

Winter 2012

South Union Messenger (Winter 2012)

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SOUTH UNION MESSENGER

Vol. XLI, No.1, 2012

South Union Shaker Village, Kentucky

The South Union Shaker Village presents the 25th annual

SOUTH UNION SEMINAR

"Historic Preservation in the Shaker World: Its Challenges, Successes and its Future"

Friday, April 20, and Saturday, April 21

Make your reservations to attend the South Union Shaker Village's 25th annual South Union Seminar, "Historic Preservation in the Shaker World: Its Challenges, Successes and its Future." The two-day event will focus on historic preservation projects that stretch from the Shakers' earliest settlements all the way to outposts in the Shaker west. The weekend will include the official opening of South Union's new Visitor Center, the unveiling of the recently restored Centre House Infirmary, hearty southern meals served by the Shaker Tavern, and insightful presentations by Sharon Koomler, Jerry Grant, Martha Boice and Dale Covington. In addition to other recent Shaker research and restoration discussions, our speakers will concentrate on the drive to restore and interpret the Shaker village at Mt. Lebanon, NY, and the failed efforts to save Bethany Hall at the site of Union Village, Ohio.

*The South Union Seminar is underwritten by
Hilliard Lyons and Michael and Shannon Vitale*

Register to attend today using the enclosed form
or by calling 1-800-811-8379 or 1-270-542-4167.

THANK YOU CARPENTER FOUNDATION

Over the past two years the South Union Shaker Village has been quietly restoring portions of several of its historic structures through a variety of projects funded by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation. Beginning in February of 2010, the \$50,000.00 grant was used to complete the 1875 Grain Barn restoration and it funded half of the \$30,000.00 restoration of the 1818 Meeting House foundation. Both projects clearly changed the face of our historic site, offering new insights into both the agricultural and spiritual aspects of the community's history.

The Carpenter Foundation grant also helped us rid the village of two non-Shaker structures that had long become unsightly anachronisms. The white frame house behind the 1917 Shaker Store, built of reclaimed materials from Shaker buildings being torn down in the 1920s, was demolished last year, as was a 1936 structure near the 1846 Ministry Shop. The village is more historically accurate because of the destruction of these buildings.



South Union Shaker Village restoration supervisor James Grinter works to remove failed restoration windows from the 1970s and to replace them with newly constructed replicas of the originals, thanks to funding from the Carpenter Foundation.

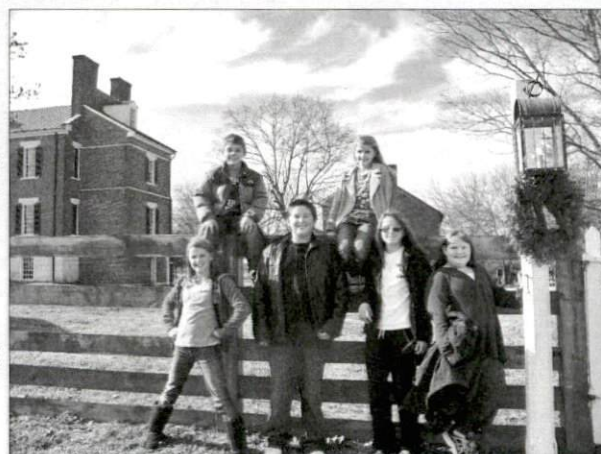
Other important developments funded by the Carpenter Foundation included the installation of new window sashes in the dormers of the Centre House (replacing 1970s restoration windows), the installation of period-correct dry-laid brick floors in two rooms of the 1835 Smoke and Milk House, the placement of additional copper lantern lighting, and the laying of limestone walks in documented locations.

Thank you, Carpenter Foundation for your support of South Union's preservation efforts since 1992.

Your generosity is making a lasting impact on our historic site.

OUR CHRISTMAS TOURS

Our children's tours in December focused on holiday traditions common in 1911. Many of the Christmas customs with which we are familiar today were well-established by that time. Most of the methods for carrying out those customs, however, have changed. Students learned about late Victorian Christmas tree decorations and gift-giving practices, and participated in the preparation of a meal, using early 20th century kitchen gadgets. One of our home school groups is pictured at right.



RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Bed, ca. 1850, cherry, bold vernacular Empire characteristics, with strong Pleasant Hill Shaker provenance (South Union beds are one of the most difficult pieces of furniture to find so our Collections Policy allows us to acquire outside our usual restriction of South Union furniture as priority)

.....Purchased with Acquisition Endowment Funds
and a private contribution from Wayne and Nancy Dinsmore

School Desk, ca. 1830, walnut and poplar, tapered legs with four slant-top "stations" for young students, attributed to Kentucky Shakers

.....Donated by Clark and Peggy Carthrae

Rocker, ca. 1860, maple and ash, refinished and replaced seat, attributed to South Union with typical finial turning and shaped back slats

.....Purchased with Acquisition Endowment Funds

Shaker Museum "Back Scratcher," ca. 1970, cherry and maple, stamped "Shaker Museum, Auburn, Kentucky," an early gift shop item from when the museum was located in the old church building in Auburn

..... Donated by Susan Jackson Keig

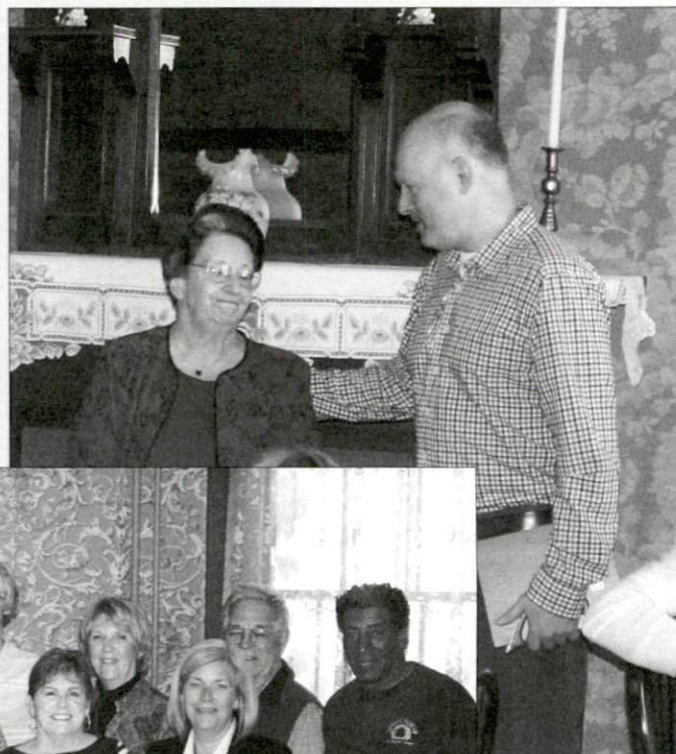
The desk at right, recently donated by Clark and Peggy Carthrae, is typical of what the Kentucky Shakers would have used in their schools prior to the Civil War. In the late 19th century the Shakers at South Union probably abandoned this type of desk and began to use individual, factory-made iron and wooden school desks common to the period. In two separate images made at South Union in June of 1922, these late school desks can be seen in the Centre House yard.



The photograph at left is a detail of a larger image that includes one of the late 19th century, factory-made desks, near the kitchen entrance, east side of the Centre House. It is obvious that in the 20th century these desks were finding new uses after there was no longer a need for schools in the village.

