

KITTY HAAS SHAKER COLLECTION

In 1940, after fighting the Nazis in the courts, Kitty Haas left Vienna, Austria with her parents and came to the United States. She was 17. Her interest was art, she studied painting with Hans Hoffman and Hiram Gross in New York.

During the religious great awakening in the 1840's many communal societies were formed. Because of her interest in American history Kitty found the Shakers. The Shakers were led by an English woman influenced by the Quakers, later known as Mother Ann. She came to Colonial America with a small band of fellows. In the 1800's there were probably 4,000 Shakers scattered in 18 communities. Their straight (honest) dealing, ingenuity, and hard work made them prosper. The things they made for themselves and to sell to others had simplicity, utility, and beautiful elegance, still admired today. Their dwelling houses, furniture, iconic chairs, and other things, even their cooking, is still admired now. The Industrial Revolution with cheap machine work and their celibacy put an end to their prosperity, and one by one the communities closed. One of the last Shakers, Sister Francis Carr died in 2017 in Sabbathday Lake, Maine, where they're still trying to keep the Shaker community going. Most of the other communities have transferred into museums. Kitty opened boutiques in Greenwich Village, Newport, RI, Nantucket and Cambridge, MA. Kitty worked with the Sabbathday Shakers to replicate the old tins they used for herbs, and she got the very first order from Bloomingdale's in New York. Kitty gave the Sisters some of the velveteen scraps left from her dress design business which they made into beautiful pincushions. Kitty hopes the next generation of collectors will enjoy and cherish the Shaker things she collected over many years.