

Spring 2014

South Union Messenger (Spring 2014)

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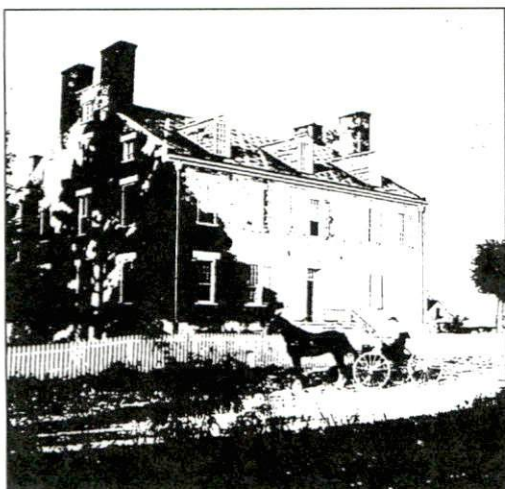


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Kentucky Library Research Collections, "South Union Messenger (Spring 2014)" (2014). *South Union Messenger*. Paper 63.
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SOUTH UNION MESSENGER

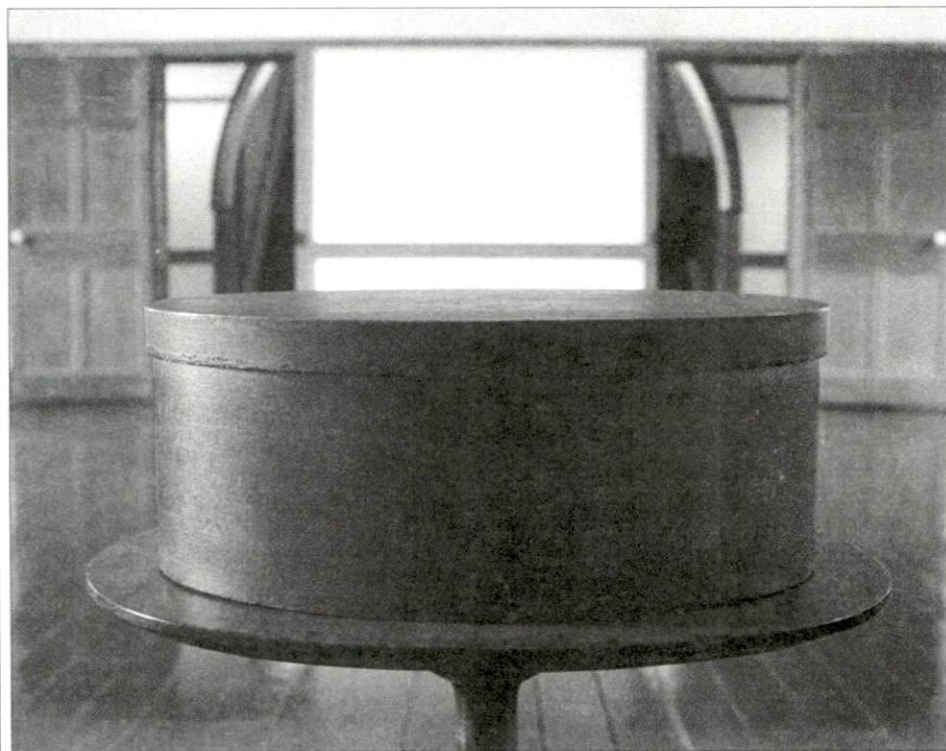
Vol. XLIII, No.2, 2014
South Union Shaker Village, Kentucky

IMPORTANT ACQUISITION

A list of acquisitions is usually printed on the third or fourth page of the newsletter, but our most recent find deserves front page coverage. Oval boxes attributed to South Union are rare and this one is even more so because of its excellent provenance. While we have no evidence that oval boxes were actually made by the Shakers in Kentucky, boxes were present at both villages, probably as gifts from other Shaker communities. This example is identified under the lid with the initials "M.F.," for Sister Mary Finke, a Shaker at South Union in the 20th century. Little is known about Sister Mary, other than that she and her two daughters came from Louisville to South Union after the turn of the century. A December 1915 journal entry, typical of the community's latter days, reads, "Mary Finke & 2 little girls, Ethel and Gertrude, are making little trinkets to put on the Christmas tree."

