Spring 2017

South Union Messenger (Spring 2017)

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DISCOVERING THE 1854 WASH HOUSE

We have begun the process of peeling away the layers on the interior of the Wash House. Behind 1970s paneling, drywall, drop ceilings and carpet, workers are discovering 19th century Shaker craftsmanship hidden away for many years. While there has been a great deal of destruction over the years there seems to be enough original fabric to be able to recreate what is missing.

The first changes took place in 1920 when the Shakers updated a portion of the building for living space to house their new farm manager and his family. By the time Joe and Fannie Wallace and their five children moved into their apartment on January 20, the Shakers had installed new wallpaper and painted over the well-worn yellow ochre-colored trim. The paper they chose was an intricate blue floral with a decorative border. The ceilings were papered in a more contemporary pattern in silver and light blue and the wood trim was given a new coat of rich blue to match the wallpaper. Evidence of that paint and paper have been found in the area where the Wallace’s lived.

When Oscar Bond bought the property from the Shakers in 1922 he wasted no time in converting more of the Wash House into apartments for the people who worked for him. The large workshops formerly used by the Shaker sisters were divided into small rooms to accommodate modern family living. Some of those divisions remain on the building’s first floor today. While the Wash House saw few changes after St. Maur’s monastery bought the building in 1949, the second order of Catholic monks, St. Mark’s, made major alterations to the Wash House. In the 1970s they changed the floor-plan of the second and third levels and removed original flooring, three brick chimneys, and many feet of Shaker-crafted wood trim.

Fortunately, there are exciting discoveries being made behind 1970s stud walls today. This recent photo illustrates several of those finds, including original features like a chimney complete with ash pit, base plank, chair rail and peg rail, and a door still on its hinges. A large limestone hearth was also found. And it’s only the beginning.
**WELCOME SALLY GIVENS**

South Union Shaker Village is happy to announce the addition of Sally Givens to its staff. Filling a new position, Curator of Collections and Development, she will be tackling quite a broad list of tasks. Not only will she manage South Union's collection of objects but she will also mount exhibits, perform research, and assist SUSV in developing opportunities for rental and retail. It's a tall order, but Sally has the skills necessary to be successful.

Sally hails from White House, Tennessee, is a graduate of Tennessee Tech University, and has her masters in Public History from Central Connecticut State University. She interned at South Union Shaker Village in 2014 and 2015, assisting in a variety of collections-related projects. We welcome Sally Givens to the staff of South Union Shaker Village and look forward to the many good things she brings to our historic site.

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**VISITING THE SHAKER VILLAGE**

Most of the historic images housed in the Julia Neal Library at South Union were made between 1900 and 1922. This is due to the fact that the people who visited the Shaker village during that period came with their cameras in hand. Occasionally, visitors had their pictures made with one of the Shakers, but most often the images are of the visitors themselves, posed in a variety of settings in the village. This example shows a group of young people seated on the stone mill trace at the west end of the community. If the top of this picture looks odd, it is because the photographer double exposed his negative and brushed away the second set of figures that were hovering above his subjects.

Seated left to right are Minnie Reel, Coy Wilson, Rosa Ray, Ernest Carson, Myrtle Hall, Taylor Neal (Julia Neal's father), Fannie Porter, Ed Gordon, Nettie Pace (Julia Neal's mother), Barnett Blewett, Annie Mildred Evans, Curry Sloss, Roberta Wilson, all of Auburn, Kentucky.
SOUTH UNION PROFILE: SAMUEL SMITH

On October 6, 1823 the journal keeper at South Union noted the arrival of William Smith, and his six children. The impact that this family would have on the community was unknown in 1823 but during the remaining decades of the 19th century the Smiths would become some of its most influential members. One of the daughters, Betsy, would eventually be handed the responsibility of lead Eldress in the Ministry, a role she would maintain until her death in 1890. Fifteen-year-old Samuel also possessed leadership abilities.

Growing up in the East Family, Samuel was eventually appointed to the role of elder there in 1839. He may not have been quite ready to lead one of the village’s largest families as evidenced by his re-assignment to the West Family, the smallest of the communal families at South Union, just two years later. He became a member of the Centre Family in 1844 where he became an elder in 1867.

Throughout his life, Samuel Smith spent a great amount of time doing manual labor, all the while serving a lead role. He is noted in the journals plowing fields and clearing tracts of land. He was also part of the crew that laid the limestone walks around the Centre House in 1848 and helped set the community’s stone sundial in 1867. Samuel was afforded the privilege of traveling with other community leaders to destinations of Shaker villages Pleasant Hill in 1859 and Union Village in 1863.

Samuel Smith’s latter years are characterized by sporadic leadership assignments, releases, and reinstatements. He gave up his role as elder in 1877, only to be put back into service soon afterwards. Then, on January 1, 1879, the journal writer noted, “Good Br. Samuel Smithretires from his long care in the Elders lot and may well rest on his well won laurels.” Twenty days later Smith was appointed to return to the Elders room.

