

Summer 2018

## South Union Messenger (Spring 2018)

Kentucky Library Research Collections  
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# SOUTH UNION MESSENGER

Vol. XLVII, No.2, 2018  
South Union Shaker Village, Kentucky

## 1854 WASH HOUSE DISCOVERIES

Peeling away layers of “improvements” made to the Wash House between 1923 and the early 2000s has revealed an amazing amount of information and just as many mysteries. Most of the significant changes in the building were made in the early 1920s when the structure was converted into apartments for the new owner’s workforce and in the 1970s when major renovation took place to create a more modern environment for the Catholic order that owned the building. While much of the interior was destroyed (primarily the third floor), most of the original interior elements were simply covered up with drywall, carpet, drop ceilings and concrete.

Removal of those additions is nearing completion. Most of the thirteen large workshop rooms and the transverse hallway retain original woodwork, including baseboard, chair rail, peg rail, and other trim. There has been damage to some of it but there is enough remaining to easily replicate what is missing. A singular Shaker peg has been discovered, still in place within a plumbing chase. From this peg, hundreds will eventually be replicated for the Wash House restoration.

From initial findings it appears that at least three of the workshop rooms and the attic were used for the purposes of washing, ironing, starching, drying and storing clothing. Evidence of a dumbwaiter that ascends four levels seems to connect these spaces, each used for a specific role in the processing of laundry. The combination of oral history and physical indications point to the one time presence of a large bank of built-in cupboards on the second floor, possibly used for the storage or “pressing” of clean linens.

Another room in the laundry area has revealed an open fireplace, a hearth for a stove, and an arch with both a wooden shelf and access to a chimney. How these three areas were originally used remains a mystery for now.

The most recent find was an arched passage through the north wall, leading from the cellar to “boiler room,” located in the ell of the building. Further investigation led to the discovery of six steps leading down from the boiler room through that opening to the cellar, having been filled with debris and covered in concrete at some point in the building’s history. Just above the steps to the cellar, a small egress was uncovered, revealing what was possibly a window to help light the passage.



Recently discovered steps (pictured above right) leading from the “boiler room” to the cellar. The cavity had been filled with hundreds of pounds of broken brick and covered in concrete. To the left is an opening that was probably a “pass through” to the ironing area. Above the stairs is evidence of what may have been a window.



## RESEARCH NEVER ENDS . . . THANKFULLY!

Maud Laules (1889-1972) was a Shaker child at South Union, arriving with her widowed mother and older brother in the fall of 1889. When her mother died of tuberculosis in 1900, Maud apparently drew closer to her friend and mentor, Sister Frances Carey (ca. 1833-1914). Maud remained at South Union until November 9, 1902 when she departed the community to pursue employment. The official record states that she “left here today with a woman who lives about 3 miles from here, by the name of Andrews. Her Brother Frank left here the week before. We took these children when Maud was an infant in her Mother’s arms, and now after 13 years, in which we tried to make something of them and failed.” Frank eventually returned to South Union and died, also of tuberculosis, in 1907.

After Maud’s departure from South Union in 1902 she returned to visit Sister Frances Carey on many occasions. Records document an overnight stay in the Trustees Office just prior to her wedding in 1910, when Sister Frances made a gift of \$8.00 to the soon-to-be newlyweds. The women’s last visit together occurred on July 7, 1914.

On July 11, 1970, Maud Laules McCulloch returned to South Union to attend the annual production of “Shakertown Revisited,” held in a tent on the grounds of the former village. A local newspaper covered her visit and noted the fact that she was commissioned a Kentucky Colonel, in honor of being “perhaps, the only living member of the South Union Shaker Community.” Unfortunately, Maud’s historic return to South Union was not recorded by photographers. She did, however, agree to an interview, culminating in two pages of text that detail her activities and other remembrances as a child at South Union.