Additional writing on the underside of the lid includes one verse of an 1867 poem by newspaper editor and abolitionist Theodore Tilton (1835-1907) entitled "The Mystery of Nature":

*The works of God are fair for nought
Unless our eyes, in seeing,
See, hidden in the thing, the thought
That animates its being.*

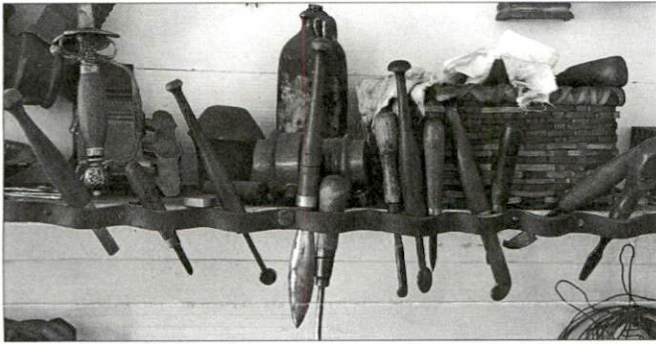


Other manuscript under the lid reveals a personal note, possibly from Sister Mary Finke, "I value this box but must discard, 1926. On the bottom of the box is manuscript from her daughter, "When I am gone this is for June Tate Wilkins, Signed Ethel Bongard, January 29, '56." Ethel Finke Bongard gave the SUSV a collection of her mother's books in the 1970s, along with a now priceless bookmark made by South Union Eldress Nancy E. Moore. She did not, however, reveal information about the oval box. It was recently discovered in Nashville, Tennessee by Michael Hall.

Many thanks to Col. Robert E. & Cora Jane Spiller and to Ray & Judy McCaskey for generously funding the purchase of this South Union treasure.

WE MET OUR GOAL!

Thanks to a group of very generous donors, we have finally reached our \$3,750.00 goal to have the missing Centre House corner cupboard reproduced. Our resident craftsman, Roger Ryan, will soon begin the meticulous work of studying the intact original cupboards in the dining room in order to make an exact replica. The paint analysis on the extant cupboards has been completed by Susan Buck and the color will eventually be reproduced by Erica Sanchez and Christian Goodwillie. Cupboards thought for many years to have been varnished walnut were originally painted with a linseed oil-based, bittersweet-colored paint. Those listed at right made it all possible.



Contributions to \$100.00

Rich and Suzy Spence
James Cornn
Donna Hill
Charles Hungate
Elaine Disch

Contributions from \$250.00 to \$500.00

Kenneth Hatcher
Jo Havener
Dottie Metcalf
Saddler Taylor
George and Darlene Kohrman

Contributions from \$2,000.00

Martha Boice

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RECENT DONATION

John and Linda Tanner—\$1,000.00 for collection acquisition
Don Hansen—\$500.00 for collection acquisition
Col. and Mrs. Robert E. Spiller—\$1,900.00 for collections acquisition
Ray and Judy McCaskey—\$2,000.00 for collections acquisition
Mary Barris—\$5,000.00 for operating support

Jerri Tarpley for creating and donating floral arrangements for our spring events

David Taylor for donating a collection Morehead's "Shaker House" prints for fundraising purposes

Pete Baxter for donating a beautifully crafted and appointed sewing carrier for fundraising purposes

Mark Hardison for donating a typescript copy of an 1896 traveler's account of a visit to South Union

