

The Shaker Peace Conference of 1905: Witness and Hope at the North Family of Mount Lebanon

By Stephen Paterwic

The purpose of this paper is to place the Mount Lebanon Peace Conference of 1905 in its proper Shaker context. The questions I will answer include these: Of the fifteen Shaker societies still extant in 1905, why did the conference happen at Mount Lebanon? Of the four families at the Mount, why was the conference sponsored by the North Family? Finally, of the twenty-eight Shakers at the North Family, who were involved in the conference and why?

By 1905, almost all Shaker communities contained but a remnant of their former membership. In 1803 there were 1,632 Shakers in eleven major communities.¹ By 1820 this number had grown to a little over 4,000 and included new communities in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. For the next twenty years, the total number of Shakers remained fairly constant, never going past 4,200.² After 1840, their numbers diminished until by 1874 there were fewer than 2,500.³ During February and March of 1904, various Shakers conducted a census of their communities at the request of Ernest F. McGregor, a student at Yale. This census listed 693 Shakers in fifteen communities. Since actual Shakers did the counting—living, for the most part, in the societies they enumerated—it is probably a very accurate count. The largest community, with one hundred members, was at Canterbury. Mount Lebanon was next with eighty-six. The five communities in the West and South had 166 in all. The eight in New England had 359, while the two in New York State numbered 168.⁴

Though there were fifteen communities in 1905, seven of them—Union Village, Ohio; Pleasant Hill, Kentucky; Harvard and Shirley, Massachusetts; Alfred, Maine; Enfield, New Hampshire; and Enfield, Connecticut—were doomed. These places had either very small membership, too much debt, poor leadership, or too much disunion to continue. Journal records, correspondence, and visitors' accounts indicate that these places were barely holding on. Of the weakest societies, six of them did not survive more than a dozen years after 1905. Clearly these societies were rapidly

winding down toward dissolution, and all efforts were spent in delaying the inevitable for as long as possible. In contrast, Sabbathday Lake, Maine and Canterbury, New Hampshire had the best chances for survival. Both had large numbers of young people and both were debt-free and prosperous. The Shakers in these communities were actively forward-looking and committed to survival. Many Shaker societies, especially in the West, were in awe that Canterbury had been able to attract and retain so many young Shakers. Both Pleasant Hill and Union Village asked Canterbury to send them some of their young members. In reply, Sister Jessie Evans of Canterbury wrote to Eldress Mary Gass of the Western Ministry on September 24, 1905, not a month after the peace conference. Evans states: "We are only a simple humble people here at Canterbury. We claim but a single merit—We Know the way walked by Christ and Mother and believers that by humility and consecration we may be true disciples of the cross."⁵ Although no Shakers were sent to either Pleasant Hill or Union Village in an effort to keep those villages alive, when Union Village was sold in 1912, Canterbury did send a cadre of young sisters to care for the elderly Shakers there. This arrangement lasted until 1920.

The resolve expressed by Jessie Evans of Canterbury was echoed at Sabbathday Lake. That community was in the midst of its golden age between 1875 and 1925. Sabbathday Lake trustee Aurelia Mace wrote in 1904, "We are in a growing condition spiritually and temporally." She was pleased that they had forty-five members "and a prospect of more." This included "fourteen nice brethren and some boys."⁶

The other five Shaker villages—Mount Lebanon, New York; White Water, Ohio; Narcoossee, Florida; South Union, Kentucky; and Hancock, Massachusetts—had some promise of continuance. In spite of problems, such as debts or weak leadership, each had a core of faithful Shakers, some of whom were only middle-aged. Three of these places, however, were closed within twenty years due to their great distance from other Shaker communities, indifferent leadership, or fire. Mount Lebanon and Hancock survived until the middle of the twentieth century because they became the societies where Shakers went when their own communities closed. Other factors also came into play. For example, Hancock, though made up almost entirely of women, was the strongest financially of all the Shaker communities. Under the leadership of trustee Ira Lawson, the society managed to avoid debt and stockpile a large amount of cash and valuable securities. Trustee Frances Hall continued this tradition of management

until her death in 1957.

What about Mount Lebanon? From the very earliest days, this community had been the strongest, indeed the very model of what a Shaker village should be. Its pattern of organization was copied everywhere in Shakerdom. A closer look at Shaker organization, however, shows that it was not the community but the Shaker family unit that gave a believer identity. Shakers were proud of the larger Shaker village where they first found union, but ultimate loyalty lay with the particular family.

