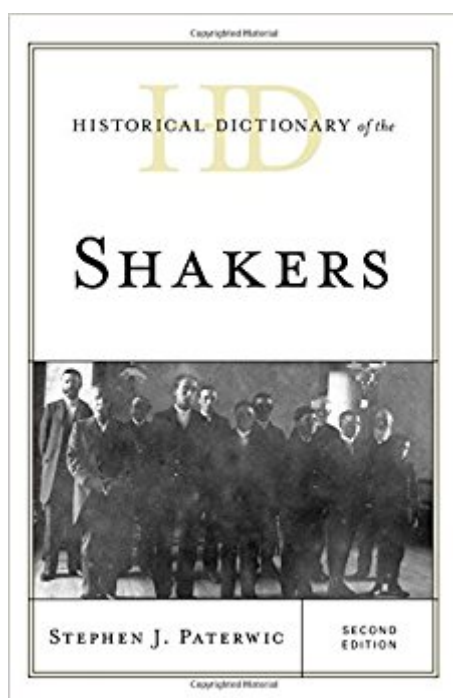


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# Historical Dictionary Of The Shakers (Historical Dictionaries Of Religions, Philosophies, And Movements Series)



## Synopsis

“Shakerism teaches God’s immanence through the common life shared in Christ’s mystical body. Like many religious seekers throughout the ages, they honor the revelation of God but cannot be bound up in an unchanging set of dogmas or creeds. Freeing themselves from domination by the state religion, Mother Ann Lee and her first followers in mid-18th-century England labored to encounter the godhead directly. They were blessed by spiritual gifts that showed them a way to live the heavenly life on Earth. The result of their efforts was the fashioning of a celibate communal life called the Christlife, wherein a person, after confessing all sin, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, can travel the path of regeneration into ever-increasing holiness. Pacifism, equality of the sexes, and withdrawal from the world are some of the ways the faith was put into practice. This second edition of Historical Dictionary of the Shakers contains a chronology, an introduction, appendixes, and an extensive bibliography. The dictionary section has over 300 cross-referenced entries on Shaker communities, industries, individual families, and important people. This book is an excellent resource for students, researchers, and anyone wanting to know more about the Shakers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The new text, endorsed by the Sabbathday Lake Shakers, is essential for religious-studies and social-science courses studying Shakers. (Booklist, January 2009) Clearly written, the work adheres

to a standard format for studies in this series....gives a good overview of the origins, growth, and decline of the group....anyone interested in this country's religious history will find this a useful and reliable guide...high school and university libraries should consider it for their reference collections. (American Reference Books Annual) --This text refers to an alternate Hardcover edition.

Stephen J. Paterwic recently retired from the West Springfield Public Schools. He is a frequent presenter at Shaker seminars and forums and he is the author of numerous articles on the Shakers. He currently serves as an overseer of Hancock Shaker Village in Massachusetts and is a trustee of Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in Maine. The Shakers of Sabbathday Lake have been his lifelong friends and provide inspiration for his spiritual life.

I have been engaged in the business of buying, selling, bibliographically describing and otherwise digressing on works by and about the American Shakers for nearly 35 years. I have a very large reference collection about the Shakers. I have a modest reference collection about the Shakers that can be deemed 'solid', 'useful', and reliable. And I have a small reference collection that I consider to be "of great value". I number this fine work among this latter group. If you are interested in the Shakers and desire informative, correct and 'solid' information about them, then this is where you want to go.

Steve Paterwic's historical dictionary is the single most useful reference book on the Shakers. I keep it within reach and consult it constantly. I have also read from cover to cover (not my usual practice for a dictionary). This book's accuracy, thoroughness, and cross-references make it an essential tool for newcomers to the field as well as experienced senior scholars. Previous reviews enumerate the more important strong points about this fine scholar's Historical Dictionary of the Shakers, but I will add three more. First, the cross-references (in bold type) make it much more useful than a standard dictionary. This book is also an index, which makes it especially valuable for scholars new to the field. Second, the typeface is large enough for aging eyes to read - an important consideration in making the material accessible in this era of shrinking fonts. Third, I am pleased to see that it is now also available in paperback at a more affordable price.

