

“Hope on – work ever”:

The Valley Forge Community and the Shakers

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When most people hear the words “Valley Forge,” they conjure up pictures of poorly clad Revolutionary War soldiers starving in the backwoods of Pennsylvania while “fat cat” Redcoats feast on the colony’s spoils during the winter social season in Philadelphia. In contrast, very few individuals are aware of the attempt to found a community there during the 1820s that eventually resulted in almost sixty converts to Shakerism. This relatively forgotten chapter in Shaker history, however, is worth a detailed examination. While the Valley Forge community is a mere footnote in the history of communal societies in the United States, for the Shakers it was one of the richest single sources of life-long members.

The romantic, elementary school depiction of Valley Forge during the winter of 1778 may not seem connected to the events there fifty years later. Yet the images of ragged shivering Americans in the country juxtaposed with glittering warm British officers in the city are actually helpful when trying to trace the circumstances that caused the Valley Forge community to be formed. Indeed, they bring us to the origins of the Shakers as well. Both were responses prompted by the ever increasing gap between the upper and lower classes.

Mother Ann Lee (1736-1784) was born in Manchester, England. “As was then common with poor people, in manufacturing towns,” she was “taught to work, instead of being sent to school.... She was employed, during her childhood and youth in a cotton factory, in preparing cotton for the looms, and in cutting velvet.”¹ Living and working conditions continued to worsen as industrialization increased. Most of the earliest Shakers were from the laboring class, and they lived in the midst of squalor while the rich seemed indifferent to their circumstances. They, as a small society, could never hope to ameliorate all of the sin and suffering in the world, but they did offer an alternative life that would transform Believers into beacons of light that offered hope and salvation.

When they opened their Testimony in America in May 1780, the message of the Shakers was religious and appealed to those who had just participated in the New Light Stir of 1779. No specific plans had been made during these early years to have Believers live in highly regulated

communities. As time went on, however, it became clear that the Shakers would have to gather together if they were to preserve their faith from distracting, outside influences. Starting in 1787, Believers formed themselves into societies according to what is called Gospel Order. Their villages were collectively referred to as Zion. All others lived in “the world.” They hoped that as time passed the Shaker life would have such an appeal that thousands would flock to them. The Shakers believed that the second coming of Christ happened when Ann Lee received the fullness of the Christ spirit. Rather than be concentrated in one person, this Second Coming was the collective Church made up of individual members. Ann Lee was merely the first to receive it. Rather than looking for the end of the world to someday complete the work of salvation, the Shakers actually felt they were living the millennium here and now. Shakers in the early nineteenth century called their religion the Millennial Church because it was the living embodiment of the fullest reception of the Christ spirit. Any person, by confessing his/her sins, could join a community and by living a life of celibacy in association with other brethren and sisters, regenerate the world. This was the heavenly life lived while still in the realm of earthly time.

While the Shakers were developing their way of transforming the world, a man named Robert Owen was born in 1771 who would also take action to transform society. Owen’s father was a saddler, iron monger and postmaster.² Typically, Robert had little formal schooling and was working when he was ten years old.³ Fortune was kind, and seventeen years after Mother and her followers had left Manchester, twenty-year-old Robert Owen “was running a huge cotton mill” there. Nine years later his success had allowed him to become the director and part owner of the New Lanark Mills in Scotland, one of the biggest factory complexes in the world.⁴ What set apart Owen from other owners was that he felt a deep compassion for his employees. In addition to running the business, he was preoccupied with trying to improve the life of the workers. This included both their time spent at work as well as their lives outside of the factory walls.

Just as the Shakers had gradually come to the idea of communal living, Owen realized that socialism offered a promising way to change society. What caused his interest in coming up with a plan to change society was the end of the Napoleonic wars and the consequent rise in the numbers of unemployed. His plan to help those without work was described in 1817

in his *Report to the Committee of the association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor*. As a remedy for unemployment, he suggested “the formation of self-supporting communities, with accommodation arranged in a parallelogram of buildings, and provision for all the educational and social needs of the inhabitants.” By 1820 Owen had refined his plan to include all people, not just the poor, and his “Villages of Co-operation” offered “millennial” hopes for the future. That year his “mature” plan was presented in *Report to the County of Lanark*.⁵

Owen’s millennialist tone and language marked a significant shift since his first work (*A New View of Society*) was published in 1813. Indeed, the Owenite movement “originated and flourished entirely within the grand era of evangelical ascendancy, c. 1800-1860.” Characteristics of evangelicalism are perfectionism and millennialism. Thus Owen’s ideas were shaped by a culture of prophecy and eschatology.⁶ Unlike the millennialist Shakers, however, Owen did not see his views fitting into Christianity or any religion. According to his plan, these villages would be “self-contained agricultural communities” and once established they would “spread rapidly because first, they were based on cooperative labor and second, they could produce more than private enterprise.”⁷ In spite of Owen’s optimism, his plan did not catch on. His anti-religious views, his identification as a factory owner, and his limited financial resources caused his movement to lose its momentum.