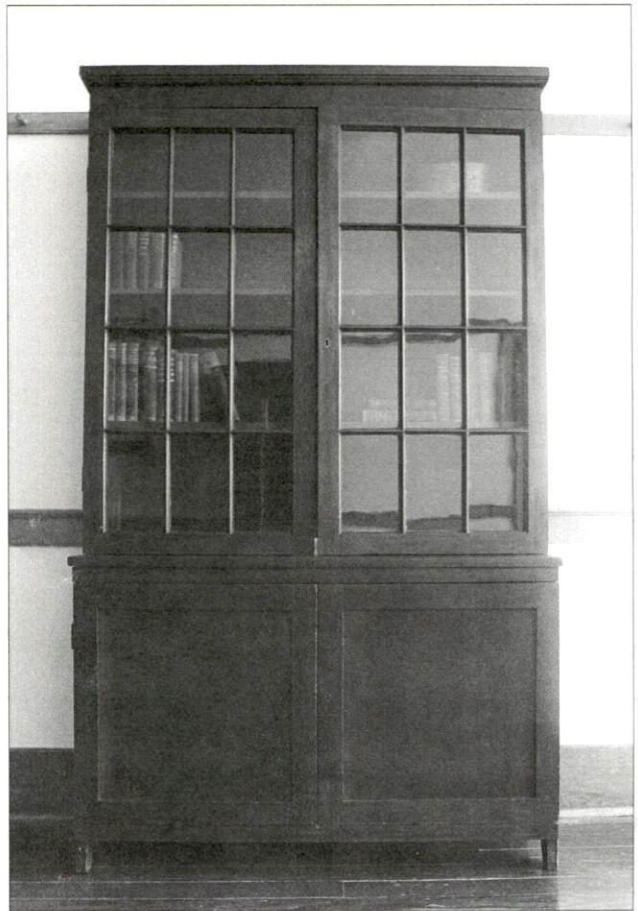
Ken Hatcher for donating period and reproduction objects for use in our educational programming

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Book Press, ca. 1820, attributed to South Union Shakers
.....purchased with acquisition endowment funds

The book "press" or bookcase (right) was discovered in an Owensboro, Kentucky, antique mall and possesses both regional connections and distinct characteristics found on early South Union furniture. Probably dating from the 1820s, the press is one piece and made of poplar. It is on exhibit in the third floor hallway of the Centre House where the Shakers kept their library.

In the early 20th century when Wallace Cathcart was collecting Shaker materials for Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio, he solicited manuscripts and printed material from South Union. In a letter dated June 6, 1916, Cathcart wrote to Eldress Catherine Allen of Mt. Lebanon, New York, "I received just after I wrote my last letter a collection from there [South Union] which I was most grateful to get. In fact I recall if I am not deeply mistaken, one or two little items that I saw in bookcases in the upper hall there at South Union." Whether or not this is one of the bookcases to which Wallace Cathcart was referring is unknown. The location of bookcases on the third floor of the Centre House, however, is well-documented.



Manuscript Letter, dated August 29, 1847

.....purchased with acquisition endowment funds
Written by Woodford Dulaney, Bowling Green, Kentucky to Robert Dulaney, Clark County, Illinois, the letter briefly describes a visit to the South Union Shaker village in August of 1847. Dulaney writes, "Two of Eliza's second cousins, Shakers, one from Ohio and the other from New York, by the name of Sharp, came to South Union on a visit and sent for her to go over and see them. We did and I found them quite intelligent women. The Shakers treated us very kindly and set before us one of the best kind of dinners. We spent a pleasant day." Dulaney's letter corresponds with South Union records which document that from August 6th through 16th Eldress Sally Sharp from Union Village, Ohio, and Eliza Sharp from Mt. Lebanon, New York, were both visiting South Union. Woodford and Eliza Dulaney and their family resided on a large farm near Bowling Green.

Collection of Secondary Material

.....donated by the estate of Diana Van Kolken
A large collection of printed material from the personal collection of our dear friend, Diana Van Kolken, who passed away in October of 2013. Diana and her husband Paul were creators and editors of *The Shaker Messenger*, an important publication that not only promoted Shaker scholarship but allowed Shaker communities and Shaker historic sites an opportunity to network and to gain exposure. The magazine, published from 1978 until 1996, was only one of the many contributions Diana Van Kolken made to the preservation and dissemination of Shaker history.

SOUTH UNION PROFILE: ELISABETH SIMMONS

Little is known about Sister Elisabeth "Lizzie" Simmons, even though she figures prominently into the last days of South Union. Born in Todd County, Kentucky, Lizzie and her sisters, Ida and Alberta, were brought to South Union and left with the Shakers in the late 19th century. Appearing for the first time in the January 1889 census, 12-year-old Lizzie is listed with her sisters as a member of the West Family.

