

Spring 2012

## South Union Messenger (Spring 2012)

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### Recommended Citation

Kentucky Library Research Collections, "South Union Messenger (Spring 2012)" (2012). *South Union Messenger*. Paper 69.  
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# SOUTH UNION MESSENGER

Vol. XLI, No.2, 2012

South Union Shaker Village, Kentucky

## "SHAKERTOWN REVISITED" CAST REUNION SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 15!

Fifty years ago this summer, citizens of Auburn, Franklin, and Russellville, along with students from WKU, were preparing for the first performance of "Shakertown Revisited." The script had been written by Russell Miller, faculty member in Western's drama department, using both manuscript records and published material on the Shakers. The music, original Shaker melodies and turn of the century standards, was arranged by Ruth Morriss, faculty member in Western's music department, who also directed the Civic Choral Club in the production. Miller directed the dramatic portions of the production. The original script called for nearly 40 speaking parts and the "pageant" involved over 100 cast members. Scores of other volunteers made costumes, assembled sets, and created publicity for the event.

The first performances were held July 20, 21 and 22 in the Auburn High School gym. A Shaker Festival, held in conjunction with the pageant, included an antique show, an art show, crafts, concessions by the South Union Homemakers, tours of the historic buildings at South Union, and tours of the newly opened Shaker Museum in Auburn. Initial response was overwhelming.

After ten years in the Auburn High School gym the pageant moved to a large tent in the back yard of the Centre House in the summer of 1972. The museum collection had also moved from Auburn to the newly purchased Centre House that year. Instead of running for three days, the pageant and festival were presented over a ten day period, then eventually over three weekends. In 1987 a pavilion was constructed as a permanent home for the production. Unfortunately, due to rising costs and fewer volunteers, the summer tradition of "Shakertown Revisited" ended in 1990.



On Saturday, September 15, the SUSV will host a reunion of former cast members and fans to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the pageant. A box lunch will be served at noon, after which will be an opportunity to reminisce and to tour the historic buildings. From 2:00 until 5:00 pm that afternoon, the Village's annual **Music in the Barn** will take place. For reservations for the **Pageant Cast Reunion**, please call: 270-542-4167 or email [shakmus@logantele.com](mailto:shakmus@logantele.com). Cost for both events, which includes box lunch, is \$20.



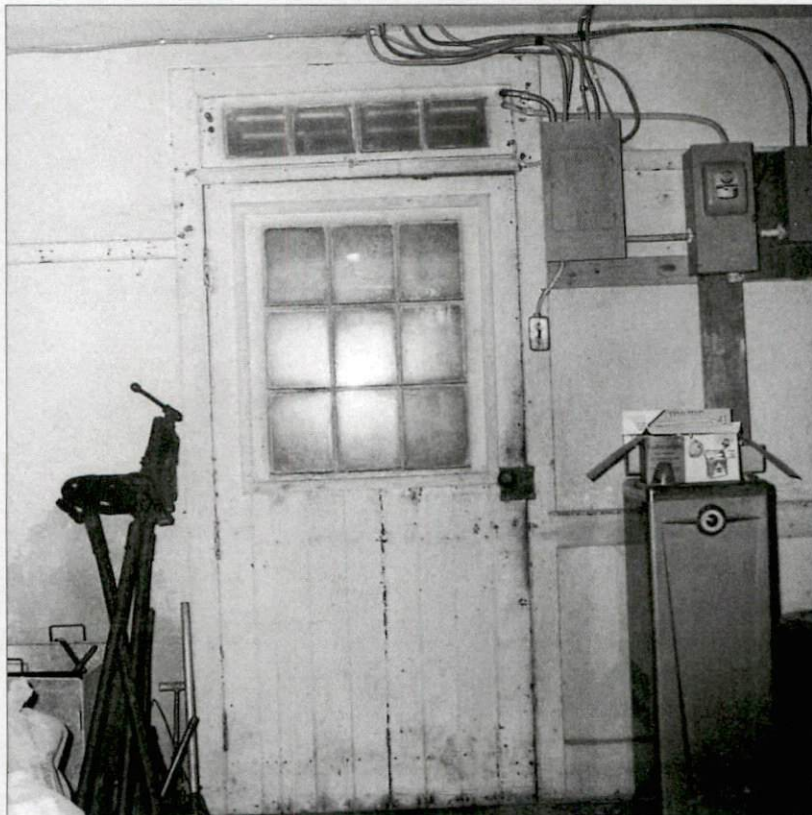
## A CLOSER LOOK AT SOUTH UNION'S HISTORIC PHOTOS

