

Spring 2013

South Union Messenger (Spring 2013)

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SOUTH UNION MESSENGER

Vol. XLII, No.2, 2013
South Union Shaker Village, Kentucky

SOUTH UNION SEMINAR GOES BIOGRAPHICAL

The 26th annual South Union Seminar delved into the personal lives of the Shakers this year, highlighting recent biographical research of some of the sect's principal leaders and of those who were lesser known as well. The presentations by Janet Scott, Carol Medlicott and Glendyne Wergland were each unique in their vivid and thought-provoking portrayals of Sister Mary Settles, Issachar Bates, and Isaac Newton Youngs, respectively. The lives of several South Union Shakers were also explored through historic photographs, manuscript records and objects that are attached to specific people.



Above from left to right, South Union Seminar participants enjoying lunch at the Shaker Tavern include (above) Don Hansen, Dale Covington, Martha Boice, Cheryl Frerman, and Tommy Hines

The weekend is always characterized by good southern cooking and our innkeeper, JoAnn Moody, did not disappoint. Saturday's menu of local barbeque and cheese grits was a particular highlight! Many thanks to all of our loyal friends who attended this year.



Above from left to right are Darlene Kohrman, George Korhman, Suzy Spence, Rich Spence, Elaine Disch and Barrett Rogers. At left, John Campbell, Glendyne Wergland (presenter), Bob Kellison, Carol Medlicott (presenter), and Lois Madden



Thank You to our Underwriters . . .

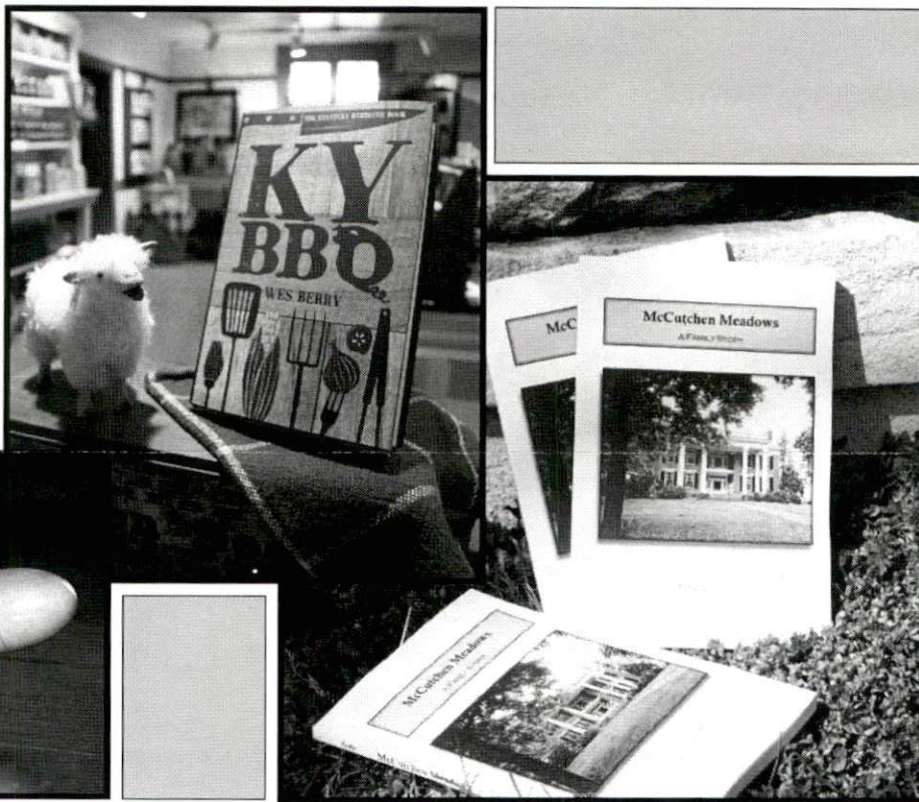
Hilliard Lyons, Shannon & Michael Vitale,
The Kentucky Humanities Council

NEW IN THE GIFT SHOP

The SUSV Gift Shop is constantly looking for new items to help broaden the understanding of the South Union Shakers and regional culture. Two new books that help serve that purpose are now available, one a fascinating family history and the other a study of Kentucky cuisine. Bill Coke's "McCutchen Meadows: A Family Story" tells the story of the family whose plantation was adjacent to the Shaker farm. Besides the telling of a heart-warming and intriguing story, the Mr. Coke also discusses his family's interactions with the South Union Shakers. Wes Berry's "KY BBQ" explores one of the foods for which our state has become famous. Regional variations are discussed, as are the people who create barbeque across the commonwealth.