Long-time Shaker scholar Steve Paterwic has compiled an invaluable volume, packed with valuable information, based on decades of painstaking and exacting research in Shaker primary source manuscripts. The latest title in a long-running series of "Historical Dictionaries of Religions,

Philosophies, and Movements," edited by Jon Woronoff, this volume significantly expands upon, corrects, and updates an earlier contribution to the same series. A substantial introductory essay provides the most careful and balanced summary overview of Shaker history, expansion, organization, and practice to be found in a recent publication. Appendices include a range of information, from a historical chronology of the Gospel Ministry to a current Covenant, contemporary iteration of the longstanding Millennial Laws (reflecting modern deletions so as to allow the reader to better understand the historical progression of this vital document), and summary accounts of contemporary Shaker daily life and worship. Paterwic's Bibliography alone is worth the price of the book. Instead of a single listing, Paterwic creates helpful bibliographic categories and includes an essay that skillfully contextualizes the various subfields of Shaker literature, providing an excellent overview of both the rich diversity of Shaker studies and of the directions in which Shaker studies has yet to evolve fully. But the centerpiece of this book is the "Dictionary" itself. Paterwic has compiled over 250 pages of alphabetized entries, and these cover a truly impressive range of people, places, concepts, and events reflecting well over two centuries of the Shaker experience. The majority consists of compact yet substantial essays, and the thorough cross-referencing allows the reader to flow seamlessly through the volume, developing a more thorough understanding of virtually any aspect of Shakerism. Overall, no reader can possibly go wrong with this fine volume. The Shaker "buff" will be greatly enlightened and stimulated for even a higher appreciation of things Shaker. The serious Shaker scholar will find a ready reference aid for tracking down facts and concepts that would otherwise be obscured in the vast and widely dispersed primary sources. And all readers will be touched by Paterwic's tender introduction, in which he reminds readers of the continued relevance of the Shaker message and the capacity of any person to be touched spiritually by this remarkable American tradition.

Stephen J. Paterwic's long awaited and lucid, interesting, insightful, useful and at times arresting Historical Dictionary of the Shakers makes for a wonderful reading! I've spent quite a bit of time with it, and found it moving, illuminating, and thought-provoking. The organization of the volume is straight forward and effective. The Preface is not only to the point, but deeply moving, explaining the history of the author's involvement with the Shakers. Placing the Chronology of the Shakerism in the front and not at the end of the volume was an excellent decision. The selection of events, the dates of establishment and closings of the Shaker communities, the inclusion of Shaker publications, and the running tally of membership numbers as years were marching on, are very helpful in anchoring and grounding the Shaker story. The introductory part of the Introduction is both, powerful in its

economy and full of insights; the same is true of the History part. The explanation of the evolution of the organizational structure and names of the families was particularly helpful. The "Dictionary's" many biographies are interesting and crammed with information. Some are absolutely fascinating, like that of Daniel Offord, Richard McNemar, or Ernest Pick, for example! Most illuminating are the entries regarding the often confused notions about the Center Family, Center of Union, and Central Ministry, and/or those about the evolution of various other Families. No matter what subjects were tackled, be they relating to specific Shaker Families, or general concepts, like Christlife, or Jesus of Nazareth, Order, etc., the entries are compellingly "authoritative," so packed they are with important facts, deep knowledge, and insights. This is true of the equally interesting entries on various industries. The added informative Appendices are useful and interesting, further broadening the scope of this valuable volume. The Bibliography is truly most impressive, because of its unconventional organization, containing a special table of contents and an introduction, followed by a long and informative listing of pertinent contributions. In summary, I sincerely believe that this volume of substance, clarity, and authority will provide an important service to the reader, be s/he an uninitiated novice, a Shaker aficionado, a general historian, or a Shaker-specialized scholar, for at least a generation to come. Dr. Magda Gabor-Hotchkiss, editor of the 2nd and Annotated Edition of *The Shaker Image*, 1994

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