When the signs became apparent in the 1850s that Shakerism was faltering, the North Family began to respond to this in a way distinct from the rest of Mount Lebanon. Of course this did not happen overnight. First of all, the North family was created in 1800 as a place to gather and train adult converts. The original plan of Gospel Order envisioned by Father Joseph Meacham did not make a provision for this. His organization of the early communities failed to include a way to accept adults into the community because from 1785 until almost 1800, the Shaker testimony had been withdrawn from the world as the various societies organized themselves into Gospel Order. After Father Joseph's death, Shaker leaders decided to organize a Gathering Order as a means to allow the admission of adults. Originally, it was thought that anyone interested in being a Shaker at Watervliet, Hancock, or Mount Lebanon would come to the North Family to be trained and then go back to his or her original community. So many people were joining the Shakers in every place, however, that this was not practical. Consequently, a novitiate or Gathering Order was started at each Shaker village—patterned after the one at the North Family. In fact, in 1820, two branches of the North Family were opened up in the nearby town of Canaan to accommodate the overflow and the various situations of people coming into the society. Some converts had spouses, children, or lukewarm faith. Thus right from the start, the North Family had a rich legacy and history to uphold. By 1863, there may have been eight Shaker families at Mount Lebanon, but three of them were part of the Gathering Order controlled by the elders of the North Family.

In addition, the North Family had a series of excellent elders. These were Shaker theologian Calvin Green and future ministerial leader Ebenezer Bishop. Peter Pease, an early missionary in Ohio and Kentucky and one of the first leaders of the western Shakers, had also been an elder at the North Family. The second generation of Shaker elders at the North Family centered upon Richard Bushnell, who served from 1827 until 1858.

Under his prudent leadership and that of his natural brother Charles Bushnell, who was the principal trustee, the North Family amassed a large amount of money. In 1858, Elder Richard went into the Central Ministry and his associate Frederick Evans was appointed to fill his place as first elder.

Of all the Shakers who ever lived, there is no question that Elder Frederick Evans was the best known. Steeped in a tradition of reform from his youth, he joined the Shakers in 1830. When the crisis of membership began to be felt in the 1850s, Elder Frederick was ready to go into battle to put his ideas into practice. Using the cash put aside by Richard and Charles Bushnell, he transformed the North Family into a large, model farm. The barn he had built rivaled in size any factory in Lowell or Fall River. Buildings were constructed, others remodeled or moved. Everything was done according to the latest scientific farming journals. On the day Lincoln was inaugurated, stock occupied the North Family barn for the first time.⁷ While the Civil War raged, the North Family completed its transformation.



Brother George Putnam (1844-1920), North Family farm manager, in the kitchen gardens south of the dwelling houses. On the left is the second house (1835-present); on the right is the main dwelling (1819-1973). One and a half stories were added to the latter house in 1863, giving it a slightly pitched roof.

(From Hamilton College Library)

Coming down the road from Albany or looking across the valley, visitors did not at first see the large boiler-roofed meeting house as in previous times. Rather, their attention was captured by the massive buildings of the North Family. Yet this was not merely a physical change. While still associate elder, Frederick Evans began his push to make the North Family vegetarian.⁸ Other families may have had vegetarian members, but only the North Family was almost entirely so. This so captured popular imagination in regard to things Shaker that even today some think all Shakers were vegetarians. Thus diet reform, scientific farming, and hygiene were all at play at the North Family by the 1860s. By the 1870s, their dwelling house had central heat. All the while Elder Frederick and his fellow leaders at the North—Daniel Offord, Antoinette Doolittle, and Anna White—went out to preach Shakerism at concert halls and friendly churches. Elder Frederick wrote books, hymns and seemingly innumerable newspaper articles, pamphlets, and tracts.

The purpose of having a Gathering Order was to feed new members to the other families in the village as needed. Because of the North Family's uniqueness, however, it attracted members such as Cecilia DeVere, Catherine Allen, and others of a similar nature. These men and women could not become members of other families at Mount Lebanon because they were too different. They had to stay at the North Family. Thus, from the time of Elder Frederick a core of reform-minded and so-called "progressive" Shakers were permanent parts of the North Family. This set the North Family apart and made it falter in its purpose to provide members to other Shaker families.

For various reasons, the Shakers at Mount Lebanon did not attract enough quality converts to avoid a steady decline. This was exacerbated by the long-standing policy of sending some of their best members to other societies to help them. Most often, these members stayed at their new communities until death. The Lower Canaan Shakers were broken up in 1884 and many members moved to the Harvard, Massachusetts society. In 1897, the Upper Canaan Family, a youthful and vibrant group, was sent to take over the North Family at Enfield, Connecticut. Also at this time, capable members from the North Family were sent to the Church Family at Enfield, Connecticut. In this way, by 1900, the North Family was all that remained of the Gathering Order at Mount Lebanon, and its adult members were all progressive and reform-minded. As a whole they were committed to temperance, women's rights, peace and arbitration,

scientific farming, and reforms having to do with hygiene, clothing, and land distribution. By 1900, those who did not fit the North Family mold had been transferred elsewhere.