Another interesting new item is a doorstop, made by local craftsman Roger Ryan. The doorstop turning replicates the egg-shaped finial that the South Union Shakers used on their 1840s chairs. The doorstops are also made of maple, just like the Shaker originals.

"KY BBQ" retails for \$27.95 and "McCutchen Meadows" for \$10.00. Our chair finial doorstops are priced at \$10.95 each. Items may be ordered by calling the SUSV Gift Shop, 1-800-811-8379, Tuesday through Friday from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm, CT.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION

Shannon and Michael Vitale—\$500.00 Event Underwriting
Hilliard Lyons—\$500.00 Event Underwriting
John and Linda Tanner—\$2,000.00 Lighting Restoration Project
Don Hansen—\$2,000.00 Collections Acquisition
George and Darlene Kohrman—Reproduction Shaker Music Stand

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

John & Linda Loughrin, Bowling Green, KY
Nancy Ginn, Bowling Green, KY
Ms. Donna Wilson, Madison, TN

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Foot Stool, ca. 1820

Purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Thompson at the village auction in 1922, this poplar foot stool is one of the earliest pieces of South Union furniture in the collection. Mr. and Mrs. Thompson were the parents of Ruth Morriss, first music director of the legendary pageant, "Shakertown Revisited."
Bequest of Ruth Morriss, Donated by Dent Morris



Historic Photograph, Centre House, 1922

An original, heavy stock, sepia photograph of the Centre House facade, this is one of a set of images made at South Union by an unknown photographer in June 1922. The photographer may have worked for the auction firm of Smith & McClanahan, Springfield, Tennessee, as twelve of the photos were used in the catalog for South Union's final auction three months later. The SUSV library has owned six of these original images for many years. A seventh was acquired with of the Ray Pearson collection in 1998 and this photograph of the Centre House makes the seventh. The photo collection includes village buildings, landscapes, livestock and rare interiors.

Donated by Dr. Ernest and Elaine Ezell

Envelope with South Union Postmark, ca. 1840

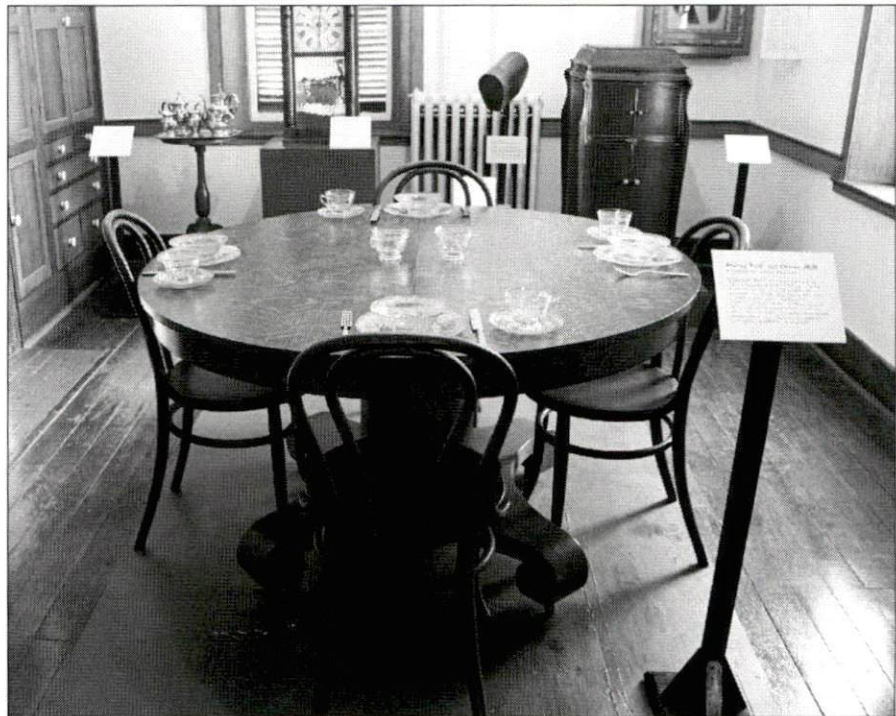
Addressed to "Rev. R. R. Gurley, Colonization Room, Washington, DC," with a hand-stamped South Union ink postmark.

