

Hamilton College Library

“Home Notes”

Christian Goodwillie Appointed Curator

It is a great pleasure to announce that Christian Goodwillie has been appointed curator of special collections and archives at the Hamilton College Library. Many of you already know Christian and are aware of his fine work at Hancock Shaker Village over the last eight years. During that time he has curated or co-curated five exhibitions, authored or co-authored four books, and has written numerous magazine articles. Most recently he co-authored with Mario De Pillis *Gather up the Fragments: The Andrews Shaker Collection*, which serves as a history of the work of Edward Demming and Faith Andrews and a catalog of the exhibit.

Christian’s responsibilities at Hamilton will cover the entire rare book collection including the separate collections on the Lesser Antilles, Ezra Pound, and Communal Societies. The collection encompasses some 45,000 items and includes printed works, manuscripts, maps, prints, photographs, and ephemera, while the archives add another 21,000 items. Christian will also be responsible for overseeing our archivist, who works with college records and the faculty and alumni collections.

Though Christian will be responsible for all rare books, the main interest of *ACSQ* readers is of course Hamilton’s Communal Societies Collection. Here Christian brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and energy, and I am confident that the collection will thrive and expand under his leadership. I also look forward to his involvement with the publishing projects of the Richard W. Couper Press.

In the almost two-hundred-year history of Hamilton College, Christian will be our first full-time curator of rare books and special collections. He will have a lot of territory to cover and will find no shortage of tasks and projects calling for his attention. Already there are faculty who cannot wait for him to get started on projects important to them. No one, however, is more eager for him to arrive than I am!

Highlights of the Hamilton College Special Collections are the following: **Communal Societies:** a collection of approximately 2,500 items on nineteenth century communities with particular focus on the Shakers. The collection has a large collection of House of David/City of David materials and secondary works on a variety of twentieth century communities. The collection includes digital versions of *The Shaker* (1871-1899), stereoviews, product labels, and photographs.

Beinecke Lesser Antilles: the preeminent collection of materials on the Lesser Antilles, largely from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. It contains over 1,800 printed volumes and 1,000 manuscripts, including hundreds of rare original documents, maps, plantation reports, correspondence, oil paintings, and watercolors.

Ezra Pound: a comprehensive collection of works by and about Ezra Pound, including first editions of all but one of Pound's works. The collection comprises over 2,500 items and includes manuscripts, correspondence, books owned and used by Pound, foreign translations of Pound's work, and photographs.

Alexander Hamilton: a collection which includes two important manuscripts by Hamilton, first editions of his works, and the lap desk on which he composed his contributions to the *Federalist Papers* and drafted George Washington's farewell address.

Book Arts: a notable collection of books on the history of printing, papermaking, and book production, along with examples of contemporary finely-produced books. The collection also includes many examples of stamped covers.

Munsell: a collection of books printed by Joel Munsell, of Albany, N.Y., who was one of the earliest and best printers in New York.

Utica: a collection of printed books published in Utica, N.Y. We collect as comprehensively as possible for pre-1900 imprints.

Cruikshank: a collection of works that contain illustrations by George Cruikshank (1792-1878).

Polar: a collection of some of the major treatises of polar explorers, including the private polar library of Rockwell Kent received in 1999.

Other interests: U.S. presidential campaigns, New York State governors, Civil War (especially material related to soldiers from Oneida, Co., N.Y.), slavery and abolition, Adirondacks, New York canals, almanacs, Communist pamphlets, and the temperance movement.

— Randall Ericson

Communal Societies Collection: New Acquisitions

Chamberlin, Solomon. *A Sketch of the Experience of Solomon Chamberlin, To Which is Added a Remarkable Revelation, or Trance of His Father-In-Law Philip Haskins: How His Soul Actually Left His Body and Was Guided by a Holy Angel to Eternal Day.* Lyons, N.Y., 1829. 12 p. 18.4 cm.

This exceptionally rare imprint was, until its discovery in 1989, a bibliographic ghost. Mormon scholars had known of its existence from manuscript records in the LDS church archives, but no copy had been recorded or located. Several years ago, a second copy of this imprint surfaced, and it was acquired by Hamilton College Library in 2008.