Eight months later Elder Harvey Eads noted that on October 9, "Rome Simmons came up here from Pembroke in Todd County & took his two daughters Ida & Elisabeth home with him, to care for a Motherless Infant, that his wife had died & left to his care. He had taken his daughter Alberta the week previous." There is no record of 18-year-old Ida returning to South Union but 11-year-old Alberta did come back for a few months, until she was taken away by her father in December of 1890.

Lizzie was re-admitted to the Shakers on July 14th, 1890 and remained a member of the community for over thirty years. References to her life in the poorly kept 20th century journals are few, although the writer does document a visit back to Pembroke to visit relatives in 1900, and she is mentioned in reference to kitchen work in the Trustees Office. Lizzie Simmons was still at South Union when the community disbanded in 1922, one of among nine remaining members. Given the choice of relocating to Mt. Lebanon, New York, or taking a \$10,000.00 residual and living life outside a Shaker village, Lizzie chose the latter.



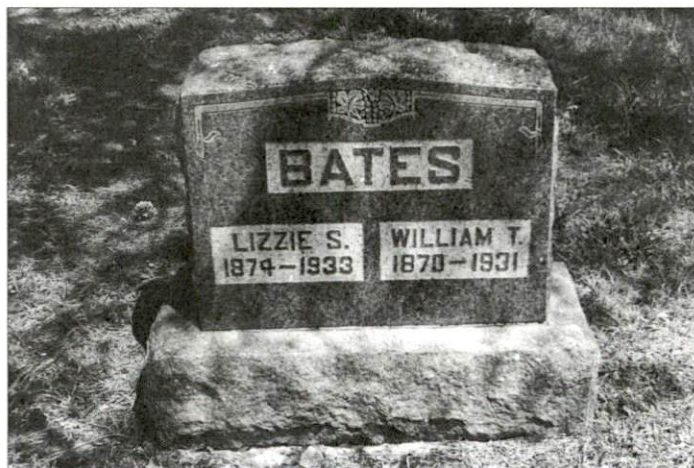
Lizzie Simmons (1874-1933) in a studio photograph, probably taken around 1923.



Above left, Lizzie Simmons poses at South Union with an unknown woman and child, ca. 1918. Both historic photographs on this page are scans of Xerox copies, donated to the SUSV collection several years ago. The originals have since been lost, so we are fortunate that even these poor quality images survive. The photo at right was recently made in the cemetery at Auburn, Kentucky.

Checks were written and distributed in March of 1922 and in a few weeks Lizzie Simmons was a married woman, accepting the proposal of former South Union member William Bates. Together they had \$20,000.00 with which to start their new life. The couple bought a house on College Street in Auburn, purchased new furniture, and lived together until the death of Mr. Bates on October 26, 1931.

Lizzie Simmons Bates died on December 16, 1933 at the age of 59. She was buried by her husband in the Auburn cemetery, just a few blocks from the home they shared.



NEW INFORMATION

Research at an historic site is on-going and you never know when another small piece of information might surface. Recently SUSV Friend and former board member Mark Hardison mailed some materials to the village, including a faded typescript recounting an 1896 trip from Crittenden County, Kentucky, to Bowling Green. The ten-day diary was written by Arnella Jacobs Hill who with her family was traveling to the Kentucky Synod, a state meeting of Cumberland Presbyterians. The journey, made by two-horse buggy, included a brief stop at South Union, about which she wrote, "A little further on we reached Shaker Town. This pretty town is peopled only by Shakers. There are many evergreen trees."

It is the next sentence, however, when the writer begins to list buildings that have dates mounted on them, that new information surfaces. Most of the structures she lists are ones with which we are familiar, but from this document we learn that the 1875 Grain Barn at one time had its date of construction on it. We do not know if the date was painted on the building or mounted on a board attached to the barn. Only one period photograph of this building is known to exist and the photographer was too far away for such a small detail to be detected. It is hoped that more information might someday become available, making it possible to add an "1875" to the Grain Barn.

The Hill family traveled back through South Union on their way home, where the writer noted that they "stopped long enough to get some pine limbs and stone mementoes . . . ate our dinner at same place as we did going." Mrs. Hill describes a turnip patch of 10 to 15 acres located at South Union and comments about the cemetery but the text, unfortunately, is illegible. Thank you, Mark Hardison for discovering and sharing this document. The information is brief but significant.