It is terribly ironic, however, that it was this passion for progress that took away Mount Lebanon's place as the premier Shaker village. In the December 1874 issue of the Shaker newspaper, *Shaker and Shakeress*, Elder Frederick Evans wrote an article claiming that Jesus Christ, being a man, had committed sin. This enraged the more conservative Shakers, including Elder Harvey Eades of South Union. He traveled to Mount Lebanon to speak to the Ministry about the matter and this exacerbated the divide that had long existed between Shakers of differing religious views. Elder Frederick and Eldress Antoinette of the North Family reacted negatively to any suggestion that they moderate their writings. They decided to give up editing the Shaker monthly newspaper. If they could not print their views, they did not want anything to do with running the paper, and they passed it on to the Canterbury, New Hampshire Shakers to publish, though for a time Elder George Lomas of Watervliet served as the editor. From this point until the demise of the monthly in 1899, the community at Canterbury became the public face of Shakerism. Inquirers flocked to Canterbury, not Mount Lebanon. Over 225 joined Canterbury in the 1880s alone.⁹ Even though only a fraction persevered until death, by 1903 Canterbury eclipsed Mount Lebanon as the largest Shaker community.

Deprived of controlling this valuable venue, the North Family nonetheless contributed numerous articles to the paper, and also redoubled its efforts to reach the world with its message. As time passed, North Family leaders added clothing reform, land reform, temperance, woman's rights and animal rights to the issues addressed in their writings and speeches. They attended conventions and entertained visitors known to be activists in these areas.

Up until now, I have not mentioned the North Family's efforts on behalf of the peace movement. This was intentional, for unlike vegetarianism or scientific farming, pacifism was always a major tenet of Shakerism. Many Shakers suffered intensely for their failure to take part in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. They were ridiculed, beaten, jailed, and fined. Only direct governmental intervention helped stop these persecutions.

For most nineteenth-century Shakers, the Civil War must have been the greatest tragedy they had ever faced. The eastern communities lost



North Family, Mount Lebanon, N.Y., 1902 or 1903. First row, left to right: Ella B. Perry, Helen Park, Maria Blow, Eliza Ryson. Second row: George B. Reynolds, Leila Sarah Taylor, Mazella Gallup, Rosetta (Annie) Stephens, Victoria Park, Lucy Moore, Sarah Jane Burger, Grace Lewis, Jane Cutler. Third row: Levi Shaw, Agnes Lee, Florence Staples, Lydia Staples, M. Catherine Allen, Anna White, Cecilia DeVere, Ruth Barry. Standing in back: Charles Greaves.
(From Hamilton College Library)

valuable markets for their products, most notably for their seeds and herbs. Some of the Western communities were practically on the battle lines and suffered accordingly. To all Shakers, this war was against their principles, but to the Shakers of the North Family it was a sign that the world needed the Shaker gospel more than ever.

North Family Shakers attended peace conferences, received newspapers devoted to peace, wrote tracts opposing war, and were members of the Universal Peace Union for decades prior to 1905, but not all Shakers considered such involvement to be proper. Ever since the theological controversies of the mid 1870s, the North Family was looked on with open disdain by perhaps the majority of Shakers. It was not that Shakers were not for pacifism, but most believers did not like the North Family's close involvement with the world on these matters. They believed that any such involvement should be the role of the Central Ministry, not of individual Shakers.¹⁰

This is extremely clear in one incident that took place in 1897. By then, only four families remained at Mount Lebanon. These were the North, the Church (official home of the Ministry) the Second and the South. At that time the village was polarized. Farms, gardens, and orchards were a part of every Shaker family, but only at the North were these the major emphasis. The herb and liquid extract business had long been the mainstay of the Church Family. The South Family ran a large chair factory and was occupied with all aspects of this business. The Second Family shared a cloak industry with the Church and helped in the chair industry at the South. Only members of the North Family were vegetarians, and since the 1860s all the Shaker families had bypassed the North Family by trying to gather their own converts.

