

# The 1885 Shaker Almanac

by Lynne Belluscio

I'm often asked what kind of things do I buy on e-Bay for the Historical Society and recently I purchased an 1885 Almanac that was distributed by Tuttle and Miller, a drug store at 20 Main Street, LeRoy. The ad on the back says that they were "dealers in drugs and medicines, and a choice selection of toilet soaps, perfumery, shoulder braces, sponges and all kinds of druggists' sundries usually kept in a first class drug store."

The store was on the north side of Main Street just east of Java's Coffee shop - - or at least in the area because the numbers on the buildings changed several times. I've looked for a photograph and so far have come up empty.

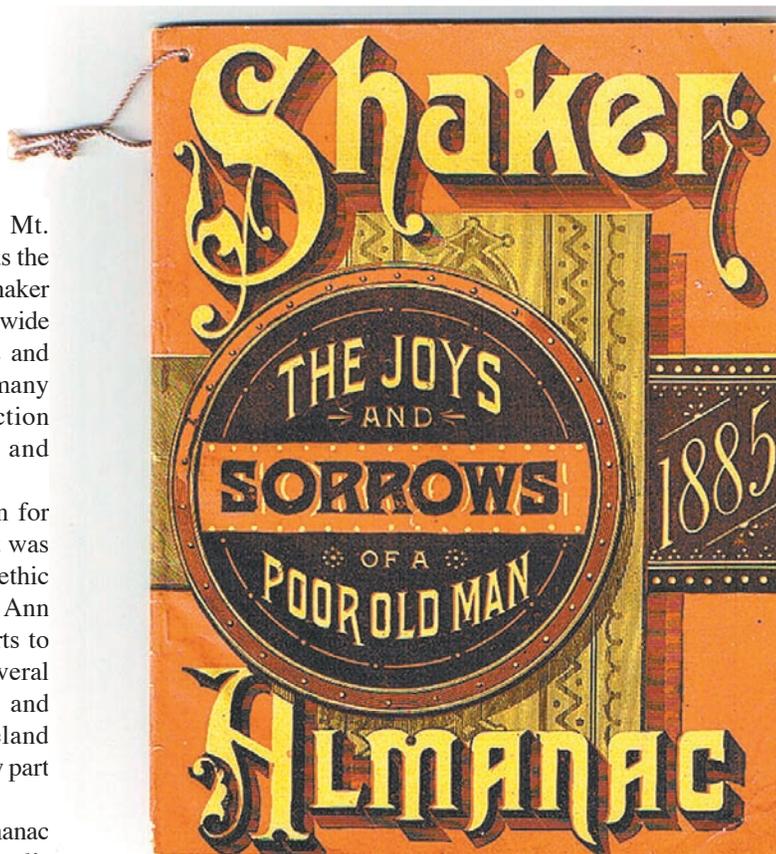
The Almanac is very interesting because it is a Shaker Almanac from Mt. Lebanon, New York. The Shaker community at Mt. Lebanon was the largest in the United States and at one time was home to over 600 people. It was situated on a land parcel of 6,000 acres, but after it closed in 1947, the property was divided and sold.

Today several of the buildings

are part of the Mt. Lebanon historic site and it is open to the public. Originally the community was known as New Lebanon for the community near by, but the name was changed to Mt. Lebanon in the 1800s. It was the most successful economic Shaker community and it produced a wide variety of medicines, seeds and chairs. The Almanac has many illustrations of the production of the various medicines and tinctures.

The Shakers were known for high quality products and it was part of their belief and work ethic put forth by their founder, Ann Lee: "Hands to Work; Hearts to God." The Shakers had several communities in New York and the closest was the Groveland Community at Sonyea - now part of the prison.

The illustrations in the Almanac show the production of Seilgel's Syrup. It was advertised as a soporific, which quiets the nerves and allays all pain and excitement of the nervous system, giving rest to the body and to the mind by its soothing, quieting influence.

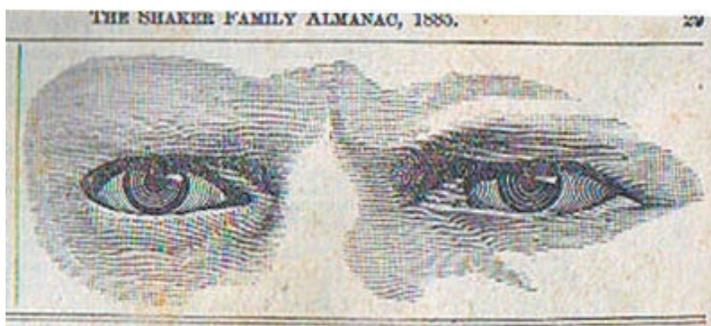


It was also a laxative and carried impurities from the blood. It was also listed as a sodorific which opens the pores of the skin and "allows the corrupt substances near the surface to pass out in the form of sweat." It was also a diuretic and an alterative which gave strength to the liver and strengthened the gall ducts. Certainly it was a medicine to have on the shelf. Who knows what the active ingredients were.

The Almanac also included a story "The Joys and Sorrows of a Poor Old Man." There are

interesting images of eyes and noses. The explanation of the one image "Expressions of the Eye - Shrewd, piercing, analytical; not easily imposed upon. Confides in nobody; will resort to dishonest means to carry a point; never forgive a real or imaginary injury ...".

On the pages of weather and the rise and setting of the sun, are historic events: August 1 - the Battle of the Nile 1798; August 3 - Columbus sailed 1492; August 7 - the War Department was formed in 1789. So the Almanac had a little of everything for everyone.



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