

Fall 2009

South Union Messenger (Fall 2009)

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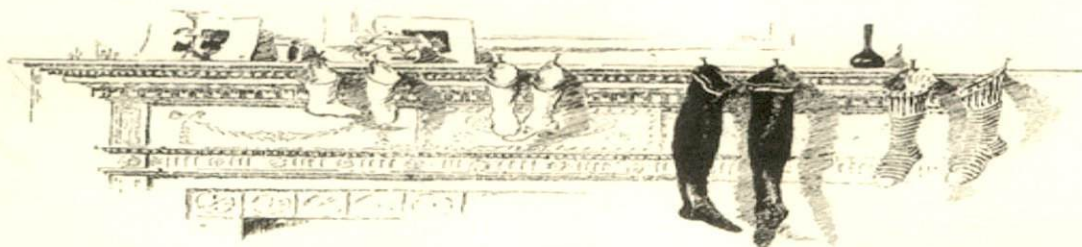
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SOUTH UNION MESSENGER

Fall 2009 Edition

Newsletter of the Shaker Museum at South Union, Kentucky



Christmas at Shakertown

HOLIDAY MARKET

... featuring the region's finest in antiques and crafts

Saturday, December 5

9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Admission is a canned food item or a monetary donation to help those in our community.

Preview Party on Friday, December 4, from 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.

Shop early and enjoy coffee and dessert for an admission price of \$10 per person

For reservations call 1-800-811-8379 or 542-4167

Underwritten by Logan Telephone Cooperative

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR by Tommy Hines

South Union is always beautiful in the fall, but this year's record rainfall has made it all the more spectacular. Our visitor numbers are up from last year, as are our gift shop sales. The poor economy is still having its impact on us, but it is encouraging to see even the slightest progress. As you will read in other articles within this newsletter, there are still many restoration and developmental projects going on and there will definitely be new things to see at South Union in 2010.

2010 marks the 50th anniversary of the Shaker Museum. It all began in an old church building in Auburn, Kentucky, through the diligent efforts of Deedy Hall and others in 1960. The collection moved to the actual site of the South Union Shaker Village in 1972 when restoration began on the 1824 Centre House. Since that time the site has grown from fifteen to five hundred acres, from two original restored Shaker buildings to seven. And that's just the beginning of the story and you will hear much more about it next year.

That progress would not have been possible without our Friends. We thank you for your support of South Union and encourage you to continue to help us preserve Kentucky's Shaker history. There is much to be done and we hope you will want to be a part of it!

SOUTH UNION'S SMALLEST RESTORATION

In 1987, Kit and Bob Cress donated to the Shaker Museum a scale model miniature house patterned after Pleasant Hill's Centre Family Dwelling. The house was filled with furniture pieces, each patterned after full-scale known examples of Shaker furniture. Also included were miniature glassware, pottery, iron ware and wooden ware, as well as hand-made reproduction textiles and tiny wax candles. After 20 years at South Union, the house was in need of a major restoration. WKU instructor Sheila Flener volunteered to



“restore” the miniature house this summer, spending several weeks cleaning, repairing and painting the exterior of the building. The house and all its contents are now being exhibited on the ground floor of the 1824 Centre House to excellent reviews. The Shaker Museum wishes to thank Sheila for her long hours of work and for the fresh new look she has given to one of our most popular artifacts.

We also wish to thank Kit and Bob Cress of Mansfield, Ohio, for their donation, 22 years ago.

MUSEUM HIRES NEW OPERATIONS MANAGER

The Shaker Museum is happy to welcome Kaelin Vernon as its new Operations Manager. Kaelin began working at South Union in 2008 as an interpreter who not only exhibited a knowledge and passion for history, but a keen interest in the Shakers. Kaelin comes to the museum with a background in education, which will be the emphasis of his duties in this new role. He will work closely with Executive Director, Tommy Hines, to develop programs for school children, manage the museum staff, plan and implement special events, and manage daily operations. We wish to welcome Kaelin to South Union!

Coming in December ...

'Christmas Dinner in 1909'

An Interactive Children's Tour for
School Groups, Grades K through 6,
in the Centre House Kitchen

December 7th through 18th

Call for Reservations: 1-800-811-8379



Kaelin Vernon and his wife Heather at a living history event in Franklin, Tennessee.