In that interview, Maud Laules McCulloch recounted the story of her family’s arrival in 1889, her visit to the Shaker community in White Oak, Georgia, the household chores that were required of her, and details about dining customs the Shakers practiced. “Daily routine was breakfast at 6, dinner at noon, and supper at 6. There was no oral return of thanks at the meal but each person was expected to offer a silent prayer of thanks. Strict silence was maintained during the meals . . . The Elders at small tables and the rest of the people sat at long tables. The men were all at the table on the right and the women at the table on the left.”

In July 2018, while SUSV staff was examining the quickly fading signatures in the mortar on the façade of the South Union Hotel, Maud Laules’ name was discovered. Twice. One has to wonder if during the many trips made to visit Sister Frances Carey that she may have stopped to add her name to the building like so many other railroad travelers had done.

Research continues on the fascinating human stories at South Union and, thankfully, there seems no end in sight.



Maud Laules’ signatures in the mortar of the façade of the South Union Hotel, ca. 1900-1910.

For more information about the life of Maud Laules, a well-documented article written by Dale Covington can be found in *The Shaker Messenger*, Vol. 17, No. 3, March 1996.



## THIS PLACE MATTERS

Rebekah Brummett



Riverview at Hobson Grove in Bowling Green

Continuing our targeted outreach efforts, South Union recently led a coalition of history-related sites and museums spanning four Kentucky counties in an initiative entitled *This Place Matters*. *This Place Matters*, an effort begun by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, was adapted and adopted by the coalition and supported by Kentucky's regional tourism officials. For 2018, TPM focused on promoting the relevancy of local history which culminated in a free admission day on Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup>. All participating sites enjoyed a significant increase in visitation on free admission day and two sites welcomed new members.

TPM exceeded the benchmarks set for its inaugural year. The results have been an increased awareness as well as an appreciation

for the positive impact history-related sites make on local communities and their economies through the preservation of irreplaceable, historic resources and opportunities for learning. In addition, bonds among TPM participants have grown, and we anticipate a wellspring of positive outcomes as a result of the increased dialogue among Southern Kentucky's museum community.

The sites that participated were Riverview at Hobson Grove in Bowling Green, Franklin-Simpson County Archives in Franklin, Logan County Archives in Russellville, Green River Museum in Woodbury, and Auburn History Museum and South Union Shaker Village in Auburn.



Franklin-Simpson County Archives in Franklin

## MEET JEFF CLARK



South Union Shaker Village welcomes Jeffery Clark as the newest member of our Advisory Committee. This group is made up of people who possess knowledge and valuable expertise that help shape what we do as a historic site. The Advisory Committee was formed in 1990 and meets once a year.

Jeff Clark is a writer/researcher and former adjunct professor at Duke University. He has worked for the Environmental Protection Agency and served as Director of Communications and Special Assistant for Legislative Affairs, Office of Air and Radiation, Washington, D.C. Jeff has also served on several Congressional sub-committees and has received awards for his distinguished government work and education. Jeff has been married to Marion Jackson for 35 years.

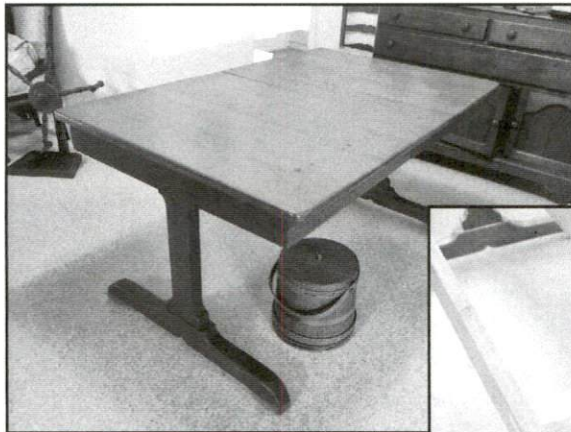
One of the most interesting things about Jeffrey Clark is that he had five family members who were South Union Shakers. Two of them, Lucy Ann Clark (1828-1814) and Nancy Clark (1833-1902), lived most of their life in the village and are buried in the South Union cemetery. The other three eventually left the community. An avid historian, Jeff is currently writing a book about his family and their experiences at South Union.