This spring the South Union Shaker Village has been fortunate to have Samantha Bruer as an intern in the library. Sam is completing her undergraduate work in Historic Preservation at Southeast Missouri State University and is required to spend 400 hours of work on a project relevant to her major. Her assignment at South Union is to scan and document the library's historic photograph collection. The collection includes nearly 1,000 images, made from the mid-19th century to the early 1970s.

While the greatest number of the photographs date from the early days of the 20th century, there are several mid to late 19th century images in the collection as well. The decision was made to broaden the term "historic photo" to include pictures that were taken as late as 1974, soon after the first historic buildings were purchased by our organization and during the early restoration efforts. Most of these later photographs were made by Elmer Ray Pearson, a faculty member at the Illinois Institute of Technology and Design. Pearson and his sons, Per and Lars, also donated significant time to the early 1970s restoration efforts at South Union. Ray Pearson's photograph collection, including images from both eastern and western Shaker villages, was given to South Union by his family in 1995.



An early daguerreotype of two Shaker sisters from South Union, ca. 1860. Note the silk kerchiefs around their shoulders.



South Union's historic photographs will eventually become more accessible to researchers, thanks to this important project. The images scanned by Bruer actually represent only a portion of South Union's holdings. The library also owns another 1,000 or more images of objects, buildings and community members from other Shaker villages. These photographs and a large collection of color transparencies will be scanned at a later date.

The South Union Shaker Village wishes to thank Samantha Bruer for her many hours of work. She will soon begin her graduate studies at Western Kentucky University.

An early 1970s photo of the doorway from the Centre House bake room to the kitchen porch, taken by Elmer Ray Pearson, pre-restoration.



## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

**Bed**, ca. 1850, cherry, refinished, Pleasant Hill, placed in the new infirmary exhibit (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

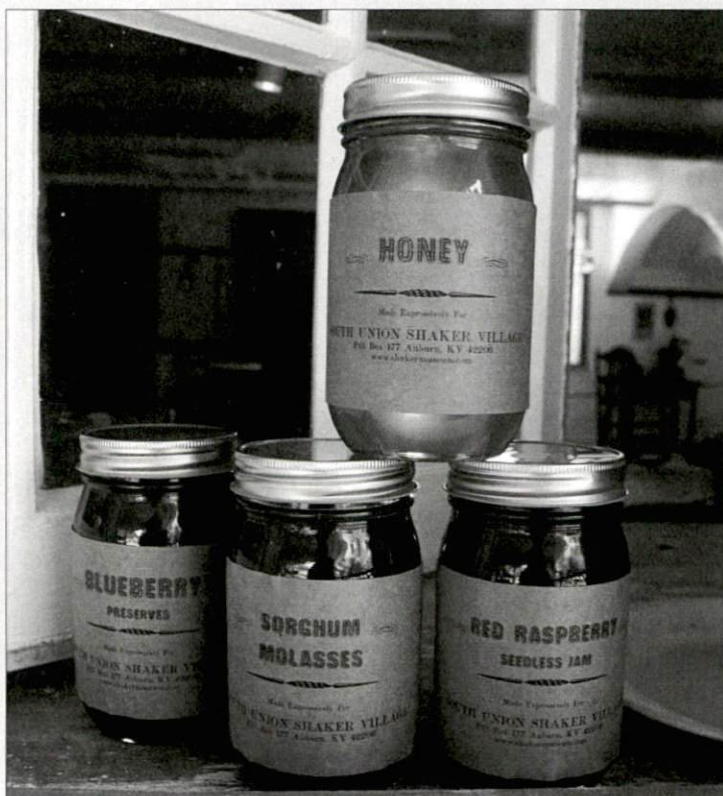
**Stove**, ca. 1840, iron, originated either at South Union or the White Water, Ohio Shaker village  
 . . . . . Funds for purchase donated by Don Hansen  
 Scottsdale, Arizona



## NEW IN THE GIFT SHOP

South Union's gift shop continues to be a great source of income for our historic site, offering a variety of regional crafts and foods, and books related to Shaker and local history. Even with the drop in visitor numbers over the past few years, our gift shop has continued to be a popular destination on its own. A decision to use the ground level kitchen door as the main entrance to the Centre House, where the shop is located, has made it even more accessible to visitors.