Purchased with Acquisition Endowment Funds

Table and Chairs, 1922

When South Union closed its doors in 1922, former Brother William Bates and former Sister Lizzie Simmons decided to marry. They purchased new furniture for their home in Auburn, including an oak table and six bentwood chairs. Mr. Bates passed away in 1931 and Mrs. Bates in 1933, at which time their estate sale was held. The table and chairs were bought by Fielding and Kathleen Rogers of Auburn, Kentucky, and used by their family for many years. Recently, the furniture was donated to the SUSV by the Rogers' son, Glenn, in memory of his mother, Kathleen.

Donated by Glenn Rogers



SOUTH UNION PROFILE: CHARITY HILTON

Charity Hilton was born February 15, 1821 in Simpson County, Kentucky, and came to live with the South Union Shakers at the age of ten. Accompanied by her sisters Rhoda (1823-1878) and Elvarine (1818-1903), Charity became a longtime member of the South Union colony. She worked a variety of tasks and over the course of 75 years and resided at one time in each of South Union's four dwelling houses.

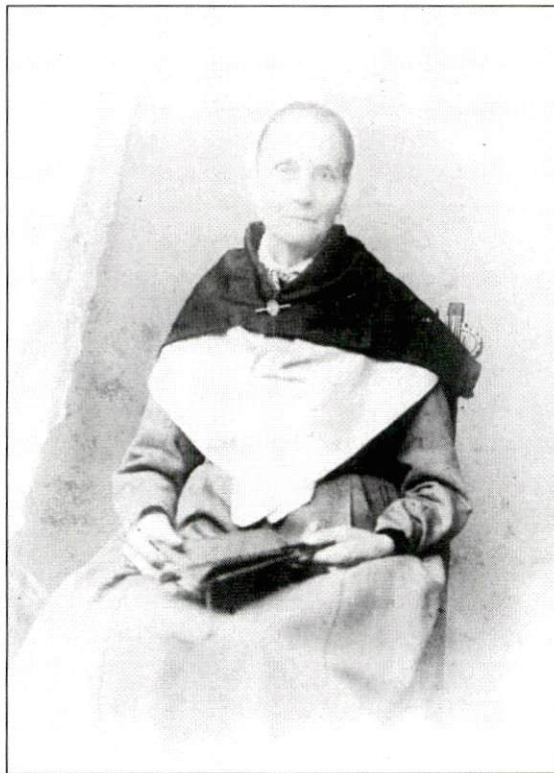
After the death of her sister Elvarine, Charity left South Union and moved to Mt. Vernon, Illinois. In 1908 she brought suit against the United Society of Shakers, hoping to force the sale of community so that the money could be divided between her and the remaining twelve members. According to the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, June, 4, 1908, "She claims that, in utter disregard of their obligation under covenant the members have neglected her, have never taught her to read or write. It is alleged that when her eyes became diseased she was not given any medical attention, and as a result she became blind. When she fell down steps and broke her ankle, she says that she was not given the attention of a surgeon, and the broken bones were not set, so that it has left her lame and a cripple. She also charges that there

were other times when she was neglected - once when she was left without a fire in winter. She alleges that the members of the Society of Shakers have abandoned their religion; that they have held no religious meetings

and have not provided any religious training nor have held any devotional services for a long while and that the purpose and aim for which the Society was formed have been entirely forsaken, abandoned and given up by the officers and its members."

Besides a portion of the proceedings from a forced sale, Charity also asked for \$3,600.00 as a reimbursement for the time she had given to the community over the past 77 years, and \$150 per month for the rest of her life. Charity lost the case and returned to Illinois.