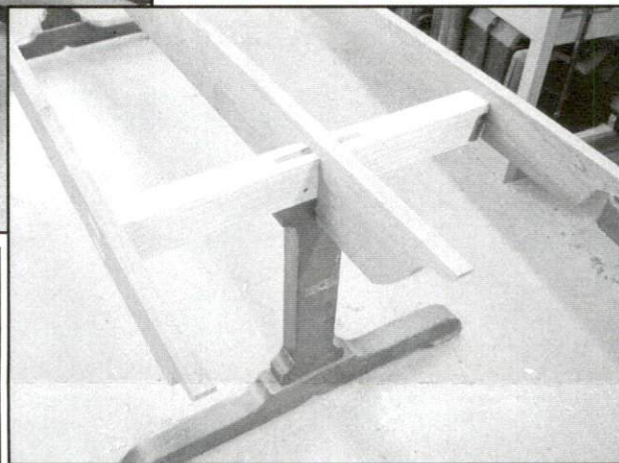
## SOUTH UNION TRESTLE TABLE COMES HOME

In May of 1920, the Shakers decided to hold a public auction to dispose of things they were no longer using. Held on the steps of the Meeting House, the sale brought in nearly \$4,000.00 in proceeds to the community. A journal keeper noted "I think is better than leaving the furniture for the rats to destroy in the attic."

Two years later, the village had closed and the Shakers were gone from South Union. It was then that Shaker leaders in New York administered a sale to dispose of what furniture was left. Posters emblazoned with the heading "LAST CALL," brought hundreds of buyers on April 8, 1922, and the remaining personal property was sold. One final auction, held September 26, 1922, attracted over 4,000 people to buy land, buildings, livestock and farm equipment.



The table (above) in the home of Betty Harper, seen in its "shortened" state, the result of a 1924 alteration. A new support structure crafted by Roger Ryan, restored the table to its original length (right).



Apparently, the buildings were not completely empty when O. A. Bland purchased the Centre House, prior to the final sale when Oscar Bond took possession of most of the village. Mr. Bland gave his daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Day, a trestle table that had been left in the dining room. Mrs. Day's personal records indicate she took the table to Adairville for

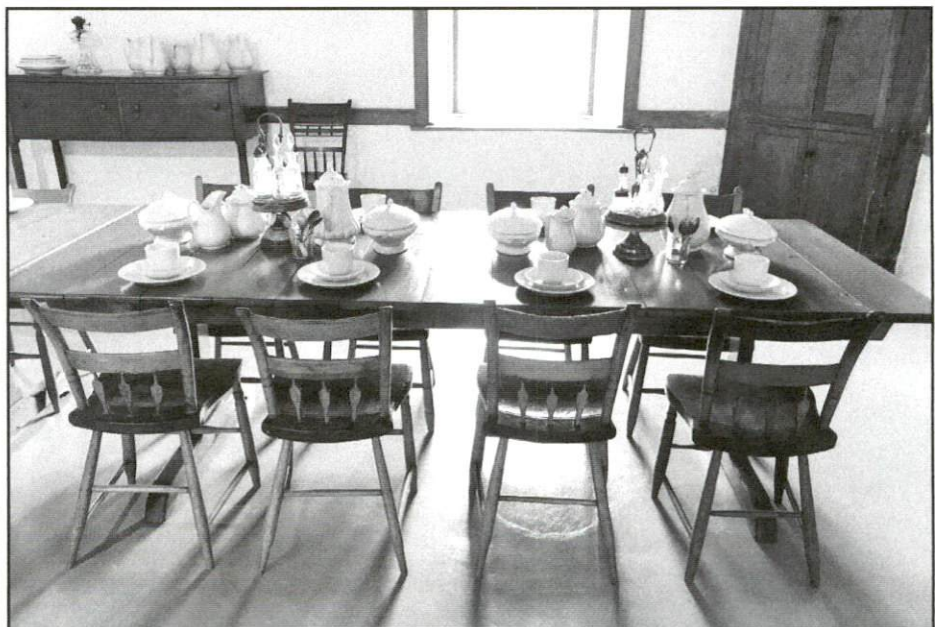
re-finishing, and to have it adapted from eight to six feet, making it usable for a modern dining room. Fortunately, the table was outfitted with a mechanism to allow for expansion and the addition of leaves, when needed. Because of this, all of the original top boards were preserved.

