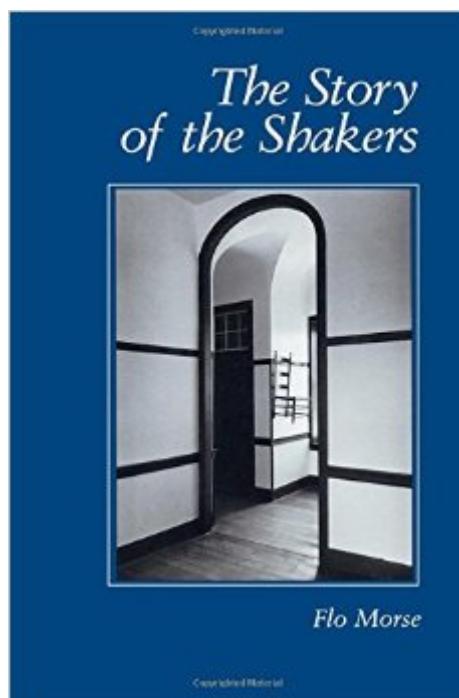


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The Story Of The Shakers



Synopsis

"Put your hands to work and your hearts to God," Mother Ann Lee told her spiritual children more than 200 years ago. Today, public appreciation of the Shakers and their works has never been keener. The Story of the Shakers by Flo Morse offers a stimulating, graceful summary of Shaker beliefs and the way of life that still endures. Ms. Morse, a former writer for the New York Herald Tribune, is the author of The Shakers and the World's People, a comprehensive, widely praised documentary history. Of her work on the Shakers, Commonweal wrote: "Fascinating material. Superbly described." Kirkus Reviews commented, the Shakers have "a caring spokesperson in Flo Morse."

Book Information

Series: Shakers

Paperback: 109 pages

Publisher: Countryman Press; 1 edition (May 17, 1986)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0881500623

ISBN-13: 978-0881500622

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.4 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #3,021,858 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #78 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Protestantism > Shaker #191697 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences #518724 inÂ Books > Religion & Spirituality

Customer Reviews

The Shaker Story by Flo Morse may not be a large book, but it provides a wealth of information about this little known and oft misunderstood religious group. Some people confuse them with Quakers. Others think they were simply manufacturers of furniture. Morse sets out to fill in the gaps. The Shakers were founded in 1772 and thrived into the 1800's. They believed that you didn't have to die to enter heaven. Rather, heaven could be found right here on earth if you lived a simple and virtuous life. Shakers were required to live in villages, where they were totally self-sufficient. Couples had to disavow marriage vows, and men, women and children lived apart from each other. They did interact during worship where they sang and danced (or "shaked"). They produced seeds, herbs, hats, cloth, thread, brooms and furniture, and sold these items all over the country. The

Shakers were also prolific songwriters, and they composed over 30,000 hymns and songs. Music was an important component of their worship. Only one of their songs, A Simple Gift, has gone mainstream. Aaron Copland included it as the main melody in his well-known classic, Appalachian Spring. You might wonder what would entice adults to live a celibate life. But this was often more appealing to women-rather than marrying an abusive or undependable husband. Women had an equal say in village life, and some villages even welcomed blacks as equals. Many unwanted children were dropped off at Shaker Villages, where they were raised to adulthood. The Shakers started to fade after the Civil War for a variety of reasons. First, factories started mass-producing the same products the Shakers made by hand, but for a fraction of the cost. Since members didn't procreate, new generations were not born to replace older generations as they died off. And public orphanages meant less unwanted children coming to Shaker Villages. One by one, the villages were dissolved and closed. Several have become National Historic Sites, and it is fascinating to see how Shakers lived, worked and worshipped. Still, there are a handful of Shakers in the United States (less than a dozen at last count), although the Shaker glory days appear to be over. So, if you can't visit a Shaker Village (such as Pleasant Valley Shaker Village in Kentucky), pick up Morse's book. She provides a good look at this fascinating group.

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

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