THANK YOU, SUE

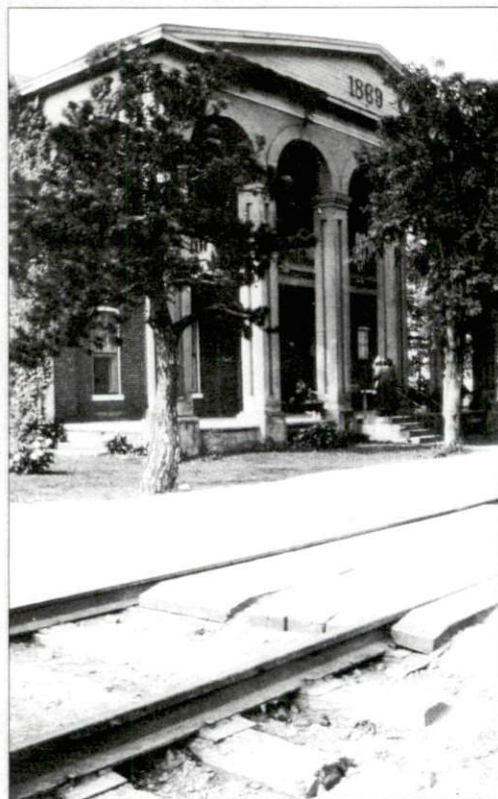
Sue Brooks recently retired from her position of gift shop manager after 21 years of service to South Union. On Monday, November 7, the South Union Shaker Village hosted a luncheon to thank Sue for her dedication and hard work. Friends, family and staff members, both past and present, enjoyed lunch prepared by Shaker Tavern inn-keeper, JoAnn Moody, and the opportunity to honor Sue.



COMING SOON . . . A NEW “BREAKFAST” EVENT!

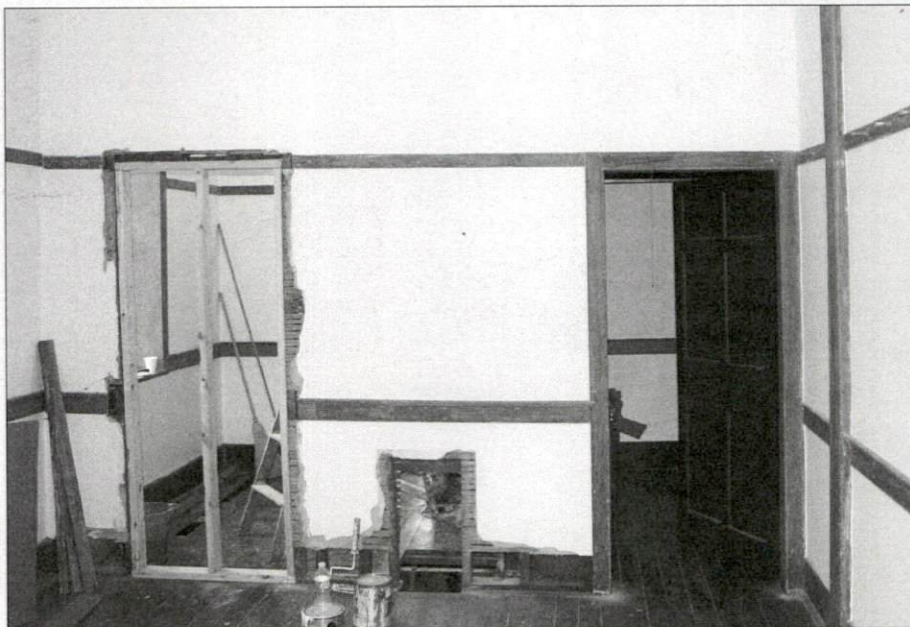
Over the years the South Union Shaker Village has had great success with events built around good southern food. The tradition began with the Shakers themselves, back in the 19th century, when the “world’s people” were welcomed to dine at the village Trustees Office. Beginning in the 1820s and continuing for a hundred years, people stopped for meals and overnight accommodations with the Shakers. Even notables like Henry Clay, James Monroe and Andrew Jackson visited South Union and ate with the Shakers while there.

The Shaker Tavern’s construction in 1869 helped alleviate the burden on the Trustee’s Office and attracted a new audience as well . . . the railroad traveler. Unique in Shaker villages, the Tavern is the only railroad hotel built by the Shakers, and probably the only railroad hotel still standing in Kentucky. The tradition of good food at South Union is continued with a new event, our “First Class Passenger” Breakfast. Scheduled for Saturday, July 21, at 10:00 am, the breakfast features a menu taken from a ca. 1912 southern railroad document, and includes pork tenderloin, scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, baked apples with sausage, yeast rolls, French toast, orange juice and plenty of hot coffee. Reservations can be made by calling 1-800-811-8379. Cost is \$15 for members and \$17 for non-members.