This was not the first lawsuit in which the Hilton sisters were involved. A brother, William, who lived 12 miles south of the village in Franklin, Kentucky, died in 1886, a few hours after he had mysteriously burned a large portion of his \$250,000.00 fortune. Before the money could be totally consumed an unnamed person rescued \$100,000.00 in government bonds from the flames. Charity and Elvarine worked diligently through the court system for the next six years, attempting to receive a portion of their brother's estate. In the end, the money was awarded to his son, James, and the Hilton sisters received nothing.



Charity Hilton (seated, center) poses in a group portrait of South Union leaders taken during the 1880s. In the photo, Charity is surrounded by the community's most influential members, including Eldress Betsy Smith and Eldress Nancy Moore, seated to her right, and Elder Harvey Eades, standing at the far right of the image.

NEW EXHIBIT OPENS AT SOUTH UNION

The South Union Shaker Village explores the lives of some of the individuals who once lived in the community in a new exhibit called, *"Something Regarding Myself: The South Union Shakers & the Objects That Tell Their Stories."* Between 1807 and 1922 hundreds of people joined the Shakers at South Union, but very few left behind any details of their lives. The Shakers' emphasis on the communal rather than the individual has much to do with this. Thanks to carefully preserved manuscript records, a small collection of photographs and rare personal possessions, it is possible to piece together some of their stories.

When book collector J. P. MacLean began corresponding with South Union's Eldress Jane Cowan in 1903, she included very little personal information, answering only the questions she had been asked about the community's historic book and manuscript collection. Finally, in June of 1903 she wrote, "You asked me to tell you something regarding myself," followed by a short narrative of her life as a Shaker. Eldress Jane was reluctant to share details of her life, stating that she was "aware it is of little interest to any person."

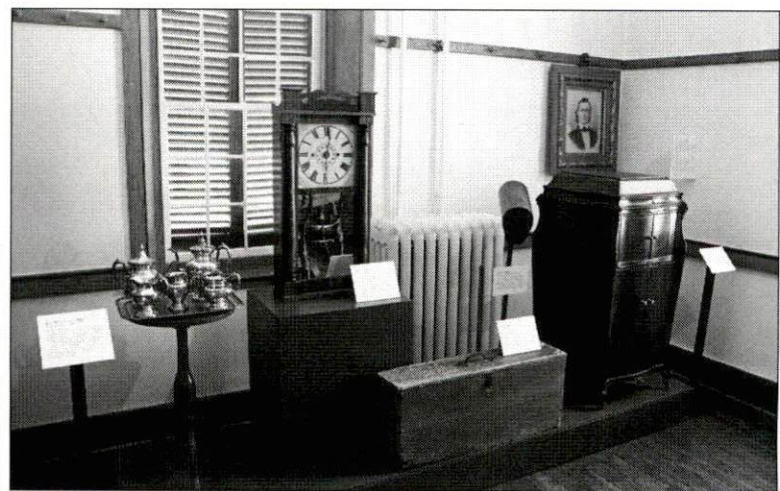
Over one hundred years later, those researching South Union's history wish that more people had written about their experiences in the community. Besides the extraordinary value of manuscripts and historic photographs, objects can also tell a story. A search was made through collections records to find artifacts that had specific individual's names attached to them, either by written identification or oral history. An amazing array of objects surfaced, spanning nearly a century of life at South Union.



Dining room furniture purchased in 1922 by former South Union Shakers and recent newlyweds, William Bates and Elizabeth Simmons, soon after the village closed (above) forms the centerpiece of the exhibit. At right are other objects attached to specific members of the South Union colony, including a silver tea service, a mantle clock, a tool box, a wooden bonnet mold, a Victrola, and a formal studio portrait, ca. 1875.