PRESERVING ON A SHOE-STRING

The Shakers incorporated exceptionally large windows in the 1824 Centre House as a source of light and fresh air. Those windows today can be a deterrent to the preservation of sensitive furniture finishes, textiles, historic photographs, manuscripts and printed material. With no current budget for climate control, low light is the best we can do to protect our collection. Recently, we have installed custom frames with light-filtering cloth into the windows of most exhibit rooms. From the outside the inserts are not visible. Many thanks to Roger Ryan for making our idea a reality.

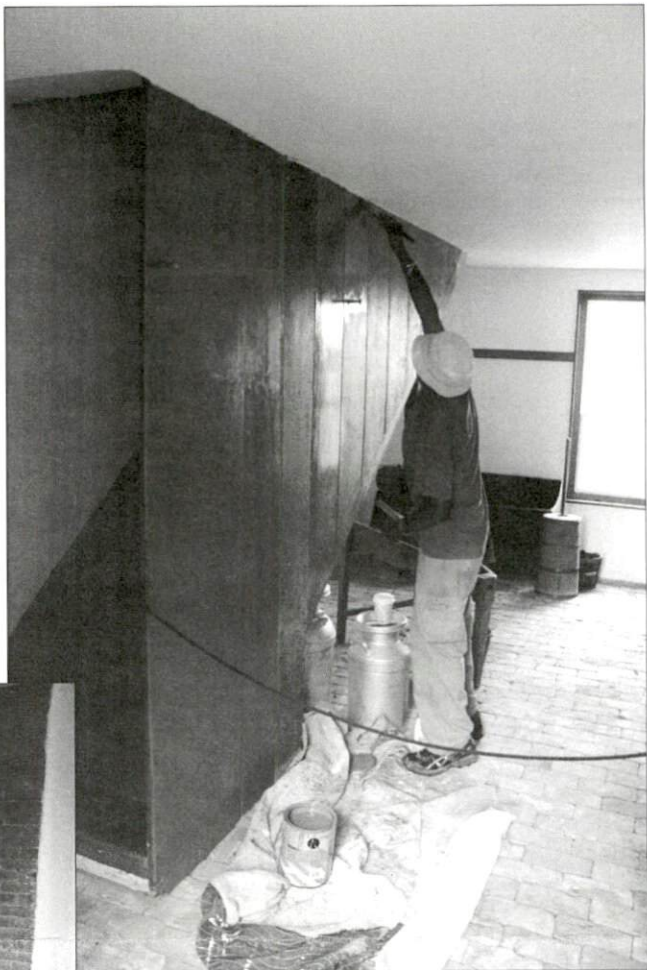


Period rooms will not be "blacked-out" but will eventually be fitted for linen curtains. It is interesting, by the way, that the windows did not have to be measured individually. One size did fit all . . . thanks to Shaker craftsmanship!

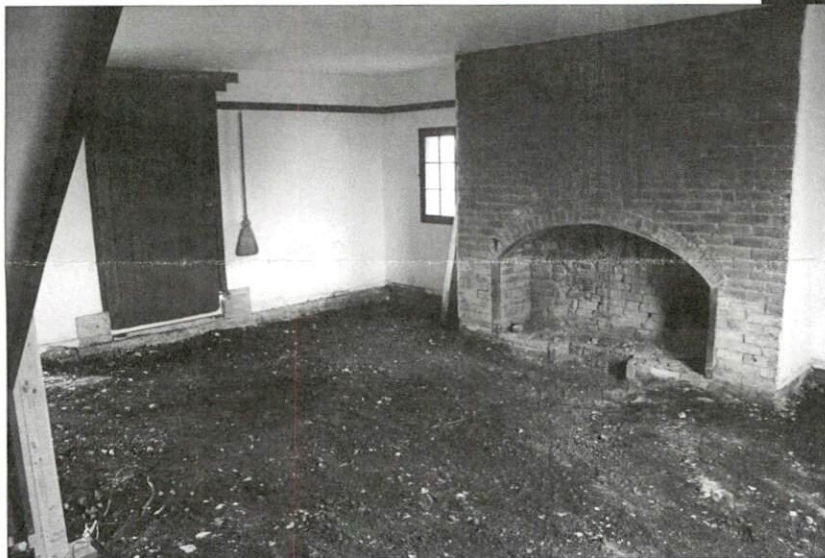
RESTORATION CONTINUES

The 1835 Smoke and Milk House continues to transform into a mid-19th century image of itself. Recently the interior wood trim on the Milk House side of the structure underwent paint analysis by Susan Buck, revealing a vivid blue-green color. The South Union Shakers have once again surprised and delighted us with their rich interior paint color choices. The new paint is currently being applied to both levels of the dairy.