Meanwhile, in the United States Owenite ideas were attracting some notice, mostly in New York and Philadelphia. The earliest publication of Owen in America was in 1817. That year in Philadelphia, editor William Duane published extracts from Owen’s *New View of Society* in his newspaper the *Aurora*. As a result, a few Philadelphians began to show interest. A Quaker named William Savery Warder sent Owen a sketch of the Shakers which Owen published in 1818 in *New View of Society: Tracts*.⁸

In New York City, Dr. Cornelius Camden Blatchly (also Blacheley) developed a social philosophy in response to the economic slump of 1819. He proposed the establishment of “pure communities,” where the good of the collectivity would replace the selfishness and individualism on which property rights rested. In 1820 he organized the New York Society for Propagating Communities and wrote “Essay on Common Wealth” as a preface.⁹ The specifics of what a “pure community” would be in Blatchly’s essay were taken from Owen’s *New View of Society*. This pamphlet also praised the Shakers, among other religious groups, for their

communal life. By November 1824, Blatchly, a Quaker, had gathered “a small society established for the purpose of forming Communities.” His group, the “society of commonwealth,” was composed of a dozen middle-aged Quakers ready and willing to start a community “when funds might permit.”¹⁰ At the same time, in Philadelphia the Owenites also formed a small society, and in the fall of 1823, they decided to start a community. Many of those interested were members of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, whose president was William Maclure (1763-1840). Efforts at community building in New York and Philadelphia did not come to fruition, however, until Owen came to America.¹¹

Owen’s frustrations in Great Britain seem alleviated by a fortuitous event that would take him and his plan to America. In 1824, after ten years of living in Indiana, Father George Rapp of Harmony decided to sell the Harmonists’ property. Among the reasons were that they had more land than they needed, they were located far from the Eastern markets where their goods were sold, they had problems with neighbors, and the area was still malarial. In addition, as conditions improved for religious dissenters in Germany, there were fewer emigrants than expected.¹² Father Rapp planned to move back to near where they had lived before from 1805 to 1814 in Pennsylvania. Members gave Frederick Rapp, Father Rapp’s adopted son, the power to sell the property. On their behalf, a neighbor, Richard Flower, went to Great Britain “to ask whether Mr. Robert Owen would care to buy their home.”¹³ Father Rapp had been corresponding with Owen since 1815 when Owen asked him for the “operating details” of Harmony.¹⁴ Flower visited Owen at New Lanark on August 14, 1824. After hearing the details from Flower, Owen asked his eldest son, “Well, Robert, what say you- New Lanark or Harmony?” And the Son answered without hesitation, Harmony.¹⁵ Owen agreed and he made plans at once to go to America and see the site. He did not take his son Robert, however, but his son William, the “most mechanically-minded.” He was also accompanied by his former engineering officer, Captain Donald MacDonald.¹⁶ On October 2, 1824, they sailed from Liverpool and arrived in New York on November 4th.¹⁷

Exactly a week later, Owen was at Watervliet visiting the Shakers. He had obtained a letter of introduction to them from his friend, Mr. Dewitt Clinton of Albany. While in Albany, before seeing the Believers, Owen also met Stephen Van Rensselaer, from whom the Shakers rented their land “at 8 bushells of wheat for every 100 acres.”¹⁸

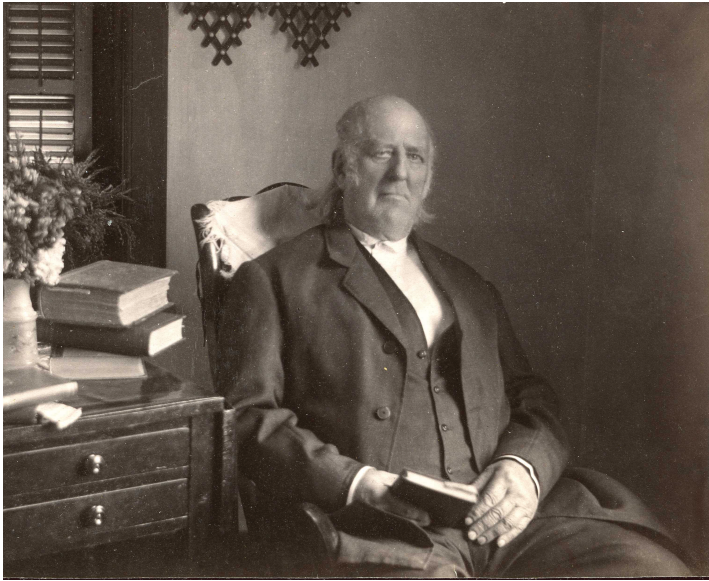
Owen's visit to Watervliet took four or five hours and he saw everything in the dwellings (kitchen, dining room, scullery, pantry and bedrooms) and shops (carpentry, joinery, coopering, shoemaking, turning, weaving, and tailoring). In addition, he visited the school and observed the farm arrangements. He told them of his plans to form communities of from 500 to 2000 people. The Shakers replied "that if they went on increasing by taking children in and educating them, or by receiving grown up persons into their community, as fast as they had done of late, they should soon have as great a number as he proposed."¹⁹