Highlights include a tool box associated with Elder Logan Johns (1842-1924), a silver tea service and Victrola once owned by Sister Josie Thrall (1845-1924), and a china cup and saucer that belonged to Sister Lucy Clark (1828-1914). Personalized objects include Brother Robert Johns' (1795-1863) stamped molding plane, a wooden clothes hanger signed by Sister Sarah Small (1810-1896), a map of Kentucky and Tennessee once in the possession of Elder Benjamin Seth Youngs (1744-1855), and an oval box with drawings and a signature by Sister Hannah Freehart (1804-1894), daughter of a slave freed by the Shakers at South Union.

Many thanks to SUSV docents Mary Odenthal, Cheryl Odenthal and Barrett Rogers who provided research for the project.



RUTH MORRIS & HER LEGACY OF SHAKER MUSIC

A major force in the preservation of Logan County's Shaker heritage passed away on April 8. Ruth Morriss, who brought Shaker lyrics and melodies to life through hundreds of memorable performances over the years, has left a definite legacy. With remarkable talent and relentless drive she helped to motivate countless students to do their very best, all the while documenting and preserving an important genre of American music.

In the summer of 1962, local citizens and students from WKU were involved in the final rehearsals for the first performance of "Shakertown Revisited." The script, based on Shaker manuscript records, had been written by Russell Miller, a faculty member in Western's drama department. Ruth Morris was asked to provide music for the production, both original Shaker melodies and turn-of-the-century standards, which she researched and arranged in four-part harmony. The first performances were held on July 20, 21 and 22 in the Auburn High School gym and 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. Ruth Morriss continued to direct the music for the pageant each season, attracting a growing number of volunteers. Newspaper articles from the time heralded the music as the main attraction of the play, especially the colorful "picnic scene" in the second to last act. Ruth and the chorale were even invited to participate in the Shaker Bicentennial celebration in Cleveland in 1974. Once more, the "Shakertown Revisited" singers received tremendous reviews.

Ruth's affection for Shaker music eventually led her to form a group called the Western Shaker Singers, composed primarily of students from WKU's music department. Invited to sing annually at the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, the Western Shaker Singers drew capacity crowds in the village Meeting House. The group's personnel changed as students graduated through the years but Ruth Morriss' fine arrangements and uncompromising leadership remained constant until the Western Shaker Singers disbanded in the early 90s.

Today, music research is one of the most active areas of scholarship in the field of Shaker studies. Original melodies and lyrics are continually being extracted from 19th century manuscripts for study and performance. Ruth Morriss was doing this over fifty years ago. She drew attention not only to Shaker music but to the very early preservation efforts going on at South Union. Through her love for music, her desire to teach fundamentals, and her dedication to quality performance, Ruth Morriss helped to entertain and to educate thousands of audience members over the years. She also helped put South Union "on the map," and for all of that, we are most grateful.



THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE DONATED TO SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE IN MEMORY OF RUTH MORRIS

