

# SHAKER MUSEUM | MOUNT LEBANON

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon to Open New Exhibition July 19

(July 8, 2015) The Shaker Museum|Mount Lebanon will open a new exhibition, *The Small World of Shaker: Miniature Furniture, Books & Dolls*, to the public on Sunday, July 19. The exhibition, which displays Shaker-made miniature objects alongside works by contemporary miniature artists inspired by the Shakers, will be on view in the Poultry House during the Museum's hours, 10AM-4PM every Friday-Monday through September 7.



*The Small World of Shaker* features miniature furniture, books, and dolls.

Fascination with miniaturizing familiar objects has always been part of being human. Dolls and furnished dollhouses, for example, were created as religious objects by the ancient Egyptians thousands of years before the present day. These objects only came to be thought of as in the domain of children's toys in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. In the case of books, miniaturizing appears to have been driven by more practical concerns – the convenience of portability and storage, and the scarcity and high cost of paper.

The Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon has assembled examples of dolls, dollhouse furnishings, and miniature books that have a relationship to the Shakers. In the crafting of all three types of materials, the Shakers actively participated through the making and selling of dolls, printing and reading miniature books, and helping to furnish a dollhouse for the Museum's educational use in the 1950s. In addition to Shaker works from the Museum's collection, several artists inspired by the Shakers are featured in the exhibit.

Of the Shaker items in the exhibition, the miniature book, *Dew Drops of Wisdom*, printed by Elder Henry Blinn, a member of the Canterbury, New Hampshire Shakers, may be the most remarkable – not for its size but rather that the Shakers printed such a seemingly frivolous item at all. The book, printed in 1852, is a collection of aphorisms for each day of the year.

The Shakers are known for their furniture, just not of the miniature variety. However, a number of miniature furniture makers have been inspired by the furniture the Shakers did make – accurately replicating it on a small scale. Historically, the best known of these artists is Gus Schwerdtfeger ( - 1981), a welder turned woodworker, who lived next door to the Shaker Society at Sabbathday Lake, Maine. His work is well represented in the exhibition. More recently, since 1979, James Hastrich of Kennebunk, Maine has been creating small-scale furniture. Although he makes all styles of painted furniture, the exhibition features exquisite examples of his Shaker pieces from the collection of Darlene Kohrman, a Shaker miniature furniture collector from Michigan. In addition to Kohrman's collection, the exhibition draws from the Museum's collection and the doll collection of Donna Mullet of Stephentown, New York.

"I have wanted to present this material for a number of years. It's one of the fun sides of the Shakers," said Jerry Grant, Director of Collections and Research. "It intersects with an audience – in the same way our current exhibition on Shakers and modernism does – that may not have had an interest in the Shakers."

The Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon, located in New Lebanon, Columbia County, New York, is dedicated to engaging and inspiring local, national, and global audiences by telling the story of the

American Shakers. The museum's collections span over 60,000 objects and it stewards the North Family historic site at Mount Lebanon, a National Historic Landmark. The museum is open seasonally at the site from June to October, and offers programs year-round. Please visit [www.shakermil.org](http://www.shakermil.org) for more information.