Owen's visit was of interest to the Shakers, and within a week, while he was still in New York City, he "came upon" two Shaker brethren from New Lebanon. They were already well acquainted with his visit to Watervliet, and they invited him to visit their community as well.²⁰ It seems, however, that the Shakers were far more intrigued by Owen than he was with them. He never visited New Lebanon, but left New York shortly thereafter for Philadelphia on his way to see Harmony.

Owen bought the Rappite village of Harmony, Indiana, on January 3, 1825.²¹ He paid \$135,000 for its 180 buildings, vineyards, orchards, and 20,000 acres of which 2,000 were under cultivation.²² He returned to England in July, 1825, but was back in America on November 6, and brought with him a six-foot-square elaborate model of the ideal community edifice. This he displayed at public meetings in New York and Philadelphia in November 1825. A young listener in the audience at one of the Philadelphia meetings was future Shaker George Wickersham, who was fourteen years old. He says, "The first time I ever heard the name Shaker mentioned, was while attending one of his lectures. He gave an account of a visit he made a short time before, in which he spent three days at Union Village, Ohio."²³ Wickersham continues, that Owen "was much pleased with some things he saw among the people there, and thought if the Shakers could live in community, in peace and harmony as long as they had, he could see no reason why the society he was trying to build in the state of Indiana, should not succeed and hold together in like manner." What fascinated Wickersham, however was that Owen

exhibited a model showing his plans for a square, for a village, or town to be built, as the society increased. The arrangements were very complete; the model could be taken apart, and all the interior rooms and different apartments, presented to view. The cooking and laundry establishments, were placed in the center, and were

designed to accommodate the whole square. Steam was to be used for washing and cooking, which was quite a novelty and something new in those days.²⁴



George Wickersham later in life at Mount Lebanon, New York, Shaker village.

Courtesy of Hancock Shaker Village

Wickersham further states that some in the audience found fault with Owen's system and were confident that improvements could be made. They proposed to start a community nearby and make the improvements there. This group which was augmented by some supporters from Wilmington, Delaware, organized a Friendly Association for Mutual Interests and fifteen members met on December 22, 1825. On January 19, 1826, they produced a preamble and constitution which was printed by March. It expressed "their commitment to pursue useful employment and share in the profits of their venture. Members promised to remain 'MORAL, SOBER, and INDUSTRIOUS.' Domestic chores would be shared, orphans would be provided for; food clothing, and furniture would be distributed to all members who were in need." Eventually a large village

with residential and commercial buildings was planned at Valley Forge.²⁵

The greatest support for Owen in America had been in Philadelphia. Many members, including William Maclure of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, who had wanted to found a community in 1823, did not join Valley Forge, but instead became a member at New Harmony, Indiana, in January 1826. Maclure, however, helped the Owenites attempting to start a community at Valley Forge by being one of their major benefactors.²⁶ The purchase price was \$65,000.²



*A one dollar note issued by The Friendly Association
for Mutual Interest at Valley Forge.*

The communal experiment at Valley Forge lasted only from the spring of 1826 until that September.²⁸ George Wickersham's father was the first to move his family to this place and was the last one to move away about a year and a half later in October 1827. Young George Wickersham lived there one year and worked in the machine shop. According to Wickersham, over three hundred people had been attracted to start this short-lived community, but not all of them moved to Valley Forge. Most intended to wait till the buildings could be prepared for them.²⁹ James Jones of Chester County was hired to supervise the community, and Jones and his family moved into the house used as Washington's headquarters in 1778.³⁰

