South Union Messenger (February 2000)

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The 1854 Washhouse -- A New Challenge

Our long-range plan regarding the acquisition of the 1854 Centre Family Washhouse has suddenly turned into a very immediate crisis. The large brick structure, one of the finest existing Shaker buildings, is in danger of undergoing permanent and irreversible alterations. The current owners have mentioned a start date as early as May unless we come up with an alternative. While we have been fortunate enough to purchase hundreds of acres of farmland, thus preserving the surrounding landscape, the alteration of the Washhouse would be an anachronism right in our "backyard." The time to act is now. Unfortunately, the more a building is changed, the faster any hope of proper restoration fades. A variety of funding possibilities are currently being explored. Please feel free to contact the museum for more details.

Airpark Board Makes Final Decision

We at South Union have breathed a collective sigh of relief! In December, we learned that South Union was not picked as the site for a proposed airpark. While we hate to see such a facility developed anywhere in this region, we are certainly glad it is not being built in our local area. A hearty word of thanks goes out to all of our friends who wrote letters to the Airpark Board. It was clear from the meetings we attended that your letters were heard and taken into consideration. Your response to this crisis was an encouragement to all of us here at the museum.

First Maples Planted

We are pleased to report that the first four sugar maple trees have been planted along the "Great Road." This area, between the Ministry Shop and the location of the East Family, is slowly developing into one of the most beautiful sections of the historic site. Trees can be purchased for $175, in honor of a loved one or in general memoriam. We encourage everyone to consider taking part in this very meaningful project.
Welcome New Members

John Alexander Beebe, Baltimore, Maryland
Terry F. White, Harrodsburg, Kentucky
Sandra Pruitt Miller, Greer, South Carolina
Patricia S. Finnell, Denver, Colorado

Thank You for Your Contributions

Auburn Banking Company, underwriting for Christmas at Shakertown
John Campbell, New Haven, Kentucky, for general support and web site development
Helm Foundation, for general support
Pat & Mary Allen, Lebanon, Ohio, for general support
International Paper, Hopkinsville, Kentucky, for general support
Firstar Bank, Russellville, Kentucky, for general support
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas A. McKenzie III, Huntsville, Alabama, for Morton Farm support
Jerry Grant & Sharon Koomler, East Chatham, NY, contribution for artifact acquisition
Marty Travis, Fairbury, IL, contribution for artifact acquisition

The 1835 Smoke & Milk House Window Project: a subtle, yet important change. Before (left) and after (right).
Another Christmas season has passed at South Union, the decorations are packed away, and the aroma of spiced tea has faded from the halls. **Christmas at Shakertown** was a wonderful time of seeing old friends and meeting new antique and craft enthusiasts. Hundreds of people turned out for the annual event, which featured everything from freshly baked bread and fruitcakes to 18th century Windsor chairs. Those who attended the second-annual Preview Party were treated to a sumptuous variety of desserts for the true sweet tooth. We would like to take time to thank all of the vendors who participated in the 1999 Christmas Show:

- Barbara Catlett Antiques
- David Taylor Antiques
- Westwick Enterprises
- Lynda Wyatt's Antiques
- Antiques at Liberty Landing
- Country Moments
- Heartstrings
- Mrs. Hinkle's Fruitcakes
- Shanty Hollow Pottery
- Wheeler Antiques & Herbs
- Basket Bounty
- Chelsea Antiques
- Kay Bender Antiques
- The WEE Shop
- The Tenant House
- Gypsy Spoons
- Lit'l Bit of Kunity
- Nell Peperis
- Quilted Creations
- Raggedy Man Antiques
- The Kentucky Sandpiper
- Enchanted Hills Antiques
- Log Cabin Antiques
- Marsha T's Antique Center
- B & M Goodies
- Countryside Bake Shop
- Country Tin Painting
- Sandra's Baskets
- Roger Selvidge

The Shaker Museum again hosted close to 1,200 students during our annual **Christmas in the Kitchen** program. Not only did the students learn about Shaker Christmas traditions, but they were also exposed to the world of 19th century kitchen gadgetry. The Centre House kitchen will never be the same! Needless to say, the month of December was a busy, yet rewarding time. Plans for the spring are well under way, with hopes of expanding the children's calendar to include more year-round opportunities and programming. With the anticipated restoration and development of the South Farm, additional space will be available for a more diverse schedule of events. The South Farm contains five key features: the 1875 Shaker Grain Barn, the Holy Ground, the village cemetery, an open-air shed for group activities, and a large demonstration barn. Utilization of this area will allow for a more involved interpretation of the South Union farm operation and provide students with a lot of "room to roam."

We are opening the year with two new exhibits, one featuring South Union textiles, including silk, that have not been out for the public in some time. In addition, we are excited about two temporary exhibits, highlighting the work of two very talented artists, Martha Wetherbee and Catherine Courtenaye. These two exhibits, focusing on basket-making and watercolor paintings, respectively, will take us through the summer months of the 2000 season. Combined with two basket-making workshops and our regular events, the spring promises to offer something for everyone.
Recent Acquisitions

The National Gazette and Literary Register, Philadelphia, PA. 1822 and 1825 editions featuring articles about the Kentucky Shakers and the Shaker community at Harvard, MA, respectively.  

The New Yorker, June 23, 1838. Includes lengthy article on a trip to the Shaker village of Watervliet, NY by writer/publisher Horace Greeley.


Early Victorian Settee, ca. 1840. Late empire, mahogany veneer. Bought from the Shakers prior to 1922.  

South Union envelope, ca. 1878. Features a South Union "Sash Balance" graphic.

South Union letterhead, February 8, 1879. Letterhead of James Richardson, South Union Trustee.