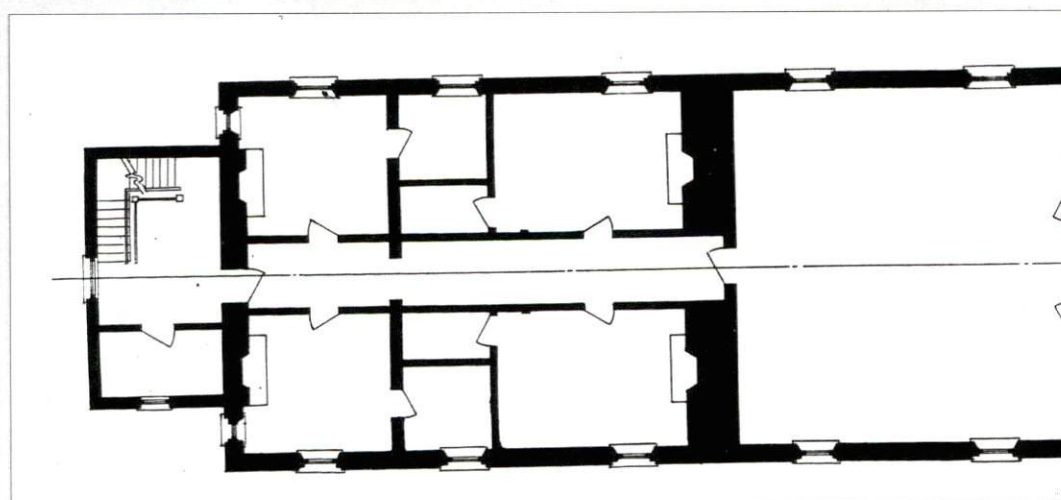
CENTRE HOUSE INFIRMARY TO OPEN SOON

Since 1994, grants from the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels have funded a variety of small but significant restoration projects at South Union. The organization has paid to have a window restored in the 1835 Smoke and Milk House, shutters reproduced for the façade of the 1846 Ministry Shop, and the bake room in the 1824 Centre House restored and opened to the public. This most recent \$3690 grant pays for the materials necessary to restore two rooms, two closets and a hallway that were once part of the Centre House infirmary. The area, used primarily for offices since the museum opened in 1972, has never been open to the public. Labor for the project is being supplied by maintenance and restoration staff and by non-staff electricians and carpenters.



The infirmary was located on the second floor of the Centre House, just behind the meeting room. It includes two rooms and two closets on the brethren's side of the hall, and the same on the sisters' side. In the 1920s, after the Shakers sold the village, the new owner had plans to convert the Centre House into a hotel. He cut a door to make a "suite" of three rooms on each side of the hallway, turning the large, well-lit storage closet into a bathroom. Part of the current restoration includes closing that 1920s passage (as seen above on left).

By the late 19th century when the Shakers no longer depended upon village nurses but a doctor from outside the community, the infirmary became unnecessary. Some of the rooms were used as sleeping space for members and other rooms were used for storage. The restoration, when completed, will feature the infirmary period rooms only on the left side of the hall, while the right side will be used for artifact storage. Furniture and related objects from the South Union collection have been chosen for the new exhibit, which is scheduled to open during the South Union Seminar, April 20-21.



A section of the Centre Family floor plan, drawn by Ray Pearson in the 1970s, is pictured at left. The large space is the meeting room, and the rooms and hallway to its left made up the original infirmary—rooms for the nurses, rooms for the sick and two closets. The stair hall, far left, was added by the Shakers in 1833.

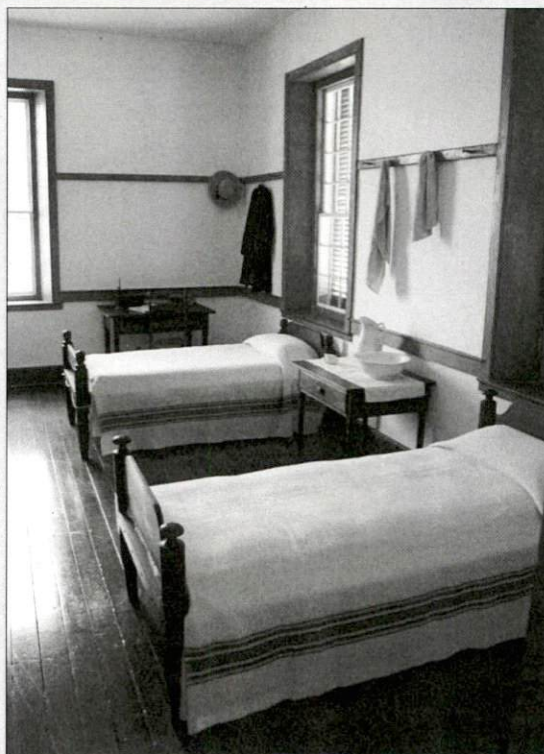
A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tommy Hines

