Summer 2013

South Union Messenger (Summer 2013)

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The South Union Shaker Village presents . . . MUSIC IN THE BARN, Saturday, September 14, from 2:00 until 5:00 pm. The village’s every day, family-friendly, laid-back atmosphere is made even more enjoyable by the addition of great music performances and free dessert! This year the event will take place in multiple venues, scheduled at various times throughout the afternoon. There will be performance tents near the Grain Barn and the orchard, and the South Union Shaker Quartet will sing in the Centre House meeting room. Fried peach pies, apple cider slushes, and Chaney’s Shaker Sweet Potato Pie ice cream will be served at the entrance of the Grain Barn.

Make sure and mark your calendar, better yet, make reservations today for your family to attend MUSIC IN THE BARN! The peaceful, natural setting of the village is a perfect place to spend an afternoon. There are acres of wide open space where kids can play and plenty of room for adults to explore as well. For more information or reservations call: 270-542-4167 or 1-800-811-8379.
One of the most interesting aspects of working at the South Union Shaker Village is discovery within the process of "interior archaeology." The study and analysis of our historic buildings have produced a great amount of important information about the Shakers' original intent for certain interior spaces, and how use of those spaces changed over time. Over the past 25 years actual artifacts have been found under floor boards in the attic and behind built-in cupboards. We have discovered untouched 19th century paint surfaces behind 1920s additions. Back in the early 1990s workmen discovered a huge kitchen fireplace opening, hidden for many years behind layers of plaster.

From physical evidence discovered in the Centre House dining room it appears that there were originally three built-in corner cupboards. Two of the originals are still in place, but a third has obviously been removed from the southwest corner. Lengths of peg rail and chair rail stop at precisely the place where the cupboard would have been, and evidence of wooden "nogs" can be found in the brick wall. Nogs are blocks of wood inserted into vacant spaces in brick walls, to which built-in furniture and wood trim are secured.

Local carpenter, Roger Ryan, has agreed to reproduce the missing corner cupboard, using the same species of wood (walnut and poplar), replicating the original hardware, and matching the finish on the existing cupboards. Cost for this project will be $3,750.00. If anyone would like to help make this restoration a reality please designate your contribution "corner cupboard."

An original cupboard (left) and the space where we want to install the replica.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION**

- Western Shaker Singers... contribution in memory of Ruth Morriss
- Fathers of Mercy... $200.00 for general support
- Ridley Wills, III... $1,000.00 for general support
- Margy Thomas... $1,000.00 for general support

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Leon & Suellen Joyner, Brentwood, TN
Mary Pace, Louisville, KY
**RECENT ACQUISITIONS**

**Collection of Music, Photographs and Printed Material**

Ruth Morriss' collection of her arrangements of Shaker music used in the pageant, "Shakertown Revisited," in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as arrangements for performances by the Western Shaker Singers in the 1980s and early 1990s. Also included are photos of the early performances of the pageant, original scripts, recordings and a scrapbook from the 1962 season.

Donated by Dent Morriss


Donated by Michel Choban

**Chair, South Union, ca. 1840**

Typical South Union chair with large “egg in cup” finials, a flame shape sub-category of the classic turning, with traces of yellow and bittersweet paint, and an original oak splint seat with traces of bittersweet paint, rockers added at a later date.

Purchased with Acquisition Endowment Funds

**Iron Handrail, South Union, ca. 1890**

Wrought iron handrail discovered in the 1854 Wash House attic, probably salvaged from the 1930 fire of the Trustee’s Office (pictured below).

Donated by the Fathers of Mercy

Sister Mary Wann (left) and Sister Alice Bass, pose on the steps of the west entrance to the Trustee's Office, ca. 1910. The iron handrail that was recently acquired not only matches the scale of this one but has a hole in the bottom rail approximately where the support post in this photograph is attached, between the sixth and seventh spindle.

The entrances to most South Union buildings had wooden handrails with turned posts and spindles. Sometime after 1885 the wooden ones were replaced by wrought iron. The only wooden example surviving today are remnants of those that once graced the steps of the Ministry Shop. The intricate turnings are similar to what is found on village furniture; the original paint color was chrome green.
On June 1, 1865 Elder Harvey Eads and Jackson McGown returned to South Union from a refugee home in Clarksville, Tennessee, having agreed to accept into the community 19 children between the ages of 4 and 16. One of those children was 9-year-old Sabrina Whitmore. Eades noted, “The children appear as though they had been well cared for but as the war is about coming to a close, they wish to break up the institution & put the orphans, made so by the war, where they can be cared for without further expense by the Government” (Record C). Sabrina’s brothers, John, Josephus, and Francis were also brought to South Union.