In 1897, Elder Charles Greaves of the North Family reproached Elder Henry Blinn, editor of the Shaker monthly newspaper, for allowing ads for war books. He told the ailing Elder Henry that this was against the Shaker religion, and he should be ashamed of himself. No doubt in Elder Charles' view such books helped promote a climate conducive to war. Elder Henry, a beloved elder at Canterbury, was very upset. He was near the end of his long life as a faithful and productive Shaker, and thought he had not done anything wrong. When Elder Calvin Reed of the Church Family heard of this incident, he was enraged. At the first opportunity he challenged Elder Charles at Sunday meeting. Point by point he refuted Elder Charles' arguments that the Bible and Jesus forbid war. Elder Calvin told Elder Charles that in matters relating to Shaker pacifism, "Leave the business in the care of the Ministry."¹¹ In a long letter to Elder Henry he writes, "It is my humble opinion that the goody, goody North Family would show more good sense, which constitutes wisdom, if they would learn and sing Sister Matilda Reed's childhood song: 'I'll mind my own business and let Polly's alone.'" Quoting a poem to emphasize his point, Elder Calvin stated, "The greatest faults of all others/With freedom we blame,/But chide not ourselves/Tho we practice the same." He reassured Elder Henry, "The best fruit trees generally get the most clubbing," and advised him, "Pay no attention to them. When there are no stones cast at them, and no attention payed to their barking, they will be apt to stop barking." He concluded by saying, "What ever the Goody, Goody North Family may think the depth of your wickedness is I am sure in the final resurrection you will not be deeper on the mire than they will be in the mud."¹²

This incident and others around this time show that the North Family

was more highly regarded by certain people in the world than at Mount Lebanon itself. In spite of this, the North Family's fervor for reform did not abate, and the person who carried this program into the twentieth century was Eldress Anna White. Eldress Antoinette Doolittle died in 1886 and Anna White succeeded her. Elder Frederick died in 1893, and Elder Daniel Offord succeeded him, but in December 1895 Elder Daniel eloped with a young sister. Eldress Anna by default had to fill the void. Her associate, Second Eldress Martha Anderson died unexpectedly in 1897. Again this left her alone. Daniel Offord came back in 1898 and was made an elder again in 1903, yet it was Anna White who was the force at work in the North Family. She had been in the Elders Order since 1865, and she alone provided the continuity of leadership needed to guide the North Family. One of her greatest friends was Laura Langford of Brooklyn, New York. A couple hundred letters survive from their almost forty years of correspondence. The hopes of Eldress Anna were made evident in these letters.¹³

By 1903, Eldress Anna was fully aware of the sad state of Shakerism. She writes that they had a small number of males and a large portion of these were aged. Since "the societies are now being practically supported by hand labors of women, of whom the greater part are already advanced in years," she dismisses the idea of the Shakers being wealthy as a myth. Basically she says that they were land poor, having inherited large tracts of profitless farmland. In addition, several families were in debt due to fires and financial disturbances in the country at large. Their



Eldress Anna White (1831-1910) in 1904
(Courtesy of Hancock Shaker Village)

industries, once so prosperous, were either rendered useless by diminished numbers or by the industrial changes of the time.¹⁴

Though Canterbury was larger, Hancock richer, Sabbathday Lake more youthful, and Shakerism seemingly on the slide everywhere else, Eldress Anna saw Mount Lebanon as having an essential mission within Shakerdom. The origin of this may be found in a popular image in Shaker theology derived from a passage in the seventy-seventh Psalm which says, "There shall be a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." For Eldress Anna, the North Family was a vital component of this vision and she writes: "This handful of corn in the top of the mountains is to the spiritual eye of the Shaker beautifully fulfilled in the handful of true believers at Mount Lebanon, the seed from which is to spring the harvest of redeemed humanity."¹⁵ She writes that in the past the Shakers held meetings to disseminate their views, whereas now they circulate tracts and "open doors to the public."¹⁶ She estimated that in 1901, over a thousand visitors had come to the North Family. Half of these had a vegetarian dinner there. She believed that this alone showed that "Shaker principles are widespread and as wars cease the virgin life will be resorted to as to check population."¹⁷ Supported by her fellow Shakers at the North Family, Eldress Anna decided to initiate a further outreach to the world.