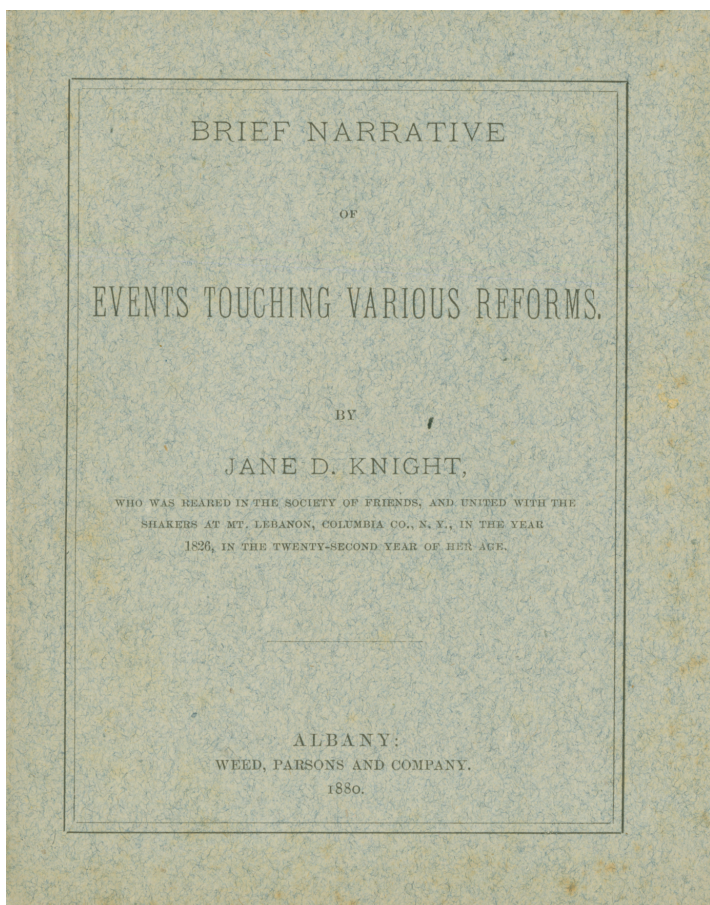
George Wickersham was very disappointed with the way the community fared. He had anticipated a good deal: "Here I expected to find that which would satisfy every feeling of my mind, All ages and classes would come together and live in harmony and peace. All strife and contention would

cease, all would labour for the mutual good and benefit of the whole and thus as it were a heaven upon earth.” By contrast at Valley Forge, “all my hopes and expectations blasted I found instead of peace and harmony the same selfish disposition ruled in those who gather themselves together as those who did not and all was again soon scatered.”³¹

To understand the climate of the time and what forces may have been at play that undermined the community, it is necessary to examine the life of one of the leaders at Valley Forge, Abel Knight (1783-1842).

Knight was a Quaker whose antecedents had come to the New World with William Penn. His family practiced primitive Quakerism. In 1816 he moved his family to Philadelphia and immediately was caught up in the religious controversies of the day. On one hand, progressive Quakers like Knight advocated freedom for all, especially slaves. They further argued against the established clergy and advocated a strong separation of church and state. On the other side, conservative Quakers backed slavery and the clergy. When Quaker Elias Hicks came on the scene, the Society of Friends split over doctrines of the atonement, the resurrection, and the divinity of Jesus.³² Indeed, “the spirit of investigation was rife at that time,” and amid the religious controversies came Robert Owen with his message. His communistic ideas and humanitarianism were very attractive to people wary of contention and strife. Many felt that “dividing and subdividing need not always prevail. With devotion and zeal they sought to inaugurate a system of justice and equality.”³³

Abel Knight became a staunch supporter of communal living and soon his house received many publications where interested people could gather to discuss a planned community. One of the papers received was the *Working Man's Advocate*, edited by George H. Evans, brother to future Shaker Frederick Evans. This paper contained “broad and liberal sentiments.” A large and mixed group became involved in the movement. “Among the number who strove to co-operate in the educational department was Professor Rafinesque, a man of fine learning and useful knowledge. Also Professor McClure, a highly competent teacher in connection with Pestalozzi of Germany.” Others were E. Postelwaite Page, “a man of culture and property, who was called high priest, [and] dressed himself entirely in green”; Fanny Wright, “fearless and independent in her actions to help build up a social order free from the confusing elements that rules in isolated families”; and Matthew Cary, a publisher and political economist.³⁴



Jane D. Knight's Brief Narrative recounted her experiences at Valley Forge.