Born on April 4, 1856, Sabrina’s place of birth is disputed in both Shaker and Federal records, being either Georgia or Alabama. She and her brothers must have been restless as they all left South Union for short periods of time in the coming years. Her youngest brother ran away when he was only 10, but was soon found and brought back to the village. Sabrina left for two months in 1878. Her brother, John, made a habit of continually coming and going throughout the rest of the century. He left South Union for the last time in August of 1891, prompting Elder Eades to note, “I would not try it anymore, John.”

Manuscript records reveal almost nothing about the life of Sabrina Whitmore. However, since she was still living at South Union during the early 20th century, oral history has been a significant source of information about her personal life. In the early 1960s museum founder Deedy Hall interviewed Will Barnett, an African American man who had worked for the Shakers in his youth. He described Whitmore as a “low, heavy set woman who did much of the dirty work. She wore wooden yokes across the shoulders and carried milk from the barn.” Being characterized as someone who was subject to heavy labor, and never rising to any level of leadership, it is odd that Sabrina is often photographed with South Union’s lead Eldresses. It is possible that her role was a subservient one.

Sabrina Whitmore actually appears in more known photographs than any other South Union member, besides Elder Harvey Eads.

For some reason unknown Sabrina Whitmore chose to leave South Union on February 12, 1921, 13 months before the village closed. Because of when she departed, Sabrina missed receiving the $10,000.00 that the last nine Shakers were offered by the Central Ministry. She moved to Nashville and boarded with a family until she passed away on February 26, 1932. Sabrina’s death certificate listed her occupation as a “domestic.”
OBJECT FOCUS

Sometimes objects that have been in storage for decades need a new assessment. For many years objects in the collection that were not made by the Shakers had little hope of ever making it outside of collections storage. However, there are many things that have been donated over the years that the South Union Shakers used but did not make. Often, these objects tell stories that are just as important as do those pieces we consider masterworks of Shaker craftsmanship.

The Shakers purchased their first sewing machines on January 8, 1855, soon after the American sewing machine was available by mass production. None of those early machines survive but one sewing machine attributed to South Union does. Purchased at the 1922 auction, the machine at right was donated to the collection many years ago then put into storage.

A recent "second look" at many of the objects in storage at South Union has brought quite a few things out of hiding, including the sewing machine. Made between 1883 and 1885, this "New Home" model has been cleaned and waxed, thanks to the expertise of Mr. Wayne Dinsmore of Auburn. Currently, it fits nicely into a 1910 period bedroom exhibit, helping to demonstrate the Shakers' penchant for technology.

A NEW FLOOR

Two years ago, one of the three downstairs rooms in the 1835 Smoke and Milk House received a new dry-laid brick floor. Replacing modern brick pavers installed in the 1980s, the dry-laid floor was a replica of what the Shakers originally chose for this building. Now a second room is receiving the same treatment.

Thanks to a generous contribution from Ernest and Elaine Ezell, this project should be complete by mid-September. Dry-laid brick floors are constructed by laying bricks in a pattern on a level bed of sand, then sweeping additional sand between the bricks to keep them in place. Because no mortar is used, bricks can be replaced or floors re-leveled without much effort.

The photo at left shows the tongue-and-groove board wall enclosing the staircase, suspended in mid-air and awaiting its new brick floor foundation. Also visible is the vinyl vapor barrier that will help keep moisture from wicking up through the new floor. This feature is one to which the Shakers did not have access in 1835. When funding becomes available, the third space on the ground level, the "meat room," will get its new floor.
Many years of research have gone into story of the Shakers at South Union, but little has been recorded about the fifty years between the final auction in 1922 and the opening of the museum in 1972. This year we have begun a concerted effort to set up oral history interviews with those who lived and worked in the Shaker buildings during those years. We hope to make these interviews a regular part of our newsletter over the next year.

When Oscar Bond purchased a large portion of the former South Union Shaker village in 1922, his mule and cattle business required a large work force. As men were hired, they moved with their families into the buildings that had once been inhabited the Shakers. Jo Thornton Havener’s family was one of many who made up a new community of people who were to live and work for many years at “Shakertown.”

