



Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon

Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon was founded in 1950 by John S. Williams, Sr. on his farm in Old Chatham, New York. Beginning in the 1930s, Williams traveled extensively to then-active Shaker communities and collected examples of their arts, industries, and domestic life, as well as spiritual artifacts. After the 2004 acquisition of the North Family at Mount Lebanon Shaker Village, the museum's name was changed from Shaker Museum & Library to Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon. Visitors are welcome year-round at Mount Lebanon; the visitor center is open seasonally. The administrative offices, collections storage, and the library are located in Old Chatham and open year-round by appointment. Learn more at shakerml.org.

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SHAKER MUSEUM MOUNT LEBANON

202 Shaker Road, New Lebanon, NY 12125
518-794-9100 shakerml.org

Great Stone Barn and walking map illustration by: Samantha Dion Baker



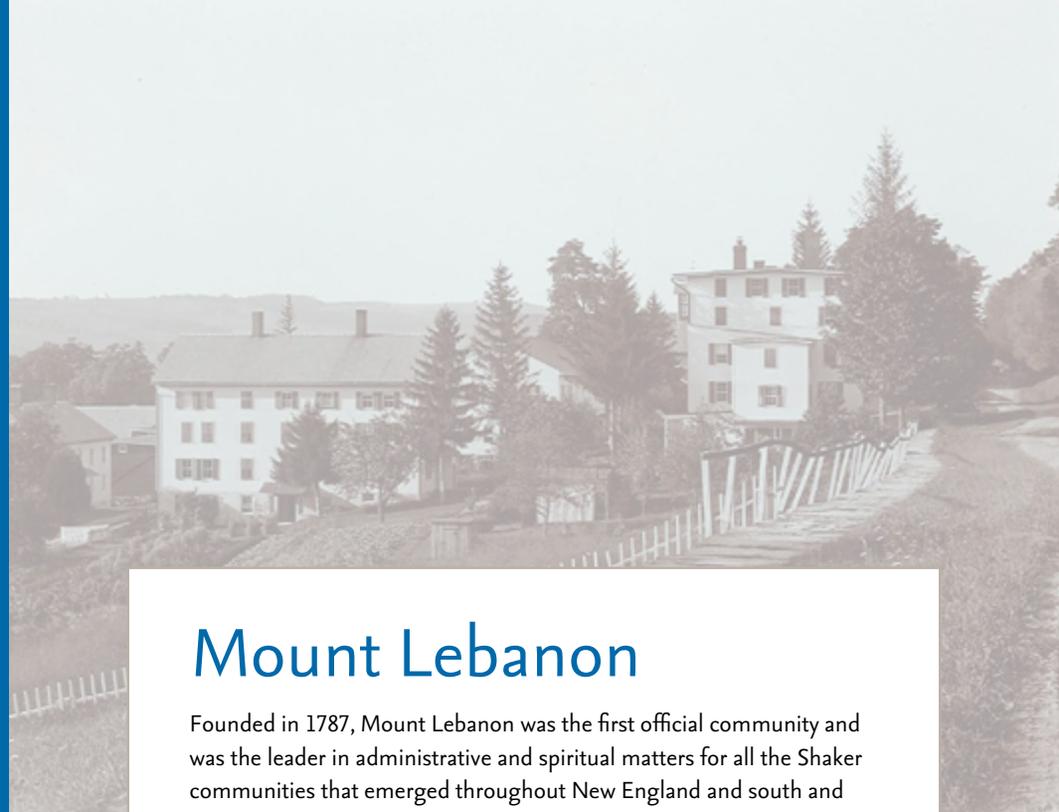
Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon

SELF-GUIDED TOUR

THE SHAKERS

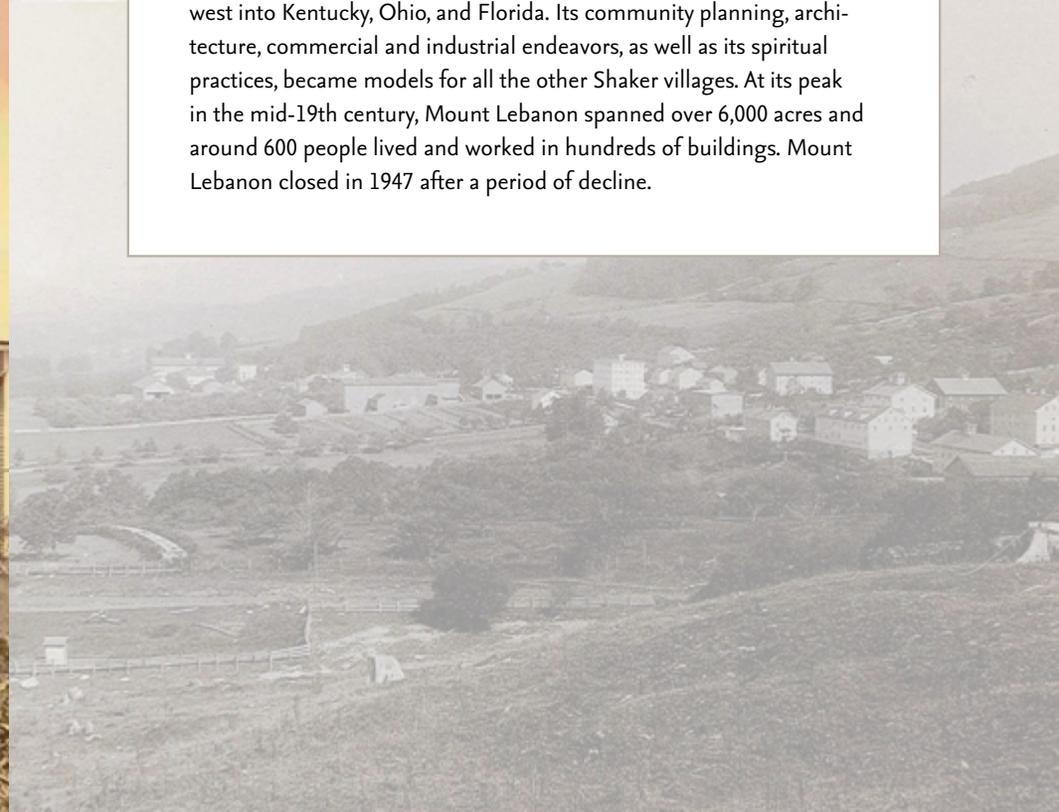
In 1774 Ann Lee, the charismatic, illiterate daughter of a blacksmith, brought a small group of followers to the United States from Manchester, England. Known officially as the United Society of Believers, the Shakers moved upstate in 1776 and settled near Albany in what is now Watervliet. In 1787 Mount Lebanon was established as the leading community of a network that would spread across the eastern half of the United States.

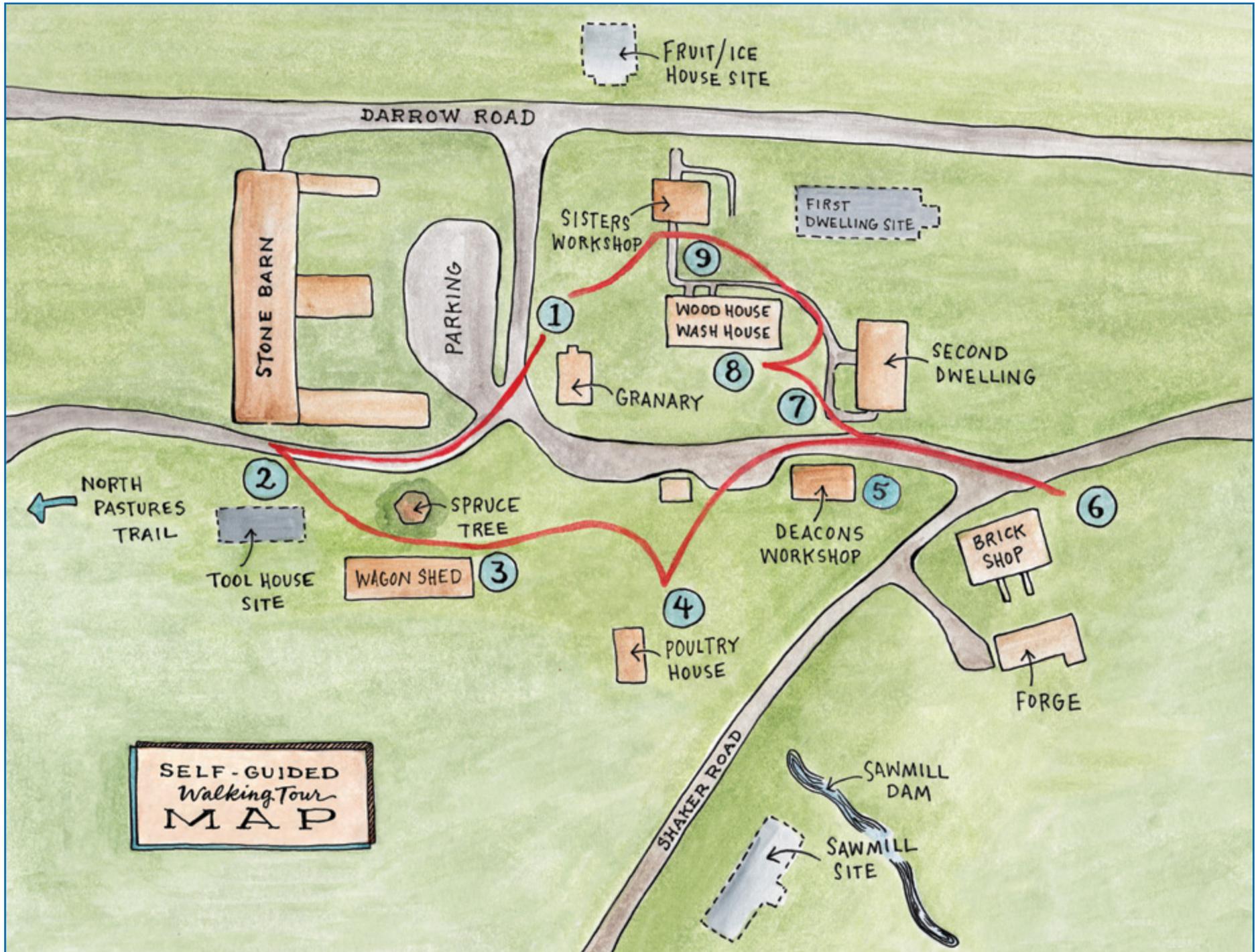
The Shakers believed society could be perfected and the earth turned into paradise through communal living, gender and racial equality, pacifism, confession of sin, celibacy, and separation from the world. The Shakers' religious and administrative leadership consisted of a man and a woman who held equal authority at each level. They worshiped with their own unique songs and dances, and brought spiritual practice into their everyday tasks. They were known for their seed and medicinal enterprises, and for manufacturing brooms, chairs, baskets, cloaks, bonnets, and round and oval bent-wood boxes.