In 1984 the table was given by Mrs. Day to her daughter, Betty Harper. Mrs. Harper

contacted the museum at South Union five years later to make us aware of the table's existence. Correspondence and photographs were retained in the collections files for nearly three decades until last year when Mrs. Harper's son, Cameron Harper, approached SUSV with news that the family wanted to donate the table.

The only stipulation was that the museum had to get the trestle table from Florida to South Union, which was accomplished by a local courier service. Soon after the table arrived it was taken to the shop of Roger Ryan for restoration. The severed and shortened structural members supporting the top were replaced, using one of the collection's other trestle tables as a model. The restored table was delivered to the museum in June and immediately placed on exhibit in the Centre House dining room, its original location.

Many thanks to Betty Harper for her very generous contribution and to Roger Ryan for his meticulous dedication to detail.



The restored trestle table, ca. 1833, (right) now back in the Centre House dining room after an absence of nearly 100 years.



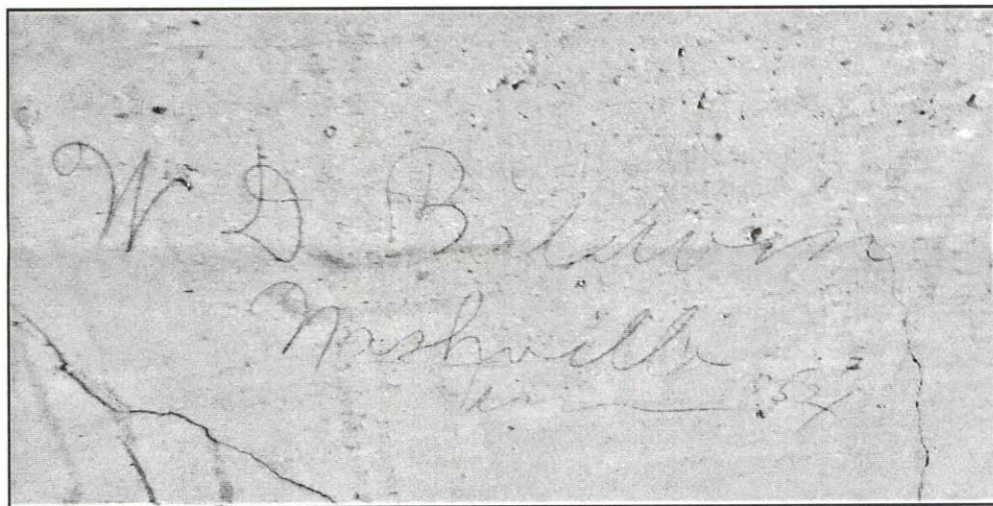
## GRAFFITI AT SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE . . . Sally Givens

When people think about the Shakers and their lifestyle the images that most often come to mind are that of a neat and orderly existence. As a communal society, everything a person owned belonged to and was used by the "family." Putting your initials or name on an object to show possession was frowned upon by the leaders. However, just because this was the rule does not mean that everyone abided by it. There are many examples at South Union of people who left their mark. Some of these people were not Shakers, but travelers passing through.

Since the acquisition of the 1854 Wash House, we have found numerous signatures from different time periods. The earliest of these was discovered in the attic where a man named W. D. Baldwin from Nashville, Tennessee signed the plaster. What makes this signature so fascinating is that it is dated 1854 when construction of the interior of the Wash House had not yet been completed. A quick Google search has revealed that Baldwin may have been a pastor from Nashville. Baldwin's visit is not recorded in the journals so his reason for visiting and the amount of time spent here is unknown. The walls of the Wash House attic are, in fact, covered with signatures of people who lived in the building during the 1920s–1940s. One of the most prominent signatures is that of Ulysses "Slim" Trogden, a carpenter who worked for Oscar Bond, the man who purchased much of the village in 1922. Slim and his family lived for many years in the Smoke and Milk House.