This imprint is of interest not only to students of Mormon history but also to those interested in the Shakers and other American communal societies. Solomon Chamberlin (1788-1862) was a visionary and seeker who for years traveled in search of the Lord's "true church and people." His spiritual journeys and prophetic dreams led him to join the Reformed Methodist Church in 1815.

The Reformed Methodist Church was organized in southern Vermont in 1814, after a small number of churches separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Reformers rejected the episcopal polity of the parent Methodist body, and declared that the selection of preachers and exhorters was to be democratically determined by members of local churches. The new church also emphasized revivalism and holiness and especially the need for church members to receive the "gift of the Holy Ghost." Shaker elder Calvin Green referred to the Reformed Methodists as "New Lights." Speaking in tongues and other remarkable "physical operations" that were a feature of the Kentucky Revival were commonplace at their worship meetings.

Shortly after Chamberlin joined the church, he and other Reformed Methodists, "thinking that the day of the gathering had come," decided to gather a central core of their adherents into a single community. A large farm that straddled the New York state line near Shaftsbury, Vermont was purchased and a communal home was established which, according to Chamberlin, was called "the Combination."

Not fully satisfied that the Reformed Methodists were sufficiently visionary, Chamberlin left them, and by the 1820s had wandered into western New York. In 1829 he published his *Sketch* at Lyons, New York. Later that year he was “providentially led” to the home of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith Jr. where he distributed his pamphlet to members of the Smith household. Hyrum Smith, the prophet’s brother, was so powerfully affected by Chamberlin’s account that he was brought to tears.

Chamberlin eagerly aligned with the fledgling Mormon church before *The Book of Mormon* had been published. Indeed, he embarked on what many scholars consider the first Mormon mission with unbound sheets of *The Book of Mormon* in hand.

The Reformed Methodist church proved to fertile ground for Shaker and Mormon missionaries. Hundreds of Reformers throughout New York converted to Mormonism including Brigham Young. The Shakers had equal success—their first involving a large body of Pittsfield Reformers who, about 1815 or 1816, confessed their sins and joined the community at Hancock, Massachusetts. A large Reformed Methodist body at Savoy, Massachusetts “went over” en masse to the Shakers in 1817 and a short-lived community was organized. Numerous other Reformers embraced Shakerism during the 1820s, filling the ranks of Believers at Groveland, New York and at Whitewater and North Union, Ohio.

Solomon Chamberlin’s *Sketch* is a part of a collection of imprints by and about the Reformed Methodists which Hamilton College Library recently acquired. The Reformers were a small denomination and published few works. Most are exceptionally scarce, and in some instances, only single copies survive.

Chamberlin’s pamphlet is the earliest printed document with content pertaining to the Reformed Methodist community. The only other known copy is held by Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Background information about Solomon Chamberlin is from: Larry C. Porter, “Solomon Chamberlin’s Missing Pamphlet: Dreams, Visions and Angelic Ministrants,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 37, no. 2 (1997-98): 113-40.

Hebert, William. *A Visit to the Colony of Harmony, in Indiana, in the United States of America, Recently Purchased by Mr. Owen for the Establishment of a Society of Mutual Co-operation and Community of Property, in a Letter to a Friend; to which are Added, Some Observations on that Mode of Society, and on Political Society at large: also, a Sketch for the Formation of a Co-operative Society.* London: Printed for George Mann, Cornhill, 1825. [3], [1]-35 pp. 21 cm.

This exceptionally rare visitor's account of Harmony contains important information on a number of communal societies in Ohio and Indiana. William Hebert, an English advocate of "cooperative societies," visited the Rappite society at Harmony, Indiana in 1823. At this time, George Rapp was planning to sell the Indiana community and have the society return to Pennsylvania. Hebert furnishes a beautifully detailed description of the Harmonists and a sympathetic account of their faith.

Robert Owen's New Harmony was established on principles which Hebert discusses in the second part of his account. Hebert offers a clear argument outlining the logic of communitarianism and the suitability of the Indiana property for such an enterprise.

A third part is titled "A Sketch for the Formation of a Society of Mutual Co-operation and Community of Property" which Hebert wrote for several friends from New York who had "contemplated the formation of a society of this kind."

