

Samantha

Hello, my name is Samantha Bowie. It is the year 1849 and I am ten years old. My father and I came from New Jersey on October 30, 1842, to live with the Shakers at Wisdom's Valley near Albany when I was just three years old. We traveled by horse and wagon and it took many days. I remember being very nervous because I was unsure of what to expect. Also, I worried I would have a hard time fitting in and making friends. Would the Shaker people like me? I hoped so.

When I arrived, the Shaker Brothers and Sisters made me feel very welcome and all my worries faded away. I am bound to Sister Clarissa Vedder. She will be the one to take care of me in this big Shaker family. When I turn twenty-one, I can choose to stay or go to the world.

It is springtime and I start my day at 4:30 am. In wintertime we rise at 5:30 am. I share a room in the Dwelling House with three other girls. We have become good friends. The first thing I do every morning is pray. Next, I wash up, dress, and pull back the covers on my bed. Most mornings I wake up hungry, but before I can eat, I must tend to my morning chores. Sometimes I help cook, but most of the time I sweep. Sometimes the dust makes me sneeze!

The Dwelling House bell rings at 6:30 am, and it is finally time to eat. The other girls and Sisters enter the dining area on the left, while the boys and Brothers enter on the right. The Sisters and girls sit at separate tables from the Brothers and boys. During breakfast we are not allowed to speak to each other. Today we are having my favorite, oatmeal and strawberries.

Most mornings after breakfast I make my bed, except for Saturdays when the beds are changed. The top sheet is moved to the bottom and a new top sheet is put on. Everything is collected and taken to the Laundry/Wash House. Then I go to school, with other girls, where we learn cursive, math, and geography. We also read from the Bible. I am especially good at math. Each school day begins with a prayer or a song. I enjoy singing along with my classmates.

My day is only half over when school lets out. Some days I report to the Sister's Workshop to clean, while other days I help gather herbs and pick strawberries. Besides eating them, we often turn strawberries into jam! Sometimes I help make soap and candles or weave and knit. On Tuesdays, I help out in the Laundry by moving the hot irons from the stoves for use and returning the cold irons to be reheated.

By the time the Dwelling House bell rings for supper, I am exhausted from school and doing my chores. But, before we can eat, we pray silently. We eat in silence, too. After supper I knit and then read from the Bible before falling asleep. I dream about going on a picnic for one of our special outings this summer.