A "hotspot" for signatures here on the property is the 1869 South Union Hotel. There are at least three dozen signatures in the mortar on the front of the building. Some include dates that range from the late 19th century through the 1940s. While many of the people who signed their names are unknown, others have been identified by friends and family.

As we continue to work in the Wash House, we expect to find more mysteries, more signatures, and hopefully more clues as to who exactly worked and possibly lived in the building. While these marks from the past are fascinating, we no longer advocate writing on our historic buildings. Today the guest book in the Visitor Center is where we encourage travelers to leave their mark at South Union!



The signature of W. D. Baldwin and the date 1854 have been discovered on the plaster in the Wash House attic. Baldwin may have been a pastor from Nashville, Tennessee.



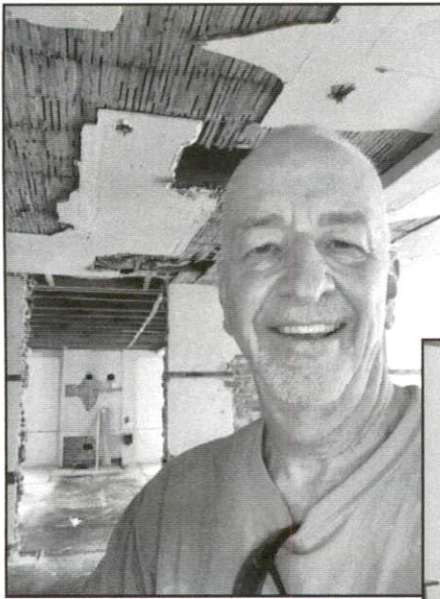
So Shakertown's good elders met,  
And "yea," quoth they, "we owe a debt  
Of gratitude to WINTERSMITH  
For marv'lous cures wrought quickly with  
His physic for this grievous shaking  
Which long hath kept our bodies quaking."

## LIBRARY RARITIES

Russellville artist Roberta Fisk McClean (1882-1975) was known for her impressionist-style paintings of local buildings and landscapes. Few people are aware that her first commercial work was a series of advertisements for Wintersmith's Chill Tonic, produced in Louisville from 1868 until the 1920s. The bottled medication was purported to cure chills, fever, and malaria.

McClean was asked by the South Union Shakers to create the advertisements in order to help promote the tonic, which they marketed. Eight examples survive, each using the Shakers in the illustration and as subjects for the poetic text. The ads were published in the *Louisville Times*, ca. 1900.





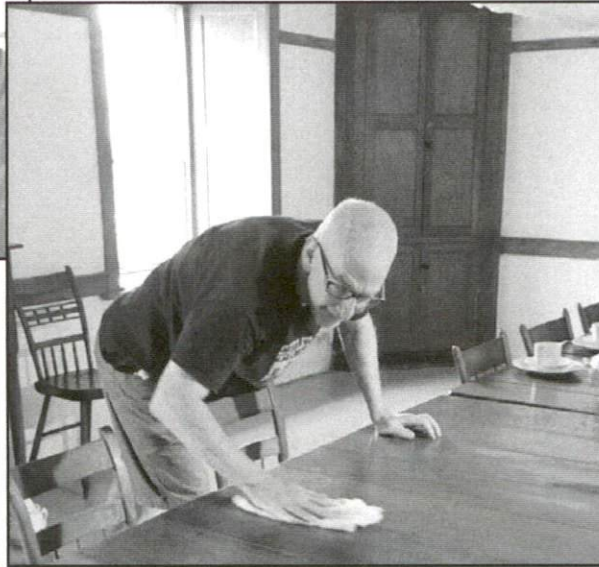
## THANK YOU, MICHAEL TAYLOR!

South Union Shaker Village received a wonderful gift in the month of June when Michael Taylor spent nearly two weeks doing volunteer work. Michael, who lives in Lexington, attended the South Union Seminar in April and became interested in the work here. He contacted the Village soon after, offering his very able services and, of course, we welcomed him with open arms. Michael spent several grueling days in the summer heat, tearing up carpet from the floors of the Wash House and hauling debris to the reclamation bin. He also worked with Sally Givens, Curator of Collections, cleaning furniture and other objects in exhibits throughout the Centre House.