In 1904, the Ann Lee Cottage was opened in one of the many unused buildings at the Church Family. Its purpose was to attract a high class of people to spend the summer at Mount Lebanon. She was hopeful that when such people saw the Shaker life for themselves some of them would want to join. That summer they also conducted a “kindergarten” for twenty-two girls ranging in age from three to twelve. Nine were children of the guests at Ann Lee Cottage; the others were from the Shaker families and hired help. Both ventures were deemed a great success. At the time, the North Family had only about thirty members, almost all of whom were over fifty years old or under twenty-one. Their activity is remarkable when it is considered that they also maintained a tremendous farm and large buildings. This was also the year that *Shakerism: Its Meaning and Message* was published. Written by Eldress Anna White and Sister Leila Taylor of the North Family, this book is the last major work on Shaker history and theology written by the Shakers. Eldress Anna wrote this book because she felt that “one of our greatest mistakes was to stop publishing our little monthly.” She felt that with people such as Laura Langford to help her, “Now is the acceptable time for re-opening ... and it will be like a handful of corn upon the tops of the mountains.”¹⁸

The summer of 1904 also saw the first conference held at Mount Lebanon. It took place on August 7th, and commemorated the 130th anniversary of the arrival of Mother Ann in America. This conference had the unanimous approval of the whole society at the Mount. The speakers were John P. MacLean (1848-1939) and Paul Tyner. MacLean had begun to collect Shaker manuscripts and records that previous decade. He had published a series of articles on Shaker history, especially as it pertained to the western communities. He had toured the eastern Shaker villages and gave lectures on Shaker history at some of them. Paul Tyner had been a Shaker at the North Family from 1890 until 1893. In 1896 he published a ten-page article titled “The Christ Ideal in Shakerism” in the *Humanitarian* and in the Shaker *Manifesto*.

The idea for the Shakers to hold a conference was first mentioned that year in the context of having a large meeting where representatives from each of the Shaker societies could get together and map out a plan for their future. Eldress Jane Cowan of South Union hoped that a conference with the Central Ministry would “adopt measures” to respond to their general decline.¹⁹ Such a conference was never held, but with the success of the 1904 conference, various forces came into play to bring about a peace conference in 1905.

Just as Laura Langford had influenced Eldress Anna to open the Ann Lee cottage, another woman, Amanda Deyo, prevailed upon her to convene a conference devoted to peace. Eldress Anna met Amanda Deyo during the 1870s at a conference held at Salt Point in Dutchess County, New York. She described her as being from Ulster County, New York, an old Universalist minister and a descendant of William Penn. Deyo was a strong peace and temperance advocate. She was a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and a vice-president of the Universal Peace Union.²⁰ She became an associate member of the North Family in 1904. This type of membership in the Shakers seems to be unique to the North Family. Close friends of the Family or members of groups that shared their ideals are often referred to as associate members or an "outer court" of Shakerism. Sometimes they are given the title of "sister" or "brother." No doubt through Deyo's influence a group of North Family Shakers, including Elder Daniel Offord, Catherine Allen and Sarah Burger, attended the International Peace Congress in Boston from October 3-5, 1904. On Sunday, October 23rd, Deyo spoke in the evening at the North Family on war and peace. A month later, Deyo sent a letter that was read at the Thanksgiving service held at the North Family.

It is not hard to imagine that by the spring of 1905, conditions were set for the organization of a peace conference. Yet that year was a tumultuous one for the Shakers in many ways. In February, trustee Ira Lawson died unexpectedly. By that time Lawson was also a member of the Central Ministry. In April, Elder Henry Blinn died at Canterbury. In August, Elder John Whitely died at Shirley. Each of these men had been a major figure in Shaker history for over fifty years, dominating the societies where they lived. Less than two weeks after the death of Whitely, Elder Louis Basting died at Hancock. His passing left Hancock without any adult men. Meanwhile, at Mount Lebanon, the more conservative elements of the village mounted an attack on Eldress Anna. Spearheaded by Robert Valentine, a former Church Family trustee, the brethren at the Church Family announced that they desired to use the lower part of Ann Lee Cottage for a dairy. As a result, the Ann Lee Cottage was not opened for visitors that summer.²¹

In many ways this was a blessing because all energy was being put into planning for the conference on peace. On April 28, 1905, Henry Nichols from New York City joined the North Family. He was an author, lecturer, printer, and "a communist in theory." Sister Leila Taylor described him as refined, intelligent, scholarly and spirited. He asked Elder Daniel to accept

THE SHAKERS OF MOUNT LEBANON

Extend to you an Invitation to Attend a

✻ PEACE CONVENTION, ✻

in the interest of Universal Peace, to be held at

MOUNT LEBANON, N. Y.,

AUGUST 31, 1905.

For one hundred and thirty years the Shakers have been showing that it is possible for men and women to approach the highest ideals of human brotherhood, living at peace with the world and among themselves, and they believe that as a rule of action, the principles of peace and brotherhood are capable of the widest application.