In 1880, Knight's daughter Jane, having lived as a Shaker for over almost fifty-five years at Mount Lebanon, described those interested in Valley Forge as "heterogeneous classes of radicals, enthusiastic devotees to principle, honest latitudinarians and lazy theorists, with a sprinkling of unprincipled sharpers thrown in." The single point holding the community together was "escape if possible from the dominant rule of caste, creed and monopoly."³⁵

In addition to spiritual matters, the temporal prosperity of the community was always uncertain. The owner of the place in Valley Forge

was named Rogers. At first he “held out many inducements to the trusting strangers; and in him they placed much confidence, as he made fair and seemingly true professions.” Quickly they discovered he was “a deceitful, speculative person.” Both the leaders and members were unable to form a community. The leadership had lost faith in the ideals and many of the members resisted attempts to bind the community together. Jane Knight comments on the situation when she states, “Neither builder nor material could blend or cement together the pentecostal structure, of which they had caught a glimpse; on one hand was to be met opposition and ridicule, and on the other, they had to meet the sad reverse of feeling experienced by the too sanguine, yet sincere leaders.”³⁶

Thus at Valley Forge, the leaders and people were finding out what Owen was at the same time finding out in Indiana. It is one thing to plan a community, quite another to actually gather enough people willing to make the community work. In summation, George Wickersham said, “as a house built on sand has but a poor foundation, so it was with the Valley Forge community.”³⁷ By September 1826, the attempt to create a modified Owenite community had been abandoned. A similar fate would befall all sixteen of the Owenite communities in the United States.

The failure at Valley Forge also had an effect on the work of naturalist Constantine Samuel Rafinesque (1783-1840). Rafinesque corresponded with Maclure at New Harmony and visited the Owenite community at Yellow Springs, Ohio. He anticipated that the Valley Forge Owenites would pay the cost of shipping forty crates of specimens he collected as well as his personal items from Lexington, Kentucky, to Philadelphia. When this did not happen because the society closed before he even got to Philadelphia, his shipment remained in storage for years.³⁸

In spite of the disastrous experience at Valley Forge, Abel Knight and a few people like him still retained their faith that a higher life could be achieved. In the words of Jane Knight, it was as if an angel was saying, “Hope on – work ever.” Knight’s journey became a spiritual one. He felt a great desire for religious truth. In fact he became so disturbed that “he was many times unable to attend to his business affairs, and would retire to his room, and there bow himself down in sorrow and deep tribulation. At times, his spirit would be lifted up, and he would take new courage; for he felt an assurance that his prayers were heard, and that a light would soon break forth, showing the work of redemption.” He often called his two daughters, Sarah and Jane, together and cautioned them to remain

open to something great that was about to come. He wanted them free of prejudice so that they could decide on their own about the “great importance in the work near at hand.”³⁹

It is well known that the Shakers often gained many members after religious revivals. Disappointed participants were ripe for conversion. This similar pattern was repeated with the failed experiment at Valley Forge. From the Shaker viewpoint this was all part of a divine plan. Indeed, “The torch-lights borne by the prophets of previous dispensations gave light, and were needful to the people of those times, who sat in darkness, and were under the shadow of spiritual death; but now a great light and glory is revealed through the manifestation of the dual Christ spirit, which transcends that of the past.”⁴⁰ The catalyst was a letter that Abel Knight saw that had been written by a western Shaker to a Quaker merchant named Mott of New York. After reading the letter, Knight “could not rest.” In the spring of 1826, before the Valley Forge community totally failed, he went to New York to attend the Friends’ yearly meeting. This trip allowed him the chance to spend an hour visiting the Shakers at Watervliet. When he returned to Philadelphia, he brought with him two publications of the Shakers: *Millennial Church* and *Christ’s Second Appearing*.⁴¹

In September 1826, Richard Bushnell (1791-1873) and Proctor Sampson (1772-1855) came to Philadelphia from the North Family to minister to the growing number of people interested in Shakerism.⁴² Richard Bushnell was second elder of the North Family, the Novitiate Order of New Lebanon. This Shaker family had the primary responsibility of gathering converts for the society. These were generally whole families who had shown an interest. In addition to Bushnell, the Shakers wisely sent Proctor Sampson. He was a former Quaker who had joined the Shakers in 1814 with his children. He was well suited to speak to Abel Knight and others like himself.

Just as the community at Valley Forge had been torn apart by religious strife, so too was the Philadelphia Shaker community persecuted by family and friends. The opposition was formidable and the two Shaker missionaries from New Lebanon could not visit Abel Knight’s house. Members of his family simply would not allow it. Nonetheless, “the brethren were visited by many people, and imparted light, love and courage to all who were prepared to receive; but some went away sorrowing, not being ready and willing to make the required sacrifice; while others ... were thankful to accept truth from those heavenly messengers, whose testimony was strong

and powerful, calling souls to a life of purity and full consecration that would result in peace and harmony. Thus the ‘desire of all nations’ had come; that for which they had been long yearning.”⁴³