'TINSELTOWN AT SHAKERTOWN' A SUCCESS

What was planned as a musical evening under the stars, ended up being our first event in the 1875 Grain Barn. Because of the threat of rain, the event was moved from the stage on the Meeting House foundation to the barn, even though the restoration was not quite complete. The 250 + member audience didn't seem to mind, even though they were in much closer quarters than originally planned. Beautiful music, this year with a Hollywood theme, resounded throughout the three-story structure, thanks to Orchestra Kentucky. Much appreciation goes to our Board of Directors, to Orchestra Kentucky, and to the other volunteers who helped create a magical environment in a short amount of time. We would also like to thank our underwriters: BB&T, Col. and Mrs. Robert E. Spiller, Logan Aluminum, and Earnhart & Friends, and an anonymous donor.

VISITORS CENTER UPDATE

Thanks to a Federal TEA-21 funding, the Shaker Museum's new Visitor Center will soon be a reality. Not only will this rehabilitated, accessible structure be the new point of entry for all visitors, but it will also house administrative offices, restrooms, meeting space, a media room, kitchen and the Julia Neal Research Library. The building was constructed in the 1930s by Oscar Bond, a dozen or so years after he had purchased the village from the Shakers. Since it was purchased by the Shaker Museum in 1996, the building has been used as rental property. When the project is complete it will serve as a educational resource for South Union Shaker history.



A new parking lot will also be constructed, just to the east of the Visitor Center, access from which will be concrete walks and wooden ramps. The old parking lot near the Centre House will be removed, isolating the historic area of the village from the visitor services area.

The Visitor Center should be open by Spring 2010!

SHAKER GRAIN BARN NEARING COMPLETION

After more than five years and over \$400,000.00, 1875 Grain Barn is almost ready to open to the public. The restoration has involved removing 1930s additions on all four sides, and the replacement of bracing and supports that had long ago failed. Poplar siding, made to match the original, was milled and nailed, to the original stud wall, a new roof was installed, and reproduction shutters were created to match the one existing original.

There are only a few projects remaining and they include two more coats of exterior paint, the replication of two door on the east end, and laying the tongue and groove poplar flooring. Many thanks to restoration carpenter Eugene Hall and his crew, and to TEA-21, the Helm Foundation, the James Graham Brown Foundation, and other donors for making it possible!



REMEMBERING WHAT WAS HERE BEFORE by Tommy Hines

As work on the Shaker Museum's new visitor center progresses, there is an emphasis on such things as up-to-date restrooms, new media equipment, paint color selection, and a revised interpretative plan. With all the talk about the 'new,' we sometimes forget to remember the old. One of South Union's first and most important buildings was originally on this site.

When the Shakers sold the village in 1922, the 1815 Brick Dwelling was still standing. Constructed between 1812 and 1815, just five years after the founding of the community, the building was originally used as a residence for the Centre Family, with a meeting room on the second level. Three doors on the façade accessed the structure, the middle door leading to the meeting room on the second floor and flanking doors to the brothers' and sisters' separate retiring rooms. The building was 50 feet wide by 30 feet deep and was occupied for the first time in June, 1816, by 19 men and 26 women.



The Shakers, anxious to use their new space for worship, actually held the first meeting in the Brick Dwelling in March of 1814. This was before plastering had begun and before the large wooden partition doors designed to divide the meeting room were finished. A visitor in 1817 attended a worship service in the room, noting, "On the Sabbath day they have a general meeting in a large and elegant house for public worship . . . Two rooms communicate with each other by sliding the partition. . . There might be about 100 present at this meeting, and their exercises lasted I suppose, something more than half an hour." ¹

When the new Centre House was completed in 1833, the earlier dwelling became a shop for the brethren and remained so until the community disbanded. Initially the leadership in the village assigned the first level for carpenters; the second story was occupied by shoemakers and painters. After the village became the property of Oscar Bond of Louisville, Kentucky, in 1922, he decided the building was fit for use as rental property. A visitor to the old brick building in 1931 wrote that the structure had been "where machinery was kept, for the Shakers did their own manufacturing. The farm family living there offered a friendly invitation for me to come inside. Around the walls were two rows of wooden . . . the farmer's wife explained the peculiar wood block that she was using as a door prop had been used by the Shakers to press their hats on. The eldest daughter proudly displayed a brick on which was the date 1812. The brick had been rescued from a destroyed building."²

In the mid-1940s, Bond finally destroyed the 1813 Brick Dwelling and constructed a modern residence for one of his employees on the site. That structure is today being transformed into the Shaker Museum's Visitor Center. There are no visual reminders of what was here before, but site represents the excitement and optimism of the early days at South Union, the seat of community worship and home to the Centre Family for nearly 20 years.