Hebert also furnishes a description of the West Union, Indiana society of "Shaking Quakers," comparing them to the Harmonists and adding, "These good people however consistently disclaim an attention to mercantile or pecuniary concerns beyond the demand of their necessities or personal comfort." This is one of very few contemporary published accounts of the Indiana Shakers.

Included is a frontis which is not found in some copies: "Ground Plan of a Village for a Co-Operative Society" which includes a diagram of a proposed Owenite community of 120 families.

This is, perhaps, the scarcest visitors' account of Harmony with OCLC World Cat locating only eight other copies. It is not found in Richmond, *Shaker Literature*.

To all people to whom these presents shall come

Whereas we Thomas Cole & Bradish Dunham Executors of the last will & Testament of James Cornell late of Savoy in the County of Berkshire deceased by an order of the Court of Probate for the said County of Berkshire which was depone & holden at Lenox in said County on the first Tuesday of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred & twenty one was licensed to make sale of the real estate of the said deceased so far as ^{he was} should be necessary to satisfy the just debts by him owing at the time of his ^{decease} incidental charges.

Therefore know ye that we Thomas Cole & Bradish Dunham Executors of aforesaid as well by virtue of the power & authority to us given as aforesaid as in consideration of the sum of fifty Dollars paid us by Saml Bowen of Adams in the County of Berkshire Approved the receipt whereof we do hereby acknowledge have granted bargained sold & do hereby in said capacity grant bargain sell convey & confirm unto him the said Saml Bowen his heirs & assigns forever certain tract or parcel of land situate & lying in the Town of Savoy in the County of Berkshire and Commonwealth of Massachusetts the same being one half lot No eighty two in the first division of lots in said Town the same being situated at the north end of said lot & containing fifty Acres by estimation & it the same more or less & also a certain piece of joining to said half lot & bounded as follows Beginning at the south east corner of said half lot thence running south by the east line of said lot till it comes to the Road to a running south by the east line of said east line thence north west six or seven rods to a corner on said east line thence north west six or seven rods to a stake and stones by the south side of a large rock the north side of the old road thence west three rods to a stake & stones in the back thence in the back to the division line of said lot above mentioned thence on said line to the first mentioned bounds containing first acres by calculation be it the same more or less so have & do hold the same with all the privileges & appurtenances thereto to him the said Saml Bowen his heirs & assigns forever. And we do hereby in the capacity aforesaid confirm with the said Saml Bowen his heirs & assigns that the said James Cornell did award of the premises that were any licensed by said Court to make sale thereof and that it necessary the same should be sold for the purposes aforesaid. That previous to the intended sale we took the affirmation by law prescribed & gave public notice thereof according to the directions of the law in such cases made & provided & that the said Saml Bowen offered most for said premises & the same was thereupon

struck off to him for the sum aforesaid at a public vendue held at the house of Samuel Bowen in Adams County of Berkshire aforesaid on the twenty second day of January in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred & twenty two we do further in the capacity aforesaid assign and do with the said Saml Bowen his heirs & assigns that the premises are free of all encumbrances & that we will warrant & defend the same to him the said Saml Bowen his heirs & assigns forever against the lawful claims & demands of all persons. In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands & seals this twenty second day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred & twenty two

affornus Effes

Timothy Cole
Thomas Dunham

Bradish Dunham

Estes, Thomas, and Bradish Dunham. [*Signed and sealed deed to Shaker-owned lands in Savoy, Massachusetts, granted to Samuel Bowen, dated January 22, 1822.*] Ink on paper, original seals, folded, browned, else in good condition.

One of many objectives of the library has been to acquire at least one imprint or holograph from each of the roughly two dozen Shaker societies, large and small. Several communities, such as the societies at White Oak, Georgia and Savoy, Massachusetts were not large in terms of membership, and did not survive many years. We have now acquired a wonderful manuscript associated with the Savoy community.

In 1817, Elder Calvin Green of the Gathering (North) Family at the New Lebanon, New York Shaker society, “having heard of a stir” in the small Berkshire County town of Savoy, decided to investigate. He found a “remarkable revival” underway that in many respects was similar to the noted Kentucky Revival. The revivalists had affiliated with the “New Light” Reformed Methodists, and their worship services were ecstatic and replete with incidents of dancing, leaping, jerking and barking.