After retiring again in 1885 he was reinstated in 1888, finally retiring for good in 1889. The erratic nature of Samuel Smith’s later years may have had something to do with the fact that good leaders were becoming more difficult to find. Many of South Union’s earliest members were still living but they were aging, and they were not being replaced by young, qualified recruits.

On February 8, 1890, the following was recorded in South Union’s records:
“Demise—Bro Samuel Smith departed this life to the day 20 minutes before one o’clock P. M. Came here 16 years of age [and] has been a faithful worker for 66 years now. 82 years & 4 mo. 1 day.”

In this photograph, made between October 1882 and December 1883, are South Union’s Elders and Eldresses and assistants, including a man who is thought to be Samuel Smith. Based on other well documented photographs, journals and census and death records, the names of the people in this image have been either positively identified or identified with conjecture, due to the process of elimination. From the top, left to right, are Samuel Smith (possible), unidentified, Harvey Eads, Charity Hilton, unidentified, Sabrina Whitmore, Betsy Smith, Nancy Clark (possible).
OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES

SUSV is excited to introduce new learning opportunities for the 2018 school year!

Community Builders: Kentucky Shakers at South Union, available fall and spring, introduces students to the unique culture and history of the Kentucky Shakers. Students explore the natural resources and human capital needed to grow from a collection of frontier farms into a substantial village. This program highlights the life of Brother David Barnett, African American Shaker and expert brick mason.

To Grandmother’s House We Go! Southern Culture & Foodways, an old favorite, this program continues by popular demand. Students participate in churning, grinding, and mixing as they explore southern culture through food selection and meal preparation.

Another new offering for children and adults alike is Shaker Space: Room No. 11, new concept room is on its way to completion in the 1824 Centre House. Visitors will immerse themselves in a specially designed exploratory experience complete with recreated furniture and personal items. Rummaging through bureaus, peeking under beds, and opening cupboards are encouraged in this space as visitors seek to uncover clues to who might have occupied this room during the nineteenth century. Once completed, Room No. 11 will become a component of each children’s program.

For more information or to book your visit contact Rebekah at outreach@SouthUnionShakerVillage.com

THANK YOU, CHERYL!

Cheryl Odenthal became a SUSV staff member in August 2012 when she was hired as a docent. We didn’t know it at the time but Cheryl would become one of our most valuable employees. She served as a very successful “first impression” in the Visitor Center, greeting guests with a smile, with conversation, and with a solid knowledge of the history of the Shakers. Cheryl’s business experience was also of great benefit to SUSV, as she played a major role in our administrative work, our bookkeeping, and as a consultant for both technology and business practices.

Cheryl has decided to retire and to travel with her husband. We will miss her bright smile and the very capable way she did most everything at South Union Shaker Village.
RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Trestle Table (right) South Union, ca. 1833, walnut and ash, purchased at the Shakers' dissolution auction in 1922 by the grandparents of the donor. Original stretchers on the underside of the table were eventually reduced in length. The top boards were kept and used as leaves to accommodate newly installed expansion hardware. Plans are to have the table restored to its original size in 2018.

............................................donated by Cameron Harper

New York Daily Tribune, September 8, 1868, newspaper that includes a front page story detailing Ku Klux Klan activity in and around Bowling Green, Kentucky, including an attack on South Union.

............................................purchased with acquisition endowment funds

Shaker and Shakeress, Vol. III, No. 12, December 1873, published by the Shakers from 1873 to 1875.

............................................donated by Ann Faules

Collection of Regional Stoneware, including fifteen 19th and early 20th century regional churns, crocks, jugs, bowls, and jars for purposes of exhibit in kitchen, infirmary and dairy.

............................................donated by Roger and Margaret Futrell

Collection of Secondary Material, one hundred eighty-eight (188) books and other printed material relating to Shaker history, foodways, folklife, architecture, and furniture.

............................................donated by Mary Allen

Weavers Chair (left) and Side Chair, South Union, ca. 1840, armed weavers chair with egg-in-cup finials, ash, early seat, and ca. 1870 Type C chair, maple and ash, replaced seat, given to C. W. Duncan, grandfather of the donor, by the South Union Shakers, ca. 1905.

............................................donated by William and George Anna McKenzie

Key (below), South Union, large, iron skeleton key to one of the exterior doors of the 1854 Wash House, discovered by the donor's father, Roy Thornton, in the 1930s. Mr. Thornton was an employee of Oscar Bond, the man who bought the property when the Shakers disbanded. The Thornton family lived in the Wash House and the donor, Jo Helen Thornton Havener, was born there in 1938.

............................................donated by Jo Helen Thornton Havener
A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Let me begin my apologizing that we have only been able to produce two newsletters this year. Because of economic set-backs we were forced to reduce our staff for most of 2017 and productivity has been condensed accordingly. We have rallied to moderate success late in the season and the "belt tightening" seems to have paid off. SUSV, like many historic sites, is striving to come up with new ways to engage the modern audience. We will not sacrifice the important story of South Union in those attempts but never want to close our minds to progress and innovation. It's the Shaker way!