Mount Lebanon

Founded in 1787, Mount Lebanon was the first official community and was the leader in administrative and spiritual matters for all the Shaker communities that emerged throughout New England and south and west into Kentucky, Ohio, and Florida. Its community planning, architecture, commercial and industrial endeavors, as well as its spiritual practices, became models for all the other Shaker villages. At its peak in the mid-19th century, Mount Lebanon spanned over 6,000 acres and around 600 people lived and worked in hundreds of buildings. Mount Lebanon closed in 1947 after a period of decline.





North Family

Shaker communities were divided into families, typically made up of 50-100 men, women, and children. Families were self-sustaining, with their own communal laundries, kitchen gardens, agricultural operations, workshops, classrooms, and dwellings. The North Family was established ca. 1800 and served as a conduit between “the World” and the more cloistered Church, Center, South, Upper and Lower Canaan, Second, and East Families. The North Family worked to attract new members by holding a public worship each Sunday, publishing theological books and tracts, and attending gatherings in the World where there might be an opening to proselytize about their faith and life. Visitors to the village and new converts were welcomed at the North Family, where they learned the day-to-day practices of Shaker life as well as its spiritual underpinnings. When the seven remaining Shakers left the North Family in 1947, Mount Lebanon was closed and the last Shaker family in New York State ceased to exist.



DISCOVER THE NORTH FAMILY

Visitors to the North Family would have encountered a dense village of large buildings (many of which are no longer standing), barns, yards, well-tilled fields, orchards, neatly kept slate walkways, and industrious activity. Use the map in the center of this pamphlet to explore the village. You are also welcome to walk the North Pasture Trail, a .3 mile loop north of the Great Stone Barn that takes visitors past 19th century stone walls built by the Shakers.

BEYOND THE NORTH FAMILY

No other building symbolizes the spiritual and physical reality of the Shakers more than the Second Meeting House, constructed in 1824 and now owned by the Shaker Museum and used by Darrow School as their library. Its distinguished but restrained form and ingenious structural engineering represent the basic tenets and achievements upon which Shaker religion, society, and aesthetics were founded: worship, order, and function. The Darrow School's campus is the former location of the Church and Center Families and many original Shaker buildings have been repurposed. The Abode of the Message, a Sufi community, occupies buildings that were once part of the South Family. Other original Shaker buildings are now private homes. The Abode is open to the public, but none of the other areas or buildings are.