Evidence Shaker Greetings, Logan County, Ky. 1879.
Thank You Recent Contributors to "Buying Back the Shaker Farm"

Fundraising Drive Goal: $585,000
Balance Yet to Raise as of 2/1/2000: $117,125

Mr. & Mrs. Ray Clark, Russellville, KY in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Ray Scott
Atticus Trust, Nashville, TN
Lyle & Ruth Taylor, Huntsville, AL
Sandra Pruitt Miller, Greer, SC
Esther Coke, Yarmouthport, MA
Chicago Area Shaker Interest Group, Chicago, IL

1999 Volunteer of the Year

We would like to congratulate Mr. Mike Sisk on receiving the 1999 Deedy Hall Volunteer of the Year Award. Mike, who lives in Elizabethtown, Kentucky has been involved with South Union for a number of years and many of you remember him from his days as a full-time staff member. While in a different capacity, Mike has continued to work closely with the museum, volunteering his time at events like Shaker Farm Day. His assistance in the planning stages of the 1999 Southern Furniture Symposium was invaluable and we can not thank him enough for his numerous trips to pick up and return furniture of all shapes and sizes.

On a more personal note, we would also like to congratulate Mike and his wife Monique on the recent birth of their first child, a healthy baby girl, Lauren Elizabeth. We wish Mike and his family all the best and look forward to working with him in the future.

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The South Union Messenger is published by the Shaker Museum at South Union.
For more information contact the museum at:
P.O. Box 30
South Union, Kentucky 42283
Phone: 270-542-4167   Fax: 270-542-7558
E-mail: shakmus@logantele.com   Webpage: http://www.logantele.com/~shakmus/
Word from the Director—Tommy Hines

With temperatures in the single digits I am eagerly awaiting the coming of spring at South Union. Our opening day for the 2000 season is just a month away and, as always, we have committed to completing a number of exciting projects for the winter. Visitors will be able to enjoy several new exhibits this year, view an expanded "Shaker Farm" vista, and will see the plaster and paint restored in the Centre House meeting room.

The meeting room is one of the most beautiful spaces in the dwelling and is used constantly for temporary exhibits, programs, performances, and gatherings. Because the restoration needs in the meeting room were less severe than in other rooms in the Centre House, the large second floor space has always been delegated to the bottom of the priority list. This winter we have made it our sole interior restoration project. Slated for completion in mid-February, the restored plaster surface and whitewash finish is going to be a pleasant surprise for those who have visited before. Exposed during the restoration were four tin-lined cylindrical channels in the meeting room walls, located near the ceiling level. The channel openings were covered with metal discs that, once cleaned of multiple coats of paint, revealed a series of tiny ventilation holes. While the purpose of these channels remains a mystery, it has been suggested that tin pipes from hanging kerosene fixtures may have vented fumes through them. "Tin Lilies," or kerosene fixtures with ventilation pipes, were used at the Shaker village in Hancock, Massachusetts. Maybe the South Union Shakers liked the idea!

We have exciting news regarding two of our former staff members. In addition to being named the 1999 Volunteer of the Year, Mike Sisk also became the proud father of a baby girl, Lauren Elizabeth. Congratulations to Mike and his wife, Monique. Likewise, our former education director, Mary Inkrot welcomed a new baby, John Patrick. Mary and her husband Tom report that everything is going great, though a bit more hectic than ever before. We wish both families the best.

Take a close look at our 2000 calendar and make plans to visit South Union often this year. Do what you can to help us increase our visitor numbers! We are still experiencing a slump in visitation that we hope to pull out of during the 2000 season. Thanks so much for your very valuable support. We could not do it without you.

Memorial Contributions

Mary Lucy Franklin, in memory of Bessie Spurlock
Exhibits & Workshops

March 1  "South Union: A Dynamic Journey"
This new permanent exhibit will address the many changes that have taken place at South Union since the Shakers left in 1922. With only half of a Centre House dwelling room restored, visitors will have an opportunity to see what the interior of the Centre House looked like prior to restoration. 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm. Free admission.

April 3  "Considering the Lilies: Shaker Textile Art at South Union"
Functional, yet beautiful woolens, linens and silks produced by the South Union Shakers during the 19th century will be on exhibit for the 2000 season. 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm. Free admission.

May 26  "Shaker Legacy: The Basket Collection of Martha Wetherbee"
Heralded for reviving the tradition of Shaker basket making, Martha Wetherbee will present her private collection of finely crafted Shaker baskets. Through June 19. 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm. Free admission.

June 9  Shaker Basket Workshop I
Make a reproduction Shaker puzzle cathead basket with Martha Wetherbee. No experience necessary, beginners welcome. Fee: TBA  Time: TBA

June 10-11  Shaker Basket Workshop II
During this two day workshop, make a reproduction Mt. Lebanon fruit basket with Martha Wetherbee. No experience necessary, beginners welcome.
Fee: TBA  Time: TBA

June 13  Gallery Walk and Basket Evaluation
Martha Wetherbee will accompany visitors throughout the "Shaker Legacy", providing valuable commentary on each basket on display. Participants can also bring a basket of their own to be evaluated by Martha.

July 1  "Colors of the Soul: Paintings of Shaker Objects"
Original watercolors by California artist Catherine Courtenaye. Through July 31. 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm. Free admission.
Upcoming at the Shaker Museum - Special Events

April 14-15  South Union Seminar

Our annual two day event, focusing on Shaker history and material culture. Fee includes Friday evening dinner, Saturday continental breakfast, and Saturday lunch.
Reservations are required. Fee: TBA  Time: 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Saturday.
This event funded in part by Hilliard Lyons.

June 3  An Evening in Shakertown

A gala fund-raising event to support the preservation efforts at the South Union historic site. Come enjoy dinner and dancing on the grounds of the 1824 Centre Family Dwelling.
Reservations required.