We have recently added a line of jams, jellies, preserves, relishes, honey and sorghum. Produced by a Mennonite family near South Union, our customers agree that these products are some of the best they have ever tasted. Having "South Union" on the label not only makes a nice souvenir, but it harkens back to one of this Shaker village's most famous industries of the 19th century . . . *Shaker Preserves, Jams and Jellies.*





## THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

Edie Bingham, Glenview, Kentucky . . . . \$14,000.00 for general support and \$1,000.00 for the Bus Fund  
W. L. Lyons Brown Foundation . . . . \$15,000.00 for general support  
Wayne and Nancy Dinsmore, Auburn, Kentucky . . . . support for collections  
Elaine Disch, Evanston, Illinois . . . . contribution in honor of Sue Brooks  
Pat & Mary Allen, Lebanon, Ohio . . . . contribution in memory of Steve Kistler  
Dorothy Marshall, Jeffersonville, Indiana . . . . \$200.00 for general support  
Dale Covington, Marietta, Georgia . . . . \$350.00 for general support  
George and Darlene Kohrman, Portage, Michigan . . . . \$500.00 for collections acquisition  
Dr. Ernest & Elaine Ezell, Auburn, Kentucky . . . . \$1,000.00 for Smoke & Milk House restoration  
Ray and Judy McCaskey, Chicago, Illinois . . . . \$3,500.00 for collections acquisition  
Jim and Dianne Stuart, Winnetka, Illinois . . . . \$500.00 for collections acquisition  
Margo Thomas, Louisville, Kentucky . . . . \$500.00 for collections acquisition  
John & Linda Tanner, Madison, Tennessee . . . . \$1,000.00 for discretionary project  
Mr. and Mrs. David Cole, Bowling Green, Kentucky . . . . \$100.00 for Tavern Restoration  
Don Hansen, Scottsdale, Arizona . . . . \$1,200.00 for collections acquisition  
Martha Boice, Dayton, Ohio . . . . contribution in memory of John Martin Smith and Thompson Smith

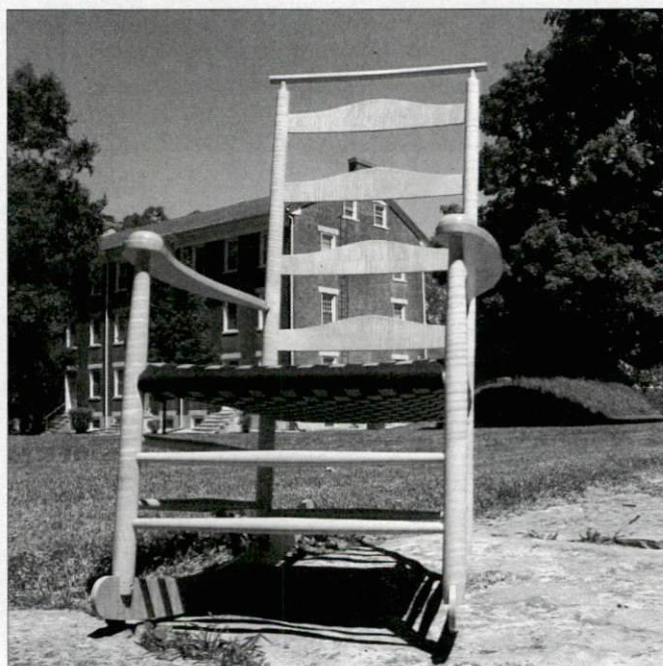
## DIGGING FOR INFORMATION

The floor in the middle room of South Union's 1835 Smoke and Milk House will soon be the subject of scrutiny by University of Kentucky archaeologist, Kim McBride. The concrete floor, poured in the 1930s, and the brick pavers, installed in the 1990s, were recently removed to expose the earth beneath. Before an historically appropriate dry-laid brick floor can be installed, we want to make sure no information of the building's past is lost. Many thanks to Ernest and Elaine Ezell for a contribution that made this project possible.