¹ "A Baptist Minister Visits Kentucky: The Journal of Andrew Broaddus," 1817, *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, October 1973

² "Shakertown at One Time a Big Village," *News-Democrat*, Russellville, Kentucky, February 19, 1931

Photo courtesy of The Filson Club, Louisville, Kentucky, the Max Charlton Collection

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Chairs (2), South Union, maple with ash stretchers, traces of original orange paint, ca. 1840
... purchased with acquisition endowment funds

Book, "Testimonies Concerning the Character of Mother Ann Lee," 1827, documented South Union history as it is inscribed "A Present from Elder Benjamin to John Meigs, October 15, 1832"
... purchased with acquisition endowment funds

Book, "A Holy, Sacred, & Divine Roll and Book from the Lord of Heaven," 1843, documented South Union history as it is inscribed "H.L. Eades Book, So. Union, Ky 1843"
... purchased with acquisition endowment funds

Manuscript, "The Holy Laws of Zion, Given in May 1840," copied by Elder Harvey Eades at South Union
... purchased with acquisition endowment funds

Manuscripts, Receipts (2), one on South Union letterhead and another on half sheet for goods purchased from the Shakers, signed by South Union Trustee Urban Johns, by purchaser Amanda McCutchen, Auburn, Kentucky, March 3, 1874
... donated by Bill and Fletch Coke

Document Box, South Union, poplar, original blue paint exterior, natural interior, purchased at 1922 South Union auction by Hall family in Auburn, Kentucky
... purchased with acquisition endowment funds

Photographs and Negatives, four views of South Union's Centre Family, ca. 1925, 5 x 7 format
... purchased with acquisition endowment funds



One of the four images recently acquired by the museum, this photograph includes (left to right) the 1846 Ministry Shop, the Meeting House Privy, Unidentified Shed, 1818 Meeting House, and 1841 Trustee's Office. The photo was taken after the Shakers left in 1922 and before the Meeting House was torn down in 1926.

IS THIS HEAVEN? By Kaelin Vernon

As I sit here in my office, knowing that it was created by honest hands and pure hearts, I can't help but feel what others have felt when they enter into this wonderful village. The village at South Union has stopped folks in their tracks for 202 years.

I have spent many hours digging through Eldress Nancy Moore's journal and I constantly find where soldiers and officers of both sides compliment how this place must be like Heaven! To this day, I meet people on a regular basis who hear the name "South Union" and they drift off to a peaceful place in their minds. We have folks who have been members here for over 35 years, who can't get enough of South Union, and every time they come they find something new. It is such a joy and pleasure to work in a place that creates such peace for people all over the world. In a world where we often are too busy, doing to much we need a place like South Union!

I am reminded of what Benson J. Lossing wrote when he visited one of the Shaker villages in 1857, noting "the very dust in the road was pure." I know we all picture what Mr. Lossing was experiencing that day. We see beautifully constructed buildings, we see men and women working along side of one another, we see neatly kept rows in fields of green and gold. What a glorious sight.

We understand that these buildings, the fields, the furniture, are an outside reflection of the inside of such beautiful and pure people, the Shaker's. What we are inside will show in our outward efforts. That is why it is important for all of us to preserve this beauty, to keep the idea and the images of the Shakers alive. To see families and children experience what we all feel when we enter the village of South Union . . . pure joy.



The "Great Road" lined with sugar maples trees donated by Mrs. W. L. Lyons Brown in 2007.

COMING IN 2010

SOUTH UNION SEMINAR – Friday, April 23 and Saturday, April 24

Our annual gathering of participants interested in knowing more about Shaker history. This year's theme focuses on the past 50 years of the Shaker Museum at South Union. The event will begin Friday evening with dinner at the Shaker Tavern and will resume Saturday at the Centre House for a day filled with presentations and special tours. Reservations required: \$75 museum members, \$85 non-members

... and other events celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Shaker Museum at South Union



Interpreter Susie Wyatt talks with children about what it was like to learn in the Shaker school at South Union,

THANK YOU ... SPONSORS OF '09 EVENTS

Kentucky Humanities Council for
SOUTH UNION SEMINAR

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CHRISTMAS AT SHAKERTOWN
HOLIDAY MARKET

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SHAKER
MUSEUM
AT SOUTH UNION

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