2011 proved to be a challenging year. Even though our visitor numbers were some of the lowest on record, we hosted several successful events, maintained our contribution levels, and actually increased our membership numbers, thanks to you! Because of your generosity and a general "tightening of the belt," the South Union Shaker Village ended the year in the black!

We wish to thank out-going Board president Thomas Moody for his nearly four years of service. Tom has not only led the Board with great care but has volunteered many hours to assist the staff with events and other projects. We welcome our new president, Skip Cleavinger, and look forward to working under his direction. Skip is ESL and Title III Coordinator for Warren County Schools, as well as being an accomplished musician.

Sometimes, the smallest details can make the biggest impression. Last year we decided to remove iron radiators from two of our period rooms in the Centre House. The hot water system was installed by the Shakers in 1921, just six months before the village closed, making the radiators inaccurate for most of the Shakers' occupation of the building. The antebellum settings are more period correct without the presence of the radiators, as seen in the photograph above. Visitors are still confused to find 1820s mantles, 1833 iron stoves, and 1916 coal grates still intact in some rooms . . . but those important pieces of the Shakers' timeline are there to stay. By the way, the radiators that were removed were re-installed in rooms that are not used for period exhibits . . . for warmth! We still use the Shaker boiler to heat the Centre House. Come see us at South Union, winter or summer!



WELCOME BONNIE EILERS

The South Union Shaker Village would like to welcome Bonnie Eilers as its new Gift Shop Manager. Bonnie has worked along side Sue Brooks in the shop for a year and was the natural choice to fill the role of manager when Sue retired. A native of Logan County, Bonnie comes to us with retail experience and a love for history. She also enjoys quilting, reading and making things with her hands.

Bonnie became interested in South Union several years ago when she and her husband, and three daughters, moved into one of the houses that Oscar Bond had built while he owned the Shaker farm. With an intriguing view of the historic South Union buildings from her home Bonnie began to visit the Village. When a docent position became available last year, she interviewed for the job and was hired.

When asked what she likes best about the South Union Shaker Village, Bonnie quickly responds, "I love everything about it!"

SOUTH UNION PROFILE: JAMES RICHARDSON

James Richardson spent most of his life as a Shaker at South Union, but was allowed the privilege and responsibility of travel more than most any member in the community's history. Richardson also had the good fortune of late 19th century technological progress at his disposal, enabling him to take advantage of the railroad system for his business trips. He most assuredly marveled at the advances made in travel during his lifetime, witnessing the construction of the railroad through South Union in 1860 and experiencing its benefits for the rest of his life.

James Richardson, age 7, arrived at South Union in November of 1845, accompanied by his 5-year-old brother, Thomas, and the boys' guardian, John L. Gooch. The journal notes only that the James and Thomas were from Vicksburg, Mississippi. James grew up in the Centre Family at South Union and was allowed to make his first trip outside the village in 1863, accompanying Solomon Rankin to Pleasant Hill to "visit the believers there" and to bring back two Durham bulls.