From the beginning they have maintained that the interests of mankind are not divided, but in common, and they ask you to join with them in this Convention, and lend your aid in favor of international peace and arbitration and to prove to the world the inhumanity and stupidity of war, the suffering it entails, and its economic waste.

There are practical measures that can be taken up, and influence be brought to bear upon our government, as the people of other countries are bringing influence to bear upon their governments, for the arbitration of international disputes, the reduction of armaments on land and sea, the establishment of the great waterways of commerce as neutral zones, the reduction of the burden of taxation, which must be borne by the producing classes. These and kindred questions will be subjects for discussion and action.

JOSEPH HOLDEN,	DANIEL OFFORD,
HARRIET BULLARD,	ANNA WHITE,
AUGUSTA STONE,	SARAH BURGER.

There are good hotel accommodations nearby at Lebanon Springs, one of the oldest watering places in the country.

One of two broadsides announcing the peace convention (Richmond no. 1308)
(Courtesy of Collection of the United Society of Shakers, Sabbathday Lake, Inc.)

him on a three-month trial. This tall, portly and light-complexioned man was fifty-six years old.²² By the end of June, eleven new members had formally joined the North Family. Among these was Amanda Deyo.²³ By the beginning of August, thirteen speakers were chosen and Deyo and Nichols spent many hours writing hundreds of letters to the press and to interested people. Eldress Anna called them “the principal factors” in the North Family’s efforts to prepare for the conference.²⁴ Though the event was to be held on August 31st, it seems that even as late as a week before it was to begin, the schedule was still being adjusted. Eldress Anna writes, “The convention may continue another day—that would depend on the speakers—some may fall out by the way.” She cited the example of Springfield, Massachusetts minister Philip Moxon, who cancelled due to illness, and the Reverend James E. Gregg, who declined because he “has never given his mind much to the Peace Cause and his Master the Prince of Peace.”²⁵

Preliminary broadsides, printed in light blue, announced the convention and extended an invitation from “the Shakers of Mount Lebanon” for the public to attend. Interestingly, however, the broadsides only carried the names of the Central Ministry and the elders of the North Family; a list of speakers is also omitted from the earliest announcements. It was noted that good hotel accommodations could be found at nearby Lebanon Springs. Not a room was available at Mount Lebanon. Six places at the Church Family office, however, were reserved for Shakers from other villages that wished to attend. As the date of the conference neared, newspapers began to include articles on the event. For example, on August 20th the *New York Tribune* carried an article on the convention describing the speakers and the purpose of the gathering.

The day was planned “in the interest of Universal Peace,” and had three sessions: ten o’clock, two o’clock, and seven fifteen in the evening. Meetings were held in the great Shaker meeting house at the Church Family. It had not been used for religious services for at least five years; thus chairs had to be obtained and arranged, and a speakers platform and sounding board constructed. The specific purpose of the convention was to exert influence upon the United States government “for the arbitration of international disputes, the reduction of armaments on land and sea, with a consequent diminution of the burden of taxation now borne by the producing classes, and the establishment of the great waterways of commerce as neutral zones.”²⁶ Eldress Anna White opened the proceedings

by emphasizing that the Shakers were not isolated from the forces at play in the world. Other speakers included Professor John L. N. Hunt, ex-president of the New York Board of Education; the Rev. Henry S. Clubb, president of the National Vegetarian Society; Sister Amanda Deyo, vice-president of the Universal Peace Union; Mrs. Kate Waller Barret, vice-president of the National Council of Women; Mrs. Elizabeth B. Grannis, president of the National Christian League; and Mrs. I. C. Manchester, president of the National Association of Loyal Women. The three sessions were moderated by Brother Henry Nichols. Sister Leila Taylor proposed five resolutions. Four of these had to do with the specific purposes of the convention. She added another resolution asking for an interdict of war loans. Sister Catherine Allen proposed four resolutions having to do with proportional reduction of armaments, the importance of conferencing, adding additional powers to The Hague court, and the appointment of a committee to present these proposals to the Congress and the President. A final resolution was proposed by the Rev. Clubb commending President Roosevelt for his efforts to bring peace between Japan and Russia. All of these resolutions were adopted.²⁷



Eldress Anna White addressing the peace convention
(From Hamilton College Library)