Jo Helen Thornton was born in the “laundry building” in 1938. She, along with her parents and older sister, Mary Ellen, lived in an apartment on the first floor, on the west end of the Shakers’ former Wash House. She recalls that in the building they were provided with electricity and running water, but the water was used only for washing. Drinking water was drawn from the well in the Centre House yard. Bathrooms were not available, so residents used the former Brethrens’ Privy, located just a few steps northeast of the Wash House.

Thornton’s youth was spent with other children whose families worked for Mr. Bond. They were free to explore the old Shaker buildings, including the unused rooms and attic in the Wash House, the abandoned South Union Depot, and the Centre House, which was completely empty except for the kitchen where Bond’s chief carpenter, Slim Trogden, had his workshop. The dozen or so families who lived and worked at Shakertown during the 1930s and 1940s were a close knit group, forming attachments that would last a lifetime.

Mr. Bond’s farm manager and his wife, Everett and Beatrice Geary, lived in the house that is today the SUSV Visitor Center. The Geary’s nephew, Lewis Havener, was a frequent visitor during the mid-1940s and it was on one of those visits that he met Jo Helen Thornton, who he would later marry. Lewis Havener would eventually work for Oscar Bond as well.

Jo Havener’s interview will be archived in the SUSV Library, along with a valuable collection of 36 scanned historic photographs of South Union taken between 1922 and the 1950s. Many of the earlier images were from the Geary family, who came to South Union with Oscar Bond soon after he purchased the property. We are indebted to Mrs. Jo Havener for her very generous contribution to the history of South Union and for her continual support of our preservation efforts.
A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tommy Hines

I want to invite everyone to this year's “Music in the Barn” event! This is always a relaxing, family-oriented day that seems to grow in popularity each year. The desserts are free with your admission and the South Union Shaker Village and farm is yours for exploring. We certainly appreciate BB&T and Col. Robert & Cora Jane Spiller for making this event possible.

You may have noticed in the list of recent contributions that the Western Shaker Singers made a donation in memory of their former director, Ruth Morriss. The Western Shaker Singers, created by Morriss in the late 1970s, performed each year to packed houses at the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill until disbanding in the early 1990s. Recently, the group's original “chaperones” and caretakers, Bill and Nancy Gaines, and Ray Clark, made the decision to donate the Western Shaker Singers' remaining funds to South Union, in memory of Ruth. This money will be used to construct a Shaker music exhibit in the Centre House meeting room, complete with recordings of the Western Shaker Singers. This exhibit will be an important part of our interpretation and a fitting tribute to Ruth Morriss as well.

The South Union Shaker Village would like to welcome three members to our Board of Directors. David Lee, Dean of Potter College, Western Kentucky University, joined us this summer, as did Christine Sowders, a private practice counselor, and David Bell, a Vice President with US Bank. As always, we appreciate those who are willing to devote time and talent to the betterment of this place.

DETAILS!

The desk that once belonged to Elder Harvey Eads is one of South Union's most prized possessions. It is currently on exhibit in Eads' former office in the Ministry Shop, where he lived and worked from 1862 until 1892. Research indicates that the desk was made for him at South Union in the 1880s. Recently someone tried to force open the three sliding doors on the desk, breaking glass in each of the doors. Our resident craftsman, Roger Ryan, removed the doors and installed vintage glass, glazing each piece with an historic putty recipe. Roger also replicated and installed several decorative walnut fans that had long been missing from some of the corners. The wooden track on which the doors rest was coated with beeswax and they can now be moved with the greatest of ease. We think Elder Eads would be pleased.
Nancy Baird
1913 Nashville Road
Bowling Green, KY 42101-3844

UPCOMING EVENTS

♦ 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.
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

♦ “SHAKE AND STIR” GALA EVENT
Thursday, November 21
Ring in the holiday season at SUSV’s second annual gala event! Details coming soon!

♦ “CHRISTMAS AT SHAKERTOWN” HOLIDAY MARKET
Saturday, December 7
One of Kentucky's finest antique and craft markets, just in time for Christmas! Features over 30 antique vendors and artists, all nestled in the village's historic atmosphere.
Admission: a canned food item or donation that will be distributed to those needful
Time: 9:00 am—4:00 pm
For a “first chance” opportunity to shop, make reservations for the Preview Party, Friday evening, Dec. 6. Enjoy coffee and desserts in the most festive of holiday atmospheres.
Reservations required: $10 per person / 7:00 pm—9:00 pm

♦ SOUTH UNION SEMINAR
Friday and Saturday, April 11-12, 2014
Mark your calendars for our annual weekend of learning!

For information or reservations for events call:
1-800-811-8379 or 270-542-4167
shakermuseum.com

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