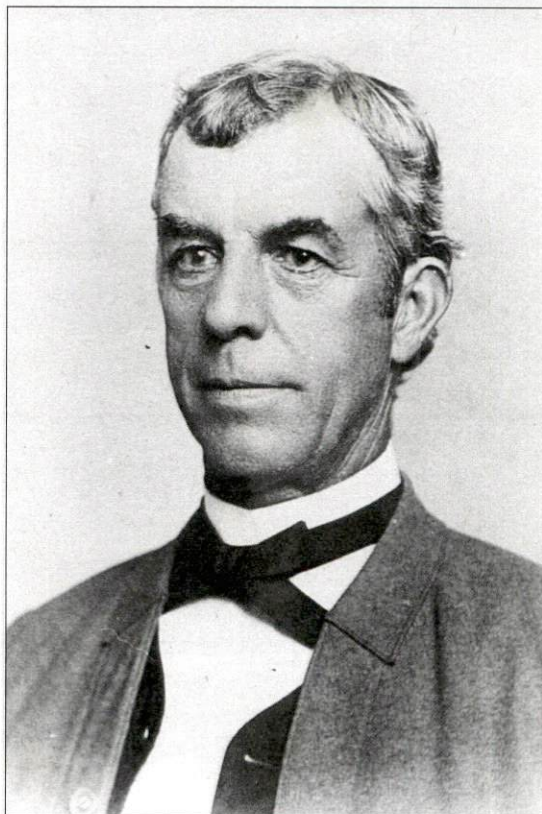
Another important journey is noted on January 30, 1865 when Richardson and Rankin started southwest on a seed selling trip. Journal keeper Harvey Eads noted, "This trip is extra hazardous—having to pass through a guerilla country—I do not look for them to return with their horses as one looks well and is about sure to be taken, if the guerillas come across them. We hope they return with their lives." The pair returned 13 days later with \$390.00 in revenue. Eads wrote that Richardson and Rankin "were not molested by guerillas." (Record C)

In February of 1865 Richard began to take care of the boys at the Centre Family, a role he would continue for most of this life. He still found time to go on selling trips, traveling for the first time by rail in 1867 and making the journey alone. Trips by wagon would continue sporadically for the remainder of the decade, but by the 1870s most selling journeys were by rail.

James Richardson eventually became an Elder in the West Family (1873), East Family (1874), Centre Family (1879), and North Family (1889). All the while, he continued to care for and teach a group of boys, and ventured frequently beyond South Union to sell seeds and cattle. By the 1890s Richardson could travel to Memphis and back in two days and could go to Louisville and return home in the same day.

Little is known about James' younger brother Thomas. In 1849 he left South Union at age 9, accompanied by Michael Robinson, a recent convert and "turn off from Union Village." He obviously returned as he listed among the boys in the 1854 Centre Family census. Journal C records another departure in 1860, and then a final departure from the village in 1863.

James Richardson died at South Union on February 23, 1900, and was buried in the South Union cemetery. Interestingly, Richardson made two trips to visit his mother in New Orleans, once in 1868 and again in 1891. The journal writer includes no explanation of Richardson's family situation or how and why he and his brother came to live at South Union. Regardless, James Richardson was a faithful brother who was trusted with much.



Elder James Richardson poses for a studio photographer, ca. 1898

SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE

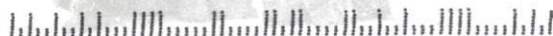
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UPCOMING EVENTS

L&N RAILROAD LUNCHEON

Saturday, March 3

Enjoy a hearty late 19th century menu typical of what would have been served at South Union's famous railroad hotel, the Shaker Tavern.

Reservations required: \$22 members, \$25 non-members

Time: 12:00 noon

SOUTH UNION SEMINAR

Friday, April 20 and Saturday, April 21

"Historic Preservation in the Shaker World: Its Challenges, Successes, and its Future" explores the field of historic preservation in relationship to America's Shaker villages. 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: \$80 members, \$90 non-members

Time: Friday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm and Saturday 8:00 am - 3:00 pm.

SPRING ANTIQUE & GARDEN MARKET

Saturday, April 28

Make a day of it at South Union Shaker Village Antique and Garden Market. Shop booths of antiques, plants and flowers and garden art in and around the 1875 Grain Barn and enjoy informative presentations held throughout the day. Lunch will be served on site. Sponsored by Logan Telephone Cooperative & Auburn Banking Company.

Admission: \$5 per person

Time: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm.

For information or reservations for events call:

1-800-811-8379 or 270-542-4167

Or visit:

shakermuseum.com

The South Union Shaker Village is located 10 miles west of Bowling Green or 3 miles east of Auburn, just off US 68-80, in historic Logan County