding the clouds and like the birds rise above what they leave behind."

Writing our memories is the sum of what one learns by living his life; whatever else he is, he is bound to be the product of his own use of language. He has to wait for words to say it to him. To sum up what he has learned by living, wherever it takes him is towards life.

It was a fast walk or a gallop with Fanny. Movable fences that would enclose an acre were used to corral several hundred cattle overnight. At

sunup we opened up and drove them to graze. Once in a while a cow would get bogged down in muck at the lake's edge. Then it took all the help we had to pull her out. That cow critter gets madder and madder, and when she gets on her feet, look out if you aren't as quick as a matadore. A boy scout doing a good deed gets a lady's admiration, but a cow wouldn't appreciate the scout's kindly intent.

We drove with short handled, braided rawhide whips from ten to fifteen feet long. We had to learn to swing them over our heads and pop the ends. Some old timers even thought they could play tunes. They could pick up pennies off a log. Our horses were never afraid of the cracking of the whips, but with these wild cattle, the sight of a woman's skirt or a dog would almost start a stampede.

The wire grass would grow fast and would be so tough that the cattle just couldn't eat it, so we set fire to it. We made back fires and put them out with pine brush. Then we would set fires to burn the grass towards the back-fired stop. We had to have new grass grazing in readiness in new sections. As the fire came towards the wide, black back-fired stop, the rabbits and snakes too would try to borrow in the sandy soil after they were free of the fire. If only our instinctive forethoughts were as good as our afterthoughts, but that is experience, learned sometimes in an expensive encounter with life.

After our sunup cattle drive to good grazing land, the horse was curry combed to scrape off the wood ticks. The scrawny cattle were almost covered with them. There is a lot of difference nowadays with the tic-free brahmas. The beef we used to drive the Kissimee brought an average of ten dollars a head. Most of them were shipped to Cuba. A Mr. Carr used to do most of the buying. We were clearing a second six acres for a new planting of orange trees (budded fruit). It took us a day's ride fifty miles to Orlando to buy these plantings. After swinging an axe, cutting and "snaking" logs, grub hoeing palmetto roots and burning the pine stumps, you were pioneering for sure.

We always toted a jug of fresh water and set it in the coolest place we could out of the sun. We swung the jug up on our shoulders to drink. I broke one of my front teeth that way. My good mother was horrified and thought I was disfigured for life. Modern dentistry was as unknown as dental hygiene. When the summer sun got real torrid, the sand ran almost like liquid. I never wore shoes except when in the saddle. Then I wore brogans and no socks until I came up North.

Going for the mail was the pleasure of the week. We went after four, after most of the day's labor was done. Saturday we had turns toting the weekly mail from town, adding two leather saddle bags over the saddle. Part of the way was just cow paths through swampy woods. Later I helped build a corduroy road through. These were made of logs. If the sides tie evenly, it's a good road where small bad stretches are tough going. Coming home through the dark and giving the horse free rein, she knew the right cowpath home. There were the bull frogs, bobcats and tree toads—the night life in Florida's woodlands in the lake country could be noisesome.

I came through there on a stormy night. We didn't know much about hurricanes. They were called Florida storms in those days. I remember on two other occasions when we just couldn't move the cattle. You just can't move them against wind and rain. But the rain this night came horizontally. The trees toppled and the crash was a crescendo of thunder and lightning; yet Fanny had her head to the wind. The rain hit as if it came from a giant hose in the hands of the devil, putting out hell's fire. Well, we came to a new little bridge but "it" just wasn't there. Where there was once a trickle, now there was a stream. It wasn't too deep so we waded in. Fanny kept her head and it was still up when we started up the bank. Muscular expansion must have popped the bellyband because the saddle, mail and I slid back in. Once a cow pony is free of you, she just keeps going towards home. No matter how many bad words you say, a man without his mustang is mighty helpless. That's why they hung "hoss" thieves. I had to tote two water soaked bags of mail for four miles to the road side gate. The barns were a half mile farther and there stood Fanny. I was too weary to be impatient. I've faced many wearysome events; I think we live and learn to "take it." I put the saddle and mail back on. There was no bellyband to hold the saddle on but the storm had abated. I opened the big gate, let the mustang to her accustomed lodging and gave her four quarts of oats. She didn't need water. We both had plenty.

Elder Egbert, an honest but rough extremist, used to drive a dray, a one-horse, two-wheeled wagon on which they rolled beer kegs. The kegs were held with stakes. The rolling them on and off, unload or load, could be done by one man. The Elder looked and acted like a reformed bum, and that is what he was.

Eldress Minerva, in her eighties, was spiritually beautiful and saintly. There was a purity of her presence and she had a loving interest in the realm of heavenly affairs. There was Sister Amanda. She was tall and had

an unselfish devotion to her duties of cooking the simple sustenance of turnips and greens, fish and bread. Sister Elizabeth was a good worker and quite a Spiritualist who always got messages. Brother Ezra, a new arrival from Mt. Lebanon always wore a "Prince Albert" coat, even in his frail efforts in grubbing palmetto roots. He was well read and it was interesting to listen to his esoteric ideas. He was cautious and clever in dealing with Egbert. Egbert was far from being a spiritual example and Ezra looked out for himself. Eldress Minerva and Amanda were the manifestations of the purity of the Shaker code of practicing Mother Ann Lee's precepts and struggled to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. "For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world."

To gain the spiritual sense of existence, it is being in the world but not of it. Immortality is obtained in proportion as sensual desires ('the flesh') is overcome. To sublimate the five senses and to be pure in heart is to see God. Whether here or hereafter, there is no hope in matter or material sense. To be pure is to feel the awareness of Christ's and Mother Ann's presence. Self-conceit falls away in the divinity of our being. It is being in the world but not of it. All is the "Gift of God." "Son, all that I have is thine." Always there have appeared wayshowers and awakeners bearing the Divine Message of the presence of God, the omnipresence of Christ in their own consciousness, and the great Light of Heaven within. Love that is love to Christ means love to Believers, the Shakers. "Seek ye the Kingdom of God." It is impossible to be "The Light of the World" and not dispel the darkness around us. Truth is our consciousness in the presence of God. Thus, mortals and the idea of Being are forced to live on two planes, the material and the spiritual, both seeming very real. This dualism hasn't come to any understanding with each other. As we put off the personal ego, we attain the consciousness of our real selves. The Reality of us is Divine Consciousness.

Mother was anxious for the younger children to have schooling. There wasn't a school here nearer than seventeen miles. Of the few colonies left of believers, the only "Family" that would and could take us in was the North Family in Watervliet. Perce and I were just sixteen on the fifth of May and could be of good help on the big farm.