We continue our investigatory work in the 1854 Wash House but major projects will not begin until grant funds are secured. The completed structural engineer's report, submitted last month, is the catalyst for ground-level work and the basis for our grant applications. Be on the look-out for a volunteer work day, coming soon. There are miles of paneling, drywall, carpet and ceiling tiles to be removed before we can actually see the original fabric of the entire building.

Thanks for all you do to make South Union Shaker Village a success!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

Edie Bingham—$25,000.00 (Wash House restoration project)
David and Michelle Bell—$250.00 (Wash House restoration project)
US Bank—$250.00 (Wash House restoration project)
Ray and Paula Clark—$100.00 (Wash House restoration project)
Beth Hester and Scott Gilbert—$50.00 (Wash House restoration project)
Martin Brown and Family—$20,000.00 (General Fund)
Edie Bingham—$10,000.00 (General Fund)
Susannah Scott-Barnes—$1,000.00 (General Fund)
Carol White—$100.00 (General Fund)
John and Linda Tanner—$1,000.00 (Collections)
Anonymous—$500.00 (Collections)
Kay Bender—$400.00 (Collections)
Logan Aluminum—$1,000.00 (Sponsorship of Shake, Ride & Roll and Holiday Market)
U. S. Bank—$1,000.00 (Sponsorship of Holiday Market)
Hilliard Lyons—$500.00 (Sponsorship of South Union Seminar)
Shannon and Michael Vitale—$500.00 (Sponsorship of South Union Seminar)
Logan Telephone Co-op—$500.00 (Sponsorship of Holiday Market)
English, Lucas, Priest & Owsley—$250.00 (Sponsorship of Holiday Market)
Wal-Mart Foundation—$500.00 (Sponsorship of exhibit)
Contributions from Elaine Disch and Martha Boice in honor of the marriage of Barbara Murphy & Dale Covington

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The “bathroom and water closet” on the sisters side of the Centre House hall, Room 4. This permanent exhibit, which helps to illustrate the Shakers’ commitment to progress, was installed in 2007.

**SHAKER PROGRESS**

Indoor plumbing was a rarity in most rural homes in southern Kentucky at the turn of the century. The Shakers constructed privies or outhouses, one for each sex, in close proximity to their communal dwellings, at the Meting House, and at the Trustees Office. Bathing practices during the 19th century are completely undocumented. In 1916, the ultimate luxury of indoor plumbing, coupled with hot and cold running water, was afforded those who lived in the Centre House.

Although it is not known for sure, most of the Shakers probably lived in the Centre House by the 1910s. The West House had been dismantled by the Shakers in the 1890s, the North House was being used in the early 1900s as a dwelling for the Shakers’ African American hired laborers and their families, and the East House had most likely been abandoned by the 1910s. Even with the likelihood that thirty people were using two bathrooms, the conveniences outweighed the waiting time.

During the month of August 1916 pipes were buried from the Centre House well to the kitchen, across the ceiling of the dining room and up through the floors into rooms 3 and 4. A gasoline pump was installed in the Wood House near the well to provide the water. How the water was heated is not recorded.

Elder Logan Johns and hired laborers dug ditches in the Centre House yard to a septic tank north of the building. All was complete by September.

**A TREASURE FROM THE JULIA NEAL LIBRARY, SUSV**

SUSV recently acquired a wonderfully constructed and proportioned weaver’s chair that had been in the possession of the same family since it was gifted to them by the South Union Shakers around 1905. In the early days of the 20th century C. W. Duncan operated the store at South Union Station. Leasing from the Shakers, Duncan obviously became acquainted with members of the community and was given the weaver’s chair for his young son to use as a high chair.

In December the weaver’s chair was donated back to SUSV by C. W. Duncan’s granddaughter, George Anna Duncan McKenzie and her husband, William. After learning the more about the history of the chair, this receipt from Duncan’s store was discovered in our library, now all the more significant because of its relationship to the object.

We are most grateful to the George Anna and William McKenzie for their very generous donation . . . and for the survival of this document.
SAVE THE DATES!

EXHIBIT OPENING: “CLEAN HANDS, PURE HEARTS, AND A JUSTIFIED CONSCIENCE: PEOPLE OF COLOR AT SOUTH UNION”
Sunday, February 18

SOUTH UNION SEMINAR*
Friday and Saturday, April 20-21

FARM TO TABLE: SPRING DINNER IN THE GRAIN BARN*
Saturday, May 26

CIVIL WAR ENCAMPMENT
September 22-23

FARM TO TABLE: FALL DINNER IN THE GRAIN BARN*
Saturday, October 13

A SHAKER BREAKFAST*
Saturday, November 3

SUSV HOLIDAY MARKET
Saturday, December 1
Preview Party on Friday night, November 30*

Additional information will be available soon. Events marked with (*) require reservations.

SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE
PO Box 177, Auburn, Kentucky 42206
270-542-4167
SouthUnionShakerVillage.com