Eldress Anna in a letter to Laura Langford dated September 11, 1905, described the day as she saw it. According to her, “all things worked together in perfect accord on that wonderful day except for the weather.” In the morning it was “decidedly threatening” so the ten o’clock session was not well attended. By the afternoon, however, “the clouds lifted and the people turned out well” for the two o’clock session. She estimated that between five and six hundred people attended, including various reporters and one man from Associated Press. A final well-attended session was held in the evening. There were sixteen speakers with singing interspersed between them.²⁸ Refreshments between sessions were served at Ann Lee Cottage. No doubt this was Eldress Anna’s way of replying to Robert Valentine’s contrariness. Besides feeding the members of the North Family, thirty additional dinners were served; perhaps these were for the speakers and their guests. Only one North Family sister did not attend the meetings. She stayed behind with two women who were tenants of the Shakers. Although almost every North Family Shaker participated, very few Shakers from the other Mount Lebanon families attended. Since the convention was at the Church Family, some of those members attended, including the elders. Attendance was sparse, however, from the other two families. Outside of Mount Lebanon, this was also the case. With the possible exception of a handful from Watervliet and Hancock, it is possible that no one came from the other societies. In fact, journal references from the other societies fail to record that the peace convention was even occurring.

One consequence of the peace conference was that Eldress Anna White and Sister Sarah Burger went to Washington, D.C. in November 1905, to bring the proposals to President Theodore Roosevelt. They were accompanied by Dr. William Barnes, who had given one of the presentations at the conference. Roosevelt agreed to extend arbitration and was about to appoint delegates to the second peace conference at The Hague. He did not think that disarmament was practicable, however, stating that “it is better that a nation should engage in war than to submit to injustice and imposition of wrong upon national honor and interests. Justice before peace!” He went on to say, “My general sentiments are strongly in favor of the spirit and purpose of the resolutions adopted last August, and I am much obliged to the Sisters for traveling such a distance in this weather, to present them for my consideration.” The resolutions were left with a committee and later incorporated into the work of The Hague Tribunal.²⁹

Back home, life was getting back to normal. Just a week before Christmas, Leila Taylor wrote that they had lost five sisters that year and that “the would-be brethren proved carping and critical and I longed to take a horse-whip and lay on but Elder Daniel has kept his ground.”³⁰ It would appear that Elder Daniel had much more tolerance for the faults of the brethren than did the sisters. In any event, it was the place of the elders to keep order in their own sphere. Apparently, one of the biggest offenders was Brother Henry Nichols. In preparation for the convention, special letterhead paper had been printed. At the top it read: “Shakers of Mount Lebanon Bureau of Peace Work, North Family.” The Committee on Correspondence listed Anna White, Henry Nichols, Sarah Burger, Amanda Deyo and Catherine Allen. A letter dated May 9, 1906 uses this stationery and Henry Nichols’ name had been crossed out. The letter written by Eldress Anna states, “The distracting elements that crept in among us last year are gone. We try all people sift out the chaff in them if we can, if not, sift out them and hold fast to those who are good.”³¹ This statement reflects the traditional attitude that most leaders in the Gathering Order had toward those who came into the community to try the life. Most converts were not expected to stay. Amanda Deyo, who was sixty-eight years old in 1905, seems to have faded in and out of the North Family after the convention was over. She did not die a Shaker and is not enumerated as a member in the 1910 census.

The Ann Lee Cottage was occupied by paying guests in 1906, Robert Valentine apparently finding another location for his dairy. Yet the guests that year did not prove to be satisfactory and so the experiment was ended. By 1907, the North Family seems to have become preoccupied with Christian Science and the cottage was used by North Family’s Sister Grace Ada Brown for her private school for girls. This venture seems to have ended in 1910, the year that Eldress Anna White died. As the society continued to diminish, it is ironic that the Ann Lee Cottage became the final home of the Church Family Shakers in 1930, after their land and buildings were sold. By then, Catherine Allen and Leila Taylor were dead. For the handful of North Family survivors, the peace convention twenty-five years earlier, if they thought of it at all, must have seemed like something unimaginable. World War I and the revolutions that followed had destroyed any notion that the world was ripe for peace. Yet the memory of this event still remains with us who have been called in these times to recall the Shakers and the best they have offered us, ever appealing to our higher natures. Eldress Anna had

stated, “The time of universal brotherhood and sisterhood are nearer than some think.”³² Let us pray that in these dark times for peace, this is true.

Notes

1. “A book of records kept by Daniel Goodrich, [Jr.], 1794-1824,” Hancock Shaker Village Library #9758. There is no specific date other than 1803 for this enumeration although it may be October 10 since that is the date he listed all of the Shakers at Hancock.
2. Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells, *A Summary View of the Millennial Church* (Albany: Benthuyssen, 1848), 76-84.
3. Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1875), 256.
4. The originals of these letters are in the library at Hancock Shaker Village. The following Shakers replied to Ernest F. McGregor on the dates indicated and provided him with information on the communities in the parentheses.

