

Samuel Stoltzfus' Divining Plate

by Joe Lyons

It's true that there are many accounts of fascinating Amish dinnerware, but none is more interesting than Samuel Stoltzfus' Divining Plate, forged in 1881. "Limpy Samuel," his nickname after a disagreement he had with a mule, originally created the plate as a gift for his son, Moses. Samuel meticulously etched the alphabet and numbers around the edge of the plate, which was forged from scraps of metal and discarded Civil War muskets that could still be found in the fields. The hope was that his son, who had difficulty with his lessons, could learn while he was eating. But the plate would prove to be far more useful than an educational tool for Moses, who was a lost cause anyway.

For you see, one of the muskets that Samuel melted down for the plate was responsible for the bludgeoning death of Thomas Becker, a Union soldier and the fourth son of Martin Becker (who was also a fourth son). This, combined with the fact that 1881 was an astrologically perfect year for inter-dimensional rifts, made the plate particularly susceptible to otherworldly influence... which is exactly what occurred when Samuel etched the letters and numbers on it. Doing so invoked the essence of one of the Good-But-Not-Great Old Ones, an otherworldly deity as old as time, whose name contains all of the letters of the alphabet and the numbers zero through nine. The only way to come close to pronouncing its name is to say "Abercrombie Snooze Mine" slowly, while slapping oneself in the throat.

One day Samuel was using the plate to cool down nails he was making in his shop. He looked down at the metal shavings floating in the water he had in the plate and said aloud, "Will these nails hold true?" Suddenly, the shavings joined together and floated to the edges of the plate until it spelled out "Yes." Intrigued, Samuel

continued: "How many will I need for Jonathan's barn?" The shavings pointed to two, then five, then zero. Convinced his eyes were deceiving him, he asked, "What happened to my best hammer last spring?" After about fifteen minutes, the shavings eventually spelled out "Hezekiah pilfered it."

From then on, after the vicious shunning of Hezekiah, Wise Limpy Samuel (his new nickname) used the plate and its gift to become the most respected elder in his community. Samuel always seemed to know how the weather would affect the crops and whose thoughts were the most sinful. The plate was always Samuel and Jesus' secret, since he assumed it was Jesus in the plate and not an inter-dimensional being, and he only used it to help his people.

After Samuel passed, Moses sold the plate in Harrisburg for two dollars, which he then spent on rock candy. Today, it sits on the back shelf of an antique store near Philadelphia, where it continues to answer questions, but its revelations, which have included World War II, Disco, and the fact that six year old Stephanie Lewis of Baltimore would one day marry Michael Huther even though she thinks he's "gross," go unnoticed.