When it was time for the two Shakers to return to New Lebanon, Abel Knight’s daughter Sarah went with them. Since she was “a favorite in the family, and dearly loved by a large circle of friends,” great opposition was aroused. To avoid anticipated confrontations, Sarah Knight left her home at midnight accompanied by her father. The next day, according to Jane Knight, “the consternation and commotion that ensued cannot be described.” Jane decided not to mention Shakerism or dwell on the topic with her family or friends. In private she read the *Millennial Church* and decided that Shakerism was true. Only her father supported her, and she endured months of arguments and inducements to abandon her Shaker beliefs.⁴⁴

The Wickersham family lived at Valley Forge from the spring of 1826 until October 1827, when they moved to Philadelphia. George Wickersham’s father, a wire worker, and Abel Knight became good friends, and Knight gave him books on the Shakers. During the evening, Wickersham would gather his family together and read from these Shaker books. In early December, sixteen-year-old George Wickersham, having overcome his mother’s objections, joined the Shakers. Before 1827 was over, another person from the group, John Shaw, also joined the Shakers at the North Family, New Lebanon.⁴⁵ A few months later he sent for his son Levi, aged ten. Levi had been living with his grandmother in New Holland, Pennsylvania. Shaw wrote to James Wilson of East Bradford, to bring Levi because he knew that the Wilsons were planning to move to New Lebanon.

Around this time, on May 8, 1827, Elder Calvin Green (1780-1869) of the North Family and Abraham Hendrickson (1779-1864) of the Upper Canaan Family arrived in Philadelphia.⁴⁶ Elder Calvin was a Shaker theologian and veteran missionary. He was held in high regard by the Believers not only because of his great accomplishments, but also because of the specialness of his childhood. He was born after his mother had joined the Shakers in 1780. Mother Ann had held him in her arms and Father James Whittaker made him his first coat. Elder Calvin was always proud that he had been born the same year that the Gospel opened, and that he always believed. He spent his long life doing everything he could to build up the Shakers. That Elder Calvin should come to Philadelphia

showed that the place had the promise of a great number of souls, and he was determined to gain as many as he could. In addition, the presence of Abraham Hendrickson showed that plans had already been made as to what to do with the converts after they joined. The two Shaker families in the adjacent town of Canaan, New York, were part of the Novitiate Order of New Lebanon's North Family. The Canaan families had been set up as places to gather whole families who joined. In this fashion these converts could work their way slowly into blending into the community. Hendrickson was in charge of the Upper Canaan Family, the larger and more prosperous of the two. He would be the man that the newcomers would be dealing with as their head, and he could answer specific questions about their new home.



Levi Shaw later in life at Mount Lebanon, New York, Shaker village.

Abel Knight accompanied Elder Calvin and Brother Abraham to Chester County, Pennsylvania, where a large number of former Valley Forge residents who had converted to Shakerism lived. Jane Knight said,

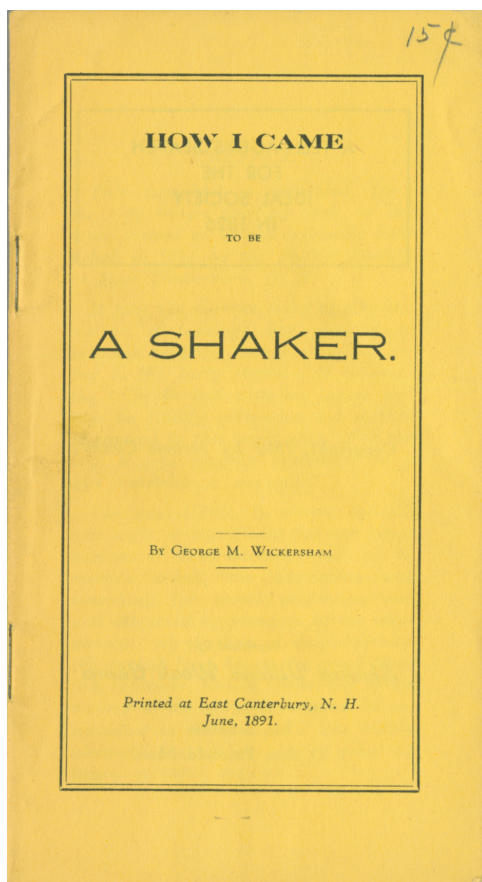
“It was evident that there was an influx of divine power from the spirit world which induced many to hear and accept the word gladly, and turn to the Zion of God.”⁴⁷