The Smoke House portion of the building is finally receiving some attention as well. The 1980s brick pavers and concrete subfloor have been removed in preparation for an archaeological investigation. When funds become available a dry-laid brick floor will be installed. Original Shaker-made bricks, salvaged over the years, will be used.

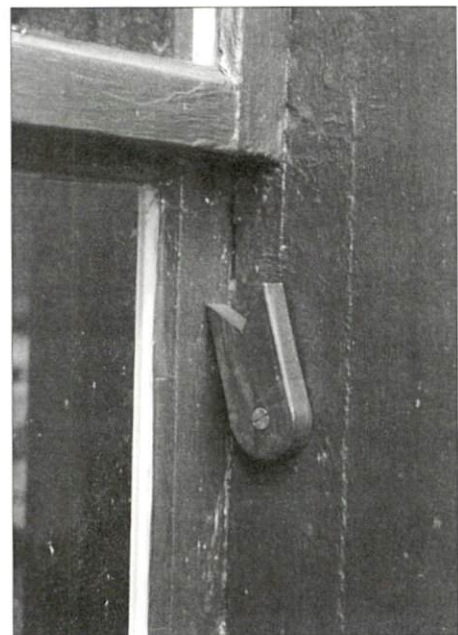


SUSV staff member James Grinter (above) applies the new color to the original stairwall in the 1835 Milk House. Unfortunately, we are only able to print the newsletter in black and white, so a visit to South Union will be necessary to the results. The Smoke House (left) is currently without a floor, awaiting funding for an archaeological dig.



THE SMALLEST OF DETAILS

Sometimes one minute piece of evidence leads to a greater understanding of 19th century life. In the days before weighted window sashes it was always a challenge to prop open a window to just the right position for ventilating an interior space. The wooden mechanism at right was the method the Shakers at South Union chose, before they invented a mechanized sash balance in 1872. This simple, v-notched prop was attached to the window frame, and allowed to pivot on a single screw. The lower sash could be raised to rest securely on the notch. Only one of these props had survived, located on a second story window of the 1835 Smoke and Milk House. Upon investigation it was discovered that every window in the building had at least one prop, and some windows had two, giving the option for two different heights. Reproductions have now been crafted by Roger Ryan and they are back in their original locations on the building.



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tommy Hines

We are experiencing a beautiful spring at South Union, and are especially thankful for it after a long, hard winter. Our first big spring event, the annual South Union Seminar, was both entertaining and informative as we hosted guest speakers Jean Burks, Aaron Genton, Timothy Mullin and Jonathan Jeffrey. Our topic, "Adventures in Collecting: Seventy-five Years of Searching for Kentucky Shaker," revealed fascinating stories about how many of our Kentucky Shaker treasures were discovered and documented. Many thanks to those who attended, to our speakers, to our staff, and to our underwriters, Hilliard Lyons and Shannon & Michael Vitale.

Our first installment in the new SUSV Lecture Series, May 10, was well-attended, filling all ten slots that we had hoped for. Many of our seldom seen objects were taken out of storage for an up-close look and discussion. These lectures are intended for those who are interested in in-depth study of a variety of topics related to the South Union Shakers. More to come!

The South Union Shaker Village Board of Directors welcomed two new members in May. Michael V. Harper is a leadership consultant and Billy Ray Smith is a farmer who formerly served both as a Kentucky state representative, and Commissioner of Agriculture. Both men bring extraordinary talent and experience to our organization and we are looking forward to their positive influence at South Union.