George H. Baxter	February 8, 1904	(Union Village, Ohio)
Alonzo Hollister	February 18, 1904	(Mount Lebanon and Watervliet, New York; Florida)
	March 21, 1904	(Alfred, Maine; South Union and Pleasant Hill, Kentucky)
Joseph Holden	February 25, 1904	(Shirley and Harvard, Massachusetts)
Louis Basting	February 26, 1904	(Hancock, Massachusetts)
Charles H. Sturr	February 27, 1904	(White Water, Ohio)
George Wilcox	February 28, 1904	(Enfield, Connecticut)
Aurelia Mace	February 29, 1904	(Sabbathday Lake, Maine)
	March 10, 1904	(Alfred, Maine)
Rosetta Cummings	February 29, 1904	(Enfield, New Hampshire)
Arthur Bruce	March 2, 1904	(Canterbury, New Hampshire)

Almost all of the Shakers were very cooperative and in addition to population figures, they gave detailed answers to McGregor’s questions regarding industries and land ownership. The exception was A. Logan Johns of South Union. In a letter dated February 27, 1904, he refused to answer any questions and replied, “For Shakers make their living by hard labor and not by writing thesis in classical shades.” This is in contrast to George Wilcox, who wrote, “I am much pleased with your labors and efforts to lay before the people the genuine Thesis of the life and Testimony of our Order.” Elder Henry Green of Alfred was away in Florida so both Aurelia Mace and Alonzo Hollister felt obliged to provide the information on the Alfred, Maine society. Hollister also provided the information on the two Kentucky Shaker villages.

5. Jessie Evans to Eldress Mary [Gass], September 24, 1905, Western Reserve Historical Society IV B- 40
6. Aurelia G. Mace to John P. MacLean, November 10, 1903, WRHS IV A-57
7. L. S. Taylor, “The North Family at Mount Lebanon Established 105 Years Ago,”

- Chatham Courier*, n.d. This clipping is at the library of the Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, New York.
8. Leila S. Taylor, *A Memorial to Eldress Anna White and Elder Daniel Offord* (Mount Lebanon, N.Y.: North Family of Shakers, 1912), 60.
 9. Richard C. Borges, "The Canterbury Shakers: A Demographic Study." *Historical New Hampshire* 48 (Summer/Fall 1993), 166.
 10. Calvin G. Reed to Elder Henry [Blinn], June 1, 1897, Canterbury Shaker Village Library, item 231.
 11. Reed to Blinn, June 1, 1897.
 12. Reed to Blinn, March 7, 1897. Canterbury Shaker Village Library, item 231.
 13. These are also extremely important documents because no journals from the North Family seem to have survived that cover the years between 1894 and 1910. The Langford letters, correspondence with John P. MacLean and articles that appeared as a "home note" in the local paper the *Chatham Courier*, are just about the only sources of information that exist for determining what was happening at the North Family during that time period.
 14. Anna White to Laura Langford, July 15, 1903, item 1202-109, Winterthur Library: The Edward Deming Andrews Memorial Shaker Collection.
 15. White to Langford, June 17, 1903, 1202-118, Winterthur.
 16. White to Langford, August 29, 1903, 1202-110, Winterthur.
 17. White to Langford, November 13, 1901, 1202-2, Winterthur.
 18. White to Langford, June 17, 1903, 1202-118, Winterthur.
 19. Jane Cowan to John P. MacLean, April 20, 1904, WRHS IV A-64.
 20. White to Langford, October 10, 1904, 1202-5, Winterthur.
 21. White to Langford, February 3, 1905, 1202-5, Winterthur.
 22. Leila S. Taylor to John P. MacLean, April 30, 1905, WRHS IV B-40
 23. Taylor to MacLean, June 17, 1905, WRHS IV B-40.
 24. White to Langford, August 7, 1905, 1202-69, Winterthur.
 25. White to Langford, August 22, 1905, 1202-70, Winterthur.
 26. From the broadside advertising the convention: "The Shakers of Mount Lebanon Extend to You an Invitation to Attend a Peace Conference in the Interest of Universal Peace, to be Held at Mount Lebanon, N.Y., August 31, 1905." [Mount Lebanon, 1905]. Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, New York.
 27. "The Peace Resolutions." [n.p., 1905]. Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, New York.
 28. White to Langford, September 11, 1905, 1202-71, Winterthur.
 29. Taylor, *Memorial*, 80.
 30. Taylor to MacLean, December 18, 1905, WRHS IV B-40.
 31. White to Langford, May 9, 1906, 1202-76, Winterthur.
 32. White to Langford, December 11, 1903, 1202-113, Winterthur.