One of Michael's areas of interest and expertise is 19th century printing practices and techniques. He spent several hours in our library doing research and examining many of the books and other publications that were printed at South Union.

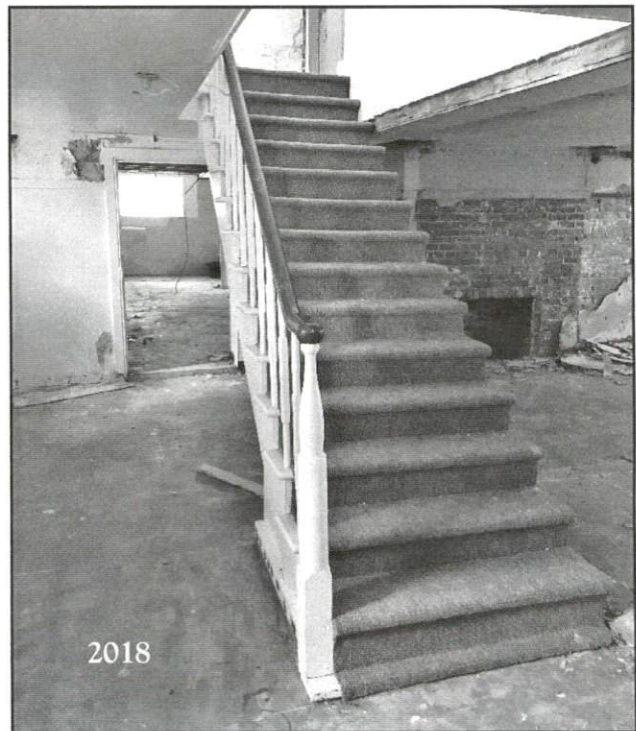
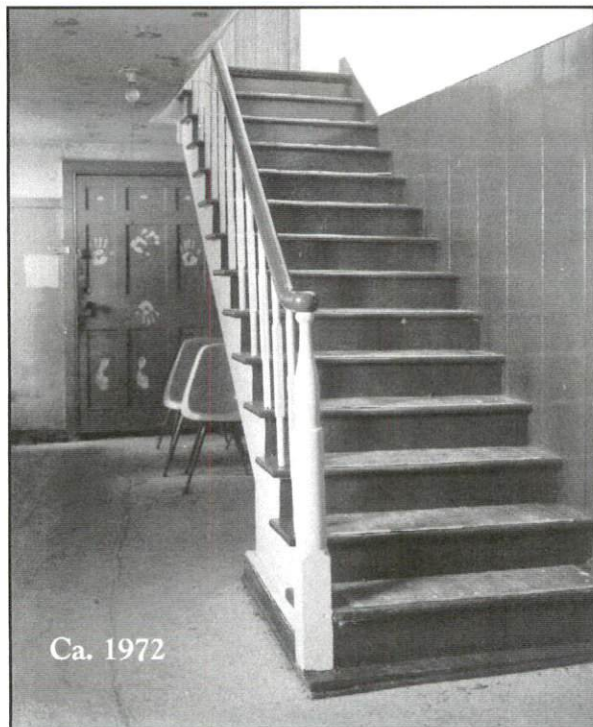
Many thanks to Michael Taylor lending us his talent and expertise. We enjoyed your time with us!

Michael Taylor assisted with the interior demolition of the Wash House, under the supervision of SUSV maintenance staff member, Johnny Miller. At right, Michael helped also out with curatorial duties, seen here cleaning period exhibition spaces.



## BEFORE AND ... STILL BEFORE

The two photographs below have captured the cellar staircase in the 1854 Wash House, the image on the left from 1972 and the one on the right from 2018. Ray Pearson's documentary photographs from the 1970s have been a great resource for the purposes of restoration. Missing in the photo at right is the door leading to the east cellar room and the board wall that separated the stair hall and the center cellar room. Both will eventually be reproduced and re-installed.