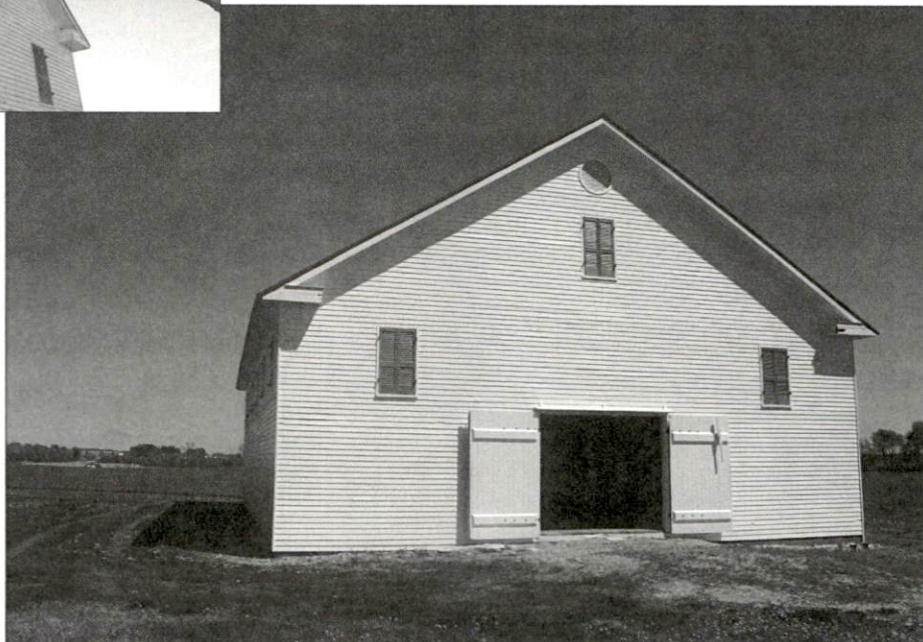
Finally, calling all former cast members, faithful volunteers, and fans! Mark your calendars for our 2nd biennial "Shakertown Revisited" cast reunion. This event will take place on Saturday, September 13, so call today and make your reservations. Details can be found on the back page of the newsletter.



NEW LOOK FOR SPRING

The 1875 Grain Barn only got one coat of paint back in 2010 when the restoration was completed. One coat was not enough to last long-term so the barn was given two coats in April, carefully applied with brushes. The

white barn makes quite an impression on a green meadow backdrop. We hope to eventually mount an exhibit on South Union's agricultural history on the inside of the barn. When funding is available for this interpretation our visitors will be able to see more clearly how the Shakers' agrarian society not only provided for their own needs but was the basis for all of their successful industries.



SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE

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COMING SOON AT SOUTH UNION!

FIRST CLASS PASSENGER BREAKFAST

Saturday, July 19

Experience a first class breakfast, ca. 1914, at South Union's famous railroad hotel, the Shaker Tavern. The breakfast, chosen from a 100-year-old southern railroad menu, includes pork tenderloin, scrambled eggs, fried potatoes, baked apples and sausage, yeast rolls, and plenty of hot coffee.

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

Time: 10:00am

MUSIC ON THE FARM

Saturday, September 13

Imagine how nice it will be to feel the cool fall breezes wafting through the 1875 Grain Barn, listening to live music while strolling across the Shaker farm, and enjoying 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 Shaker Sweet Potato Pie ice cream from Chaney's Dairy Barn.

Tickets: \$15 per person, \$25 per couple, \$5 children ages 6-12

Time: 2:00pm - 5:00pm

"SHAKERTOWN REVISITED"

CAST REUNION

Saturday, September 13

Join us for the South Union's biennial reunion of former cast members and fans who were a part of "Shakertown Revisited," a outdoor musical drama that was performed in Logan County from 1962 to 1990. A box lunch will be served at noon, after which will be an opportunity to reminisce and to tour the historic buildings.

Reservations required: \$20 per person, which also includes admission to MUSIC ON THE FARM that afternoon.

Time: 12:00pm-2:00pm

SHAKER FARM DAY

Saturday, October 11

The common farm chores of yesterday are practically lost arts today, but not at the South Union Shaker Village! Enjoy a day of interactive demonstrations where butter is made, corn is shelled, hams are smoked, laundry is boiled, and more! Lunch will be available.

Tickets: \$10 per person, \$5 children ages 6-12

Time: 10:00am - 4:00pm

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.

For more information: 270-542-4167
www.southunionshakervillage.com