When Levi Shaw reached East Bradford, the home of the Wilson family, he met Calvin Green and Abraham Hendrickson and went with them to Philadelphia in the company of former Valley Forge members Abel Knight, Jonas Supplee, and Thomas Ridden. There they remained for a few days and held meetings. When the elders returned to New Lebanon, they took John Wilson (age thirteen) and William Wilson (age eleven) with them. Meanwhile Abel Knight decided to buy land near the New Lebanon Shakers and get to know them better before formally uniting with them. For this purpose, he purchased a farm about a mile from the Shakers in New Lebanon. His entire family, including his wife and nine remaining children, moved there around June 1, 1827.⁴⁸

Living so near the Believers, the Knights were able to visit Sarah Knight who was “happy in the enjoyment of spiritual privileges and strong in the faith, without a regret as to the choice she had made.” Furthermore, Jane no longer had to hide her interest and attended Shaker meetings.⁴⁹

Elizabeth Knight, Abel’s wife, however, decided not to join and left New Lebanon with five of their younger children. Jane Knight always blamed the vicious gossip of neighbors, who greatly disliked the Shakers, for turning her mother against the Believers. After her mother returned to Philadelphia, Jane, Israel, Isaac, and Charles Knight, and their father joined the North Family. Abel immediately consecrated all of his considerable business talents to the cause of Shakerism. In fact he served as the principal trustee of the North Family from September 13, 1832, until his death in October 1842.⁵⁰

George Wickersham, John Shaw, and the Knights were merely the first people connected with Valley Forge to join the Shakers. For the next three years, a steady stream of others joined the New Lebanon Shakers. For example, on October 20, 1828, a party of fifteen left Chester County, Pennsylvania, for New Lebanon. This group, which arrived on October 25, consisted of Levi Shaw and James Wilson, along with Wilson’s wife Margaret and their children: Samuel, Theophilus, Cyrus, James, Nancy, and Hannah. In addition, George Wilson, Mariah Evans, and Jesse Gause and three of his four children, were included.⁵¹ Jesse Gause actually came only as a visitor, but he later came back with his family, including a wife and four children, and joined the Hancock Shakers where his sister Ruth Gause was a Shaker.⁵²



*George M. Wickersham's
How I Came to
Be a Shaker recounted
his experiences at
Valley Forge.*

By 1831, fifty-nine souls had been gathered. Except for nine children who went into the Children's Order at the Church Family, all of the members either joined at the North Family or the Upper Canaan Family and eight were eventually sent to Hancock. Of this number, thirty persevered till death as Shakers. This is a very high percentage, especially considering that sixteen of the apostates were from just three families.

Calvin Green always regretted that the Shakers had not formed a society in the vicinity of Philadelphia instead of making those interested in Shakerism move to New Lebanon or Hancock. He believed, "A very eligible situation could have been obtained in as favorable a location as I think probably can be found in the land." The transplanted converts "could

not stand the trial” of new surroundings so far from their acquaintances. That is why some eventually left the Shakers. In contrast, “I think a number of them might have stood the trial if there had been a settlement where they could have travelled together.” Green hinted that the New Lebanon ministry did not have the “strength to bring forth such a hopeful Branch.”⁵³

In time the former Valley Forge members enriched many of the other families at New Lebanon and were stalwart members of the North, the Church, and the Second Families. They were part of the core membership that helped New Lebanon continue throughout much of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the last of the Valley Forgers, Levi Shaw, did not die until 1908. At that time he was in charge of running the extensive North Family operations at Enfield, Connecticut.

Seen from the perspective of faith, the work of Robert Owen and the failure of Valley Forge were part of Divine Providence. Gradually, a people who had not even known of the Shakers were made ready to receive the Gospel. All glory to them.

Notes:

1. *Testimonies of the Life, Character, Revelations and Doctrines of Mother Ann Lee, and the Elders with Her* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1888), p. 2.
2. There are many accounts of Robert Owen's early life. Two of these are: Frank Podmore, *Robert Owen, a Biography* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1924), 2; and G. D. H. Cole, ed., *A New View of Society and Other Writings [of Robert Owen]* (London: J. M. Dart and Sons Ltd., 1927), viii.
3. Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944), 196.
4. Albert Fried, editor, *Socialism in America*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970), 66.
5. John Harrison, "Robert Owen and the Communities," an Internet essay based on material in the author's book, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).
6. John F.C. Harrison, *Quest for the New Moral World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1969), 92, 93 100.
7. "The Utopian Socialists: Robert Owen and Saint-Simon (2)," Lecture 22, *The History Guide[:]* *Lectures on Modern European Intellectual History*, www.historyguide.org/intellect/lecture22a.html, 2.
8. Robert Owen, *New View of Society. Tracts Relative to the Subject; viz...A Brief Sketch of the Religious Society of People Called Shakers* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818). The article sent to Owen by Warder was also printed in William Savery Warder, *A Brief Sketch of the Religious Society of People Called Shakers* (London, Printed by R. and A. Taylor, 1817).
9. Fried, 65.
10. Caroline Dale Snedeker, ed., *The Diaries of Donald Macdonald*, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1942), 176, 183.
11. For example, the very first day he arrived in America, Owen met with William Blatchly and later met with him again. Snedeker, 183. They eagerly sought his endorsement.
12. Karl J. R. Arndt, "George Rapp's Harmony Society," in *America's Communal Utopias*, edited by Donald E. Pitzer (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 73.
13. Margaret Cole, *Robert Owen of New Lanark 1771-1850*, (London: The Batchworth Press, 1953), 146. According to Cole, Richard Flower was an English radical journalist who himself had founded an intentional community in Edwards County, Illinois.
14. W. H. G. Armytage, "Owen in America" in *Robert Owen Prophet of the Poor, Essays in Honor of the Two Hundredth Anniversary*, edited by Sidney Pollard and John Salt (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971), 216.
15. Cole, 147.
16. Armytage, 217.