# A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thanks so much, SUSV Friends, for continuing to support our efforts here. This has been a summer for new exhibits, important acquisitions, and exciting restoration in the Wash House. Our tireless staff continues to be innovative and creative in discovering new ways to tell the story of the people who lived at South Union. If you haven't visited us this year, make sure and stop by and see some of the new things we have to offer.

We have also experienced some setbacks in 2018, one of them being a slight decrease in visitor numbers so far. In a day when there are countless ways to communicate your message to audiences (and we are using most of them!), word of mouth is still such an important tool to generate interest. We appreciate our Friends organization spreading the word. Secondly, our Civil War event, planned for September 22 and 23, has been cancelled due to the fact that the volunteer coordinator was unable to get the enough response from participants. We are very disappointed not to be able to host this event that SUSV had been anticipating for many months. Our apologies.

Make sure and plan to attend one or more of our upcoming special tours or events. There are also lots of opportunities to volunteer at South Union! Give us a call if you can help. Tommy Hines

*Follow us on Facebook: South Union Shaker Village*  
*Or Instagram: southunionsv*

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION

### **For Event Sponsorship:**

\$1,000.00—Shannon and Michael Vitale and Hilliard Lyons  
for *South Union Seminar*

\$1,000.00—Logan Aluminum for *Shake, Ride & Roll Bike Event*  
and *Holiday Market*

\$500.00—JB Distributors for *Shake, Ride & Roll Bike Event*

\$250.00—Vickie A. Cole for *Shaker Breakfast*

\$250.00—Dr. Chris Givens, DMD for *Farm to Table Fall Dinner*

### **Wash House Restoration:**

\$200.00—Elaine Disch

### **Gifts in Honor of Elaine Disch**

George and Darlene Korhman

Lisa Disch

Kathleen Moriarty

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*Curator of Community Engagement*

Sally Givens  
*Curator of Collections & Development*

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# SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE

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## SUSV CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### 1854 WASH HOUSE EXPLORATION

Friday, September 14

The Wash House restoration is underway and you can join Executive Director Tommy Hines on a special tour that explores the mysteries of one of South Union's most important buildings.

Regular admission charges apply / 3:00pm-4:00pm

### BEHIND-THE-SCENES COLLECTIONS TOUR

Tuesday, September 18

Spend an hour with Curator of Collections Sally Givens, taking a behind-the-scenes look at some of South Union's unique and distinctive objects.

Regular admission charges apply / 11:00am until noon

### SOUTH UNION FURNITURE TALK

Wednesday, September 26

Examine the furniture-making legacy of the South Union Shakers with Executive Director Tommy Hines.

Regular admission charges apply / 3:00pm-4:00pm

### FARM TO TABLE: *FALL DINNER IN THE 1875 GRAIN BARN*

Saturday, October 13

Join us for an autumn meal created from local sources, served in the rustic atmosphere of the 1875 Grain Barn. Catered by River Cottage Farms and wine by Carriage House Vineyards. Menu available online.

Reservations required: \$75 per person / Time: 6:30pm

Sponsored by Dr. Chris Givens, DMD

## A SHAKER BREAKFAST

Saturday, November 3

A Civil War-era Shaker breakfast that promises to please and to astonish . . . featuring fried chicken, scrambles eggs, sweet potatoes, pork sausage, asparagus, apple pie, buttermilk biscuits and more!

Served at the historic South Union Hotel.

Reservations required: \$24 members, \$27 non-members

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

Sponsored by First Southern National Bank, Vickie A. Cole

## FALL CHILDREN'S TOUR OPTIONS

*Community Builders: Kentucky Shakers at South Union*  
Students explore the natural resources and human capital needed to grow the village from a collection of frontier farms into a substantial village. This program highlights the life of Br. David Barnett, African American Shaker and skilled mason.

*To Grandmother's House We Go! Southern Culture & Foodways.* Students participate in churning, grinding, and mixing as they explore southern culture through food selection and meal preparation.

*Children's Programs Sponsored by The Spiller Family*

SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE  
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270-542-4167 SouthUnionShakerVillage.com