Elder Calvin was successful, for by May of that year nearly all of the Savoy Reformed Methodists had “opened their minds” and set out as Shakers, numbering nearly one hundred brethren and sisters (including children). The most respected Savoy convert was James Cornell (1755-1819), a relatively wealthy farmer and innkeeper who had a large family and who assumed the lead in meetings when the Lebanon brethren were not present.

In late 1817, the Savoy Shaker society was formally organized with Calvin Green as elder and Savoy resident Bradish Dunham serving as clerk. Dunham (1795-1862) was, according to Green, the best learned “and most competent writer” of the Savoy brethren. James Cornell’s inn was converted to a Shaker meeting house and communal buildings were erected near his dwelling.

Savoy would prove to be one of the shortest-lived Shaker societies. The harsh climate, poor soil, and two disastrous droughts with subsequent locust infestations, led to a decision to abandon the site in late 1821 and relocate members of the community to Watervliet, New Lebanon and Canaan in New York.

Cornell’s unexpected death in November of 1819 was, arguably, another factor that weakened and dispirited the Savoy society. Between 1820 and 1822 much of his estate was sold, including this large parcel of

land, the north part of proprietor's lot number 82.

Because the Savoy society was active for less than five years, few documents were issued by Savoy Shakers and virtually none has survived to the present day. This manuscript deed was executed by Dunham and Thomas Estes (1780-1853) who were the executors of Cornell's estate. Starting in 1822, the process of disposing of their Savoy lands and possessions commenced, and this deed is a record of one such transaction. Bowen, the buyer, was from the adjacent town of Adams.

Estes and Dunham and their families relocated to New Lebanon in late 1821. Brother Thomas and his wife Catherine remained faithful Shakers until death. Bradish Dunham and his wife Candace (one of James Cornell's many daughters) remained at Lebanon for a year, then "growing homesick" returned to Savoy and purchased the Cornell farm. Both Bradish and Candace remained on friendly terms with the Shakers and managed Shaker properties and interests in Savoy until the early 1860s.

We are indebted to David Newell of Ashfield, Massachusetts who furnished us with the foregoing information. Material in quotations was obtained from Calvin Green's "Biographical Memoir" (manuscript held by Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio).

Sidarta, M. A. (Sivarta, Alesha? [pseud.]) *Sepherva: A Synopsis of the Book of Life*. Chicago, [Ill.]: 1884. [16] p. Cover title. Illustrated wrappers, contents with engraved illustrations.

Occasionally HCL acquires an imprint that raises more questions than it answers. This bizarre yet fascinating little pamphlet is one such example. No additional information is available because no other library holds a copy. This example is the only one known.

The author's name (M. A. Sidarta) may be an intentional or unintentional misprint. Dr. Alesha Sivarta, according to one account, was "probably a pen name" of a medical doctor, artist, and "deeply spiritual" man who wrote several esoteric works including a substantially expanded *The Book of Life* (of which there are several editions, all later and all rare). The author's great-great-grandson credits him as a grandfather of the "new age" movement and the founder of "Messianism." Another source reports that Sivarta had a Hindu father and a Unitarian mother, and commenced his career of spiritual discoveries in 1859.



Sidarta's (or Sivarta's) works declare that "we cannot have a true Science of Society without a scientific knowledge of [man's] constitution. *Its laws include the entire plan of a perfect social structure.*" [emphasis added]

Did the author envision a world-wide collective or community with a scientific plan calling for the sharing of resources? Perhaps the answer lies in what a "Band of Messians" would or could do after they organized. And what the Messians might do would, in part perhaps, be based on their understanding of the highly complex and fascinating drawings found in both our *Synopsis* and in the larger and later editions of *The Book of Life*. The engraving of "The Tree of Life Discovered by Alshah...1861," for example, depicts twelve branches, each somehow related to a tribe of Israel, each defining a "department of society." While the drawings in the two books are not identical, they are so similar as to leave no doubt that the author and engraver must be the same individual.

Indeed, some defined social structure is evident within this pithy sixteen-page pamphlet; a membership form, with blanks, is included. All it took to organize a "band of Messians" were seven persons who would fill the first seven offices and fill in the blanks on the form. Where the band would go from there remains a mystery.