Tom Bryant / Read Hodges

Susan Taylor

Martha Jo Lyne

Emily Boots

Maxine Mansfield Hohl

Pat Basham

Joan Simmons

Roger Hartley and Cathryn Carver

Mary Lucy Franklin

Betty Dempsey

Jan Camplin

Joan Robards

Tommy Hines

Dale Young

Dr. Sally Ann Strickler

Ray & Paula Clark

Jim and Sarah Riley

Carol Gaddie

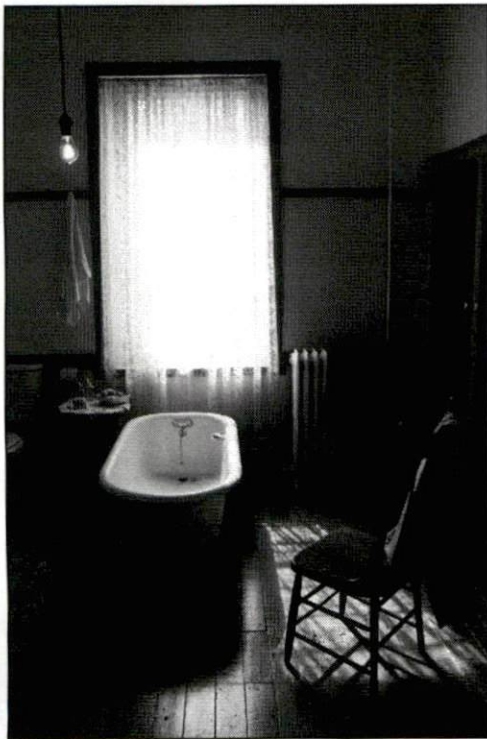
George Richardson

Gary and Donna Dilliha

Frederick Thurman & Ted Barr

Richard Harvey

Ernest and Elaine Ezell



ELECTRIC LIGHTS IN THE CENTRE HOUSE

Throughout the 19th century the Shakers at South Union lit their buildings with a progression of common devices. Early oil-burning lamps and candles (both made by the Shakers and purchased from outside sources) were customary until mid-century when mass-produced glass kerosene lamps became the convention of the day. Manuscript records document the purchases of glass lamps for the village and the installation of a kerosene lamp chandelier in the Meeting House. Physical evidence of hanging lamps has also be discovered in the Centre House.

It wasn't until 1920 that the process of installing electric lights in the Centre House began. Hired electricians removed floor boards down the center of the entire length of the second level hall, fishing knob and tube wiring through holes drilled in the floor joists. A long wooden channel was constructed to take the wiring up the wall to the third floor, and then to the fourth. The journal writer notes that the lights were turned on for the first time on June 24, 1920.

Historic photographs made in 1922 reveal what they looked like . . . single-bulb electric fixtures, suspended from the ceiling by cloth cord. Some included bell-shaped shades and others were simply bare bulbs. In 2010 a grant from the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels helped to purchase three reproduction lighting fixtures, matching those in the photographs, to be mounted in the hallway of the infirmary restoration. The result was entirely authentic in appearance, thanks to the quality work of Rejuvenation lighting.

Because of the generosity of long-time members John and Linda Tanner, the Centre House has now been completely outfitted with these beautiful reproduction lighting fixtures. The Tanners' contribution provided for the purchase and installation of twelve additional fixtures, ten for the hallways and two for period rooms. We are most appreciative to John and Linda for their very generous donation.

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tommy Hines

It's a beautiful spring at South Union with green foliage even more lush than usual for this time of year. Our maintenance crew is keeping the village looking neat and trim and a group of SUSV docents have even planted a new garden in the Shakers' former herb lot. Using heirloom seeds and plants, the new garden will fit nicely into our educational program this season. If you pay us a visit before mid-summer you will be able to see tomatoes, squash, watermelon, okra, strawberries, tobacco, broomcorn, and flax in the Centre Family garden.

The South Union Shaker Village was very pleased to receive an award from the Communal Studies Association, the Gina Walker Outstanding Project Award, for restoration of the 1875 Grain Barn and the Cemetery. The Communal Studies Association annual conference was held here in the fall of 2011. We are most appreciative of this recognition and are grateful to the donors and craftspeople who made those restorations possible.

As always, thank you for your continued support through membership in our Friends organization. Come see us this summer!



Kaelin Vernon exercises his interpretive skills during this spring's Civil War program for school children.

SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE

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UPCOMING EVENTS

“FIRST CLASS PASSENGER” BREAKFAST

Saturday, July 20

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, baked apples with sausage, yeast rolls and plenty of hot coffee.

Reservations required: \$15 members, \$17 non-members

Time: 10:00 am

MUSIC IN THE BARN

Saturday, September 14

Imagine how nice it will be to feel the cool fall breezes wafting through the 1875 Grain Barn, while listening to live music and enjoying an afternoon dessert. Kick back in a relaxed family atmosphere and partake in some traditional Southern delicacies, including fried peach pies, apple cider slushes, and homemade Sweet Potato Pie ice cream from Chaney’s Dairy Barn.

Reservations suggested: \$15 members, \$25 per couple
\$5 children ages 6-12

Time: 2:00 pm–5:00 pm

A SHAKER BREAKFAST

Saturday, November 2

A Civil War-era Shaker breakfast that promises to please and to astonish . . . featuring fried chicken, pork sausage, scrambled eggs, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, asparagus, apple pie, Shaker sweet cake, buttermilk biscuits and more! Served at South Union’s famous railroad hotel, the Shaker Tavern.

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

Time: Seatings available at 8:30 am and 10:30 am



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.