Last year the floor in the "milk room" of this structure went through a similar process. The transformation from concrete to dry-laid brick is not only amazing from a visual standpoint, but from an historical one as well.

## ROCKER RAFFLE

You might be the proud owner of a beautiful reproduction of a Mt. Lebanon rocker . . . if you purchase a \$5 raffle ticket in our Village gift shop. Crafted in figured maple by SUSV member and woodworker Pete Baxter, the chair will be on display in the Centre House until the winning ticket is drawn on December 1. Tickets are \$5 each and can be purchased by calling the village @ 270-542-4167.





## A TRADITION FOR QUALITY

John Campbell has been making brooms for the South Union Shaker Village for many years. This past year he began training apprentices in order to help keep up with the demand for brooms online and in our gift shop. The second floor of the 1835 Smoke and Milk House has now been designated as our official broom shop and John and staff member Mike Hossum are supplying all of our broom needs.

Recently a customer returned a broom to our gift shop, stating that the binding had worn out. When we inquired as to when the broom was purchased, the customer said, "twenty years ago!" Now that's a long-lasting broom! John repaired the binding on the broom that he had made twenty years ago, and it was like new.

Carrying on the Shaker traditions of simplicity and quality, we were reminded of the way the South Union Shakers promoted brooms in their 1885 catalog: "In no article have we acquired a greater reputation . . . So far there has nothing appeared in this Catalogue that is deserving of more credit than the quality of Brooms we are at present manufacturing. They will compare favorably with anything on the market. We buy nothing but first-class material and use our best efforts to produce a neat and durable article."

There is one great difference in the product we sell today and those sold from South Union back in the 1880s. The Shakers listed their brooms at \$1.40 per dozen. Today we price our brooms at \$17.50 each. The process may be the same, but economic times have changed.



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Susanna Scott-Barnes, Nashville, Tennessee  
Dr. William & Dr. Elizabeth Annesley, Brentwood, Tennessee  
Don Cooper, Tacoma, WA  
Pam Bratcher, Bowling Green, KY  
Harold Thompson, Aurora, CO  
Michael & Mary Ann O'Reilly, St. Louis, MO  
Peter Dunn, Moss Vale, Australia



## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tommy Hines

While we are experiencing one of the hottest summers on record, our visitor numbers continue to slowly rise above last year's figures. Having an air-conditioned Visitor Center has definitely created a positive first impression for our guests. Even on the warmest of days, the new building proves to be a comfortable gathering place and a respite from the heat. And did I mention that we finally have modern restrooms? There's plenty for which to be thankful at South Union!

We welcomed four new Board members this spring: Laura Haury, Renee Kilgore, Roiann Ridley, and Scott Greene. This young, energetic group joins Tom Moody, Ann Covington, Meredith Johnson, Lee Young, Lisa Rice, Gene Harris, Susan Gardener, and newly-elected president Skip Cleavinger, making up one of the most talented and enthusiastic Boards we have assembled in many years. While Laura Haury and Scott Greene are new to our organization, Roiann Ridley and Renee Kilgore have been involved with South Union fund-raising events in the past. We wish to thank each of these gifted volunteers for contributing to the South Union Shaker Village in many creative ways. Many thanks to Tom Moody, who guided this organization as president of the Board from 2008 through 2011.

Thank you, members, for continuing to support South Union with your contributions. Not only do your donations make a tremendous impact on our historic site, but your encouragement is also invaluable. We look forward to your visits this year and appreciate your important feedback in regard to our continually developing site. Tickets for our "First Class Passenger" Breakfast on July 21 are going fast, but we still have plenty of room at our cast reunion and *Music in the Barn* events in September. Hope to see you there!



