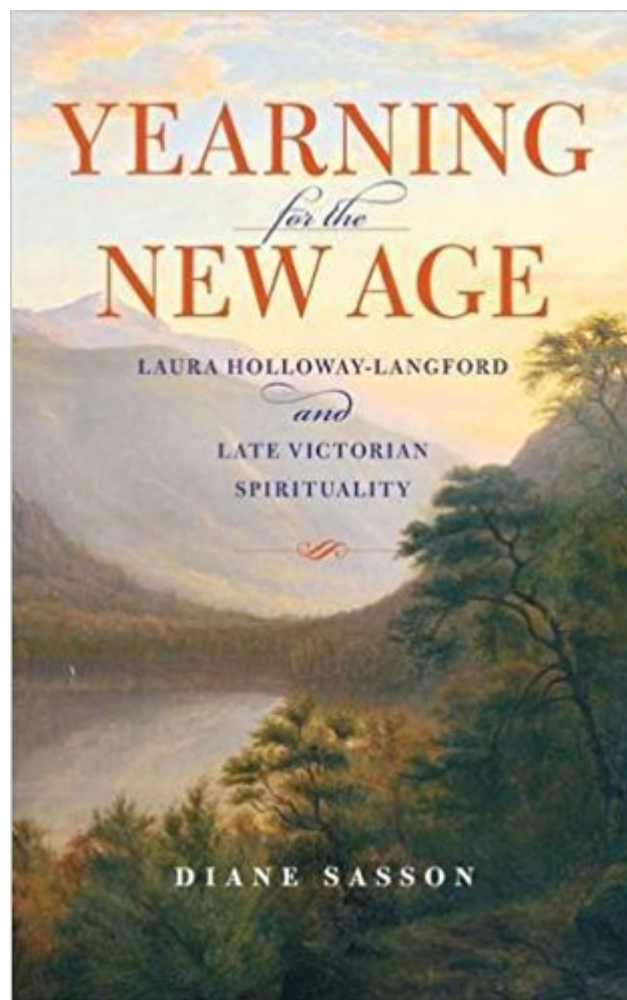




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Yearning For The New Age: Laura Holloway-Langford And Late Victorian Spirituality (Religion In North America)



Synopsis

This biography of an unconventional woman in late 19th-century America is a study of a search for individual autonomy and spiritual growth. Laura Holloway-Langford, a "rebel girl" from Tennessee, moved to New York City, where she supported her family as a journalist. She soon became famous as the author of *Ladies of the White House*, which secured her financial independence. Promoted to associate editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, she gave readings and lectures and became involved in progressive women's causes, the temperance movement, and theosophy. Even traveling to Europe to meet Madame Blavatsky, the movement's leader, and writing for the theosophist newspaper *The Word*. In the early 1870s, she began a correspondence with Eldress Anna White of the Mount Lebanon, New York, Shaker community, with whom she shared belief in pacifism, feminism, vegetarianism, and cremation. Attracted by the simplicity of Shaker life, she eventually bought a farm from the Canaan Shakers, where she lived and continued to write until her death in 1930. In tracing the life of this spiritual seeker, Diane Sasson underscores the significant role played by cultural mediators like Holloway-Langford in bringing new religious ideas to the American public and contributing to a growing interest in eastern religions and alternative approaches to health and spirituality that would alter the cultural landscape of the nation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Yearning for the New Age will be particularly insightful to those who study the development of

alternative religions—including Spiritualism, Shakerism, and Theosophy—in the United States and the roles of women within such traditions.... Along its richly detailed biography, readers of *Yearning for the New Age* will encounter important additions and new materials that will deepen historical understandings of New Age movements in America." *American Studies*"As Sasson's title suggests, there is an inherent ambiguity in the life of [Laura Holloway-Langford]. On the one hand, there is the spiritual quest from liberal Protestantism to spiritualism to theosophy to Buddhism; on the other, there is her pragmatically progressive critique of sexual norms and her championing of women's rights (though she was ambivalent about suffrage), women's labor, and the agenda of the New Woman." *Journal of American History*"Diane Sasson's excellent biography of Laura Holloway-Langford (1843–1930) uses evidence from letter collections, 29 books, and more than 80 articles that Holloway-Langford published from 1868 to 1917, show how Holloway-Langford challenged traditional values that circumscribed women's lives." *Nova Religio*

Diane Sasson received her doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is the author of *The Shaker Spiritual Narrative* (1983) and articles on American folklore and communal societies. She was Director of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program at Duke University, and served as President of the National Association of Graduate Liberal Studies. For the last decade, she has been on the faculty at Vanderbilt University.

As a biography of a long-forgotten but prolific author, *Yearning for the New Age* succeeds at several levels. Scholars will find here the best informed, most nuanced discussion to date of the Mahatma letters of the early Theosophical Society, explaining how they embroiled their recipients in controversy and intrigue. Readers interested in Shaker history will find the later portion of the biography engaging in its sympathetic portrayal of the state of Shakerism in the early 20th century. Admirers of scholarly quest narratives will enjoy Sasson's final chapter explaining the odd coincidences and discoveries that propelled her research from Nashville to New York and beyond. All readers will find the entire context of late Victorian spirituality illuminated through Sasson's portrayal of Holloway-Langford's many enthusiasms and reversals of fortune.

Diane is a solid researcher and writer. She made the people and the event come alive. Not unlike her teaching!

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