17. Snedeker, 159, 174.
18. Ibid., 187-88.
19. Ibid., 189. Owen's visit to Watervliet was on November 11, 1824.
20. Ibid., 199. The encounter with the New Lebanon brethren was on November 17, 1824.
21. Armytage, 217.
22. Donald E. Pitzer, "The New Moral World of Robert Owen and New Harmony," in *America's Communal Utopias*, 113.
23. Owen visited Union Village, Ohio, on December 30, 1825. He also visited the Shaker community at Busro (West Union), Indiana, in April 1825, while still on his first visit to Harmony (Snedeker, 290).
24. [Autobiography of George Wickersham], "How I came to be a Shaker," [1891], [1-3], WRHS VI:A-6.
25. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, "Chapter One: The First One Hundred Years at Valley Forge" in *Valley Forge: Making and Remaking a National Symbol*.
26. Ibid.
27. Wickersham, "How I came to be a Shaker," [3].
28. John F. C. Harrison, *Quest for a New Moral World*, 166.
29. Wickersham, "How I came to be a Shaker," [4].
30. National Park Service, "The First One Hundred Years at Valley Forge."
31. [Testimonies of New Lebanon Shakers], George Wickersham, December 12, 1843, WRHS VI A-6
32. Jane D. Knight, *Brief Narrative of Events Touching Various Reforms* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co.: 1880), 10-15.
33. Ibid., 16.
34. Ibid., 17.
35. Ibid., 18.
36. Ibid., 19.
37. Wickersham, "How I came to be a Shaker," [3-4]..
38. Charles Boewe, "Constantine Samuel Rafinesque (1783-1840)," in *Kentucky Encyclopedia* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992).
39. Knight, 19-20.
40. Knight, introduction.
41. Wickersham, "How I came to be a shaker," [4].
42. Knight, 22.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 23-24.
45. Wickersham, "How I came to be a shaker," [9].
46. Knight, 24-25.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 26-29. According to Genealogy Forum "Knight family of Byberry/

Moreland, PA” posted January 25, 2003, by Dave Tourison, the children of Abel Knight and Elizabeth Donaldson were: Jane, Sarah, Margaret, Israel, Isaac, Tacy, Joseph, Charles, Elizabeth, Martha, and Oliver. Their daughter Sarah was already a Shaker and their daughter Margaret may have been married or deceased by 1828. The five younger children who left were: Tacy, Joseph, Elizabeth, Martha, and Oliver. Jane, Israel, Isaac, and Charles joined the Shakers at the time their father did.

49. Knight, 26-29.

50. “Book of Records-North Family-1814-1910,” New York Public Library, Shaker Collection, item #20.

51. Knight, 29.

52. Jesse Gause (1785-ca. 1836) resigned from the Quakers on January 30, 1829, and joined the Hancock Shakers with his second wife Minerva. He and his wife did not stay very long and returned to Pennsylvania where they had a son named Randall. In the meantime his children remained at Hancock in the care of his natural sister Ruth. Jesse, Minerva, and their infant son then joined the North Union Shakers in Ohio. Jesse left North Union after a short while and became a Mormon missionary and was even made a Counselor of the First Presidency. He was excommunicated from the Mormons in 1832, and his subsequent whereabouts are not well documented. This information is from “Jesse Gause” in Wikipedia. The name of Jesse and Minerva’s son Randall was found in Genealogy Forum, “William Gause Family and Related Surnames” posted by Erin Jennings on August 28, 2008.

53. Glendyne R. Wergland and Christian Goodwillie, eds., *Shaker Autobiographies, Biographies and Testimonies, 1806-1907*, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014), 257.