Volunteers pose in the Centre House for a photo that was used in the 1964 Shaker Festival program.



## SOUTH UNION PROFILE: BRO. WILLIAM BATES

The written records of South Union reveal very little about the life of William Bates. His name is first listed in the 1870 community census when he was a boy of six years. For the next forty years, census records are the only written evidence that Bates was a Shaker. Oral history and photography have provided additional insight.

Because he lived during a period when photography was gaining popularity, Bates was captured in a number of pictures taken at South Union. When a professional photographer came to the community in the early 1900s, William Bates must have been his guide, as he appears in the foreground of most of the images. Bates presence can also be noted in several candid photos taken between 1890 and 1922.

Ironically, William Bates became a Trustee at South Union around 1910, a marked accomplishment, especially since he had little prior leadership training. This role may have been bestowed upon him because of his forty years of faithfulness to Shakerism, or the fact that he was the only young man remaining in the community. It was also in 1910 that the Shakers purchased their first automobile, of which Bates became the principle driver.

The Shakers' final manuscript journal notes the community's progression of automobile purchases, beginning with a 1910 *Reo*, followed by an *Empire*, then a *Studebaker*, in which Bates "hurt his arm when the car turned over in a ditch on a bad road." In May of 1921 the Shakers paid \$2,415.00 for a new *Case*, after receiving \$1,400.00 for the trade of their old car. Two months later, the Shakers purchased their last car, a *Dodge Roadster*, and William Bates remained the designated driver.

When South Union closed in 1922, William Bates chose to accept a \$10,000.00 check and life in "the world" in place lifetime membership at the Shaker village at Mt. Lebanon, NY. Soon after the dissolution of



Brother William Bates poses for a traveling photographer on the stoop of the 1846 Ministry Shop, ca. 1900.

South Union Bates married former Shaker Sister Lizzie Simmons, who had also received one of the \$10,000.00 checks. As a wedding present William and Lizzie were given the *Dodge Roadster*. Mr. and Mrs. Bates purchased a house on College Street in Auburn and furnished it in the latest 1920s style. The couple's round oak table and bentwood chairs still exist in a private collection.

William Bates died in Auburn in 1931 and Lizzie Simmons Bates passed away two years later at the age of 59. Although the granite grave marker in the Auburn Cemetery records William Bates' birth year as 1870, he was actually born around 1864.



Brother William Bates (left) with a group of visitors and Sister Mary Wann (right), on the "Great Road" in front of the 1810 Dwelling, ca. 1915.



# SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### "FIRST CLASS PASSENGER" BREAKFAST

**Saturday, July 21, 10:00 am**

Experience a first class breakfast, ca. 1912, at South Union's famous railroad hotel, the Shaker Tavern. The breakfast, chosen from a 100-year old southern railroad menu, includes breakfast tenderloin, scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, French toast, baked apples with sausage, yeast rolls, and plenty of hot coffee. Reservations are required: \$15 members, \$17 non-members. Space is limited.

### "SHAKERTOWN REVISITED" PAGEANT CAST REUNION

**Saturday, September 15, 12:00-2:00 pm**

Celebrate the 50th anniversary of the historic pageant "Shakertown Revisited" with a reunion of former cast members and fans! Reservations are required for a box lunch served at noon near the Visitor Center. After lunch take time to renew old acquaintances and reminisce about the pageant, which was performed annually from 1962 until 1990. Tickets are \$20 per person, and include free admission to the historic buildings, the **Music in the Barn** event, and a box lunch. Call or write for reservations.

### MUSIC IN THE BARN

**Saturday, September 15, 2:00-5:00 pm**

Enjoy the cool breezes wafting through the 1875 Grain Barn while listening to live music and enjoying an afternoon dessert! This relaxed family atmosphere is the perfect early fall event, complete with fried peach pies, fresh apple cake, cider slushes, and homemade Shaker Sweet Potato Pie ice cream from Chaney's Dairy Barn. Reservations are suggested: \$15 members, \$25 per couple, \$5 children, ages 6-12.

**For information or reservations for events call:**

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

shakmus@logantele.com

**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, Kentucky