

Bicentennial Moment #3: The Groveland Shakers

A Society of Christian Believers, commonly known as Shakers, moved from Sodas Bay in Wayne County to the hamlet of Sonyea in Groveland, Livingston County in 1837. This was the last long-lived Shaker community and the only colony in western New York. The Shakers practiced celibacy, agrarian communal living, and self-sufficiency. The fertile flat lands and the Genesee Valley Canal greatly benefited the Shakers' cottage industries that included brooms, furniture, and garden seeds.

But by 1892, membership was greatly diminished and the last few women merged with the Shaker community in eastern New York at Watervliet. The land in Groveland was sold to the State of New York for the Craig Colony for Epileptics which opened in 1896. Craig closed in the 1980s and Groveland Correctional Facility, a New York State medium-security prison, took over the property and still occupies the former Shaker land to present day.

