

# The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from The Museum at Lower Shaker Village

Volume II / No. 1

Fall 1988

## A Reluctant Mother, A Miraculous Path and Other Mysteries

by Elaine P. Loft

*Elaine P. Loft is the volunteer coordinator of The Museum's new Oral History Project. Since August, 1988 she has been soliciting memories of the Enfield Shakers and their village from local residents. To date she has talked to nearly a dozen people and has recorded their stories for The Museum's archives.*

One of the Oral History Project's most interesting stories resulted from a visit with Webster and Mary Hill of Enfield. Mr. Hill's great-great grandmother (four generations, if you are counting), Dorcas Ferrin Huse, had several sisters who became Shakers. According to family history, Dorcas' parents were divorced, and her mother brought her daughters to live in Enfield. As far as the Hills knew, Dorcas' sisters were buried in the Shaker cemetery.

Surely enough, the Church Family cemetery plot plan, now on exhibit at The Museum at Lower Shaker Village, contains the following entries:

|                                                       |                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Hannah Ferrin<br>Died July 21, 1793<br>Age 23         | Mary Ferrin<br>Died Feb. 4, 1827<br>Age 84 |
| Eldress Esther Ferrin<br>Died Jan. 19, 1845<br>Age 72 |                                            |

Confident I had found Dorcas' Shaker siblings, I returned to share my news with the Hills. We used the tombstone entries to calculate when each Ferrin was born. Simple subtraction revealed a new angle. Although Hannah and Esther were only three years apart in age, Mary was nearly thirty years older. Obviously, Mary Ferrin was not one of Dorcas' sisters, but her mother. Now a new set of questions arose. Did Mary join the



*The author talks with Webster Hill, whose great-great-great grandmother and great-great aunts were among the first Shaker converts in Enfield.*

Shakers because as a divorced mother in the 1700's she could not provide for her daughters? And why, if her mother and sisters became Shakers, did Dorcas not join the faith?

I continued my research at the Enfield Public Library. In the town's geneological records I found entries for Mary, Hannah, Esther and Dorcas, as well as for a "missing" sister, Rhoda. There were no records listing a Mr. Ferrin, though Mary's entry stated that she had married a Phineas Ferrin.

With the assistance of librarian Marjorie Carr, I began leafing through the library's Shaker notebooks, searching for further references. The journals of Shaker Henry Blinn yielded some answers. The section on "Deaths from 1792 to 1820" contains a reference to Hannah, the oldest Ferrin child.

Hannah Ferrin was born July 23, 1770. She entered the society in March, 1793. She was one of the first sisters that accepted the faith of Believers in Enfield. Hannah was the daughter of Mary Ferrin. Hannah was the first person who died after

the organization of the society and her burial was in the North cemetery. Died July 21, 1793. Age 22 years, 11 months and 28 days.

Another entry discusses Esther, and also suggests that Mary Ferrin did not approve of the Shakers:

Eldress Esther Ferrin was born Jan. 15, 1773, joined (the) Society in March, 1793, died Jan. 19, 1845. Before (the) Church family was organized, Esther lived with her mother and sister in a house where the North family (house) now stands. (Her) father had died some time before the arrival of the Shakers. (The) girls wanted to join, but (their) mother did not favor it. Neighbors interfered. (The) girls had their hair cut close to their heads hoping they would be left alone. Esther went to live with Molly Brooks on George Hill.

Molly Brooks (or Estabrooks) and her husband Josiah were two of Enfield's first converts to the Shaker faith. My search into a paper entitled "A Concise Account of the Commencement and Early Progress, Shakerism or Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, in the Town of Enfield, County of Grafton, and State of New Hampshire" brought to light a fascinating passage, narrated by Molly, containing one of the famous Shaker "visions."

Esther Ferrin, when she was a youth, worked with me, as I needed some help and she was striving to be a Believer...Someone would generally inform us when there was going to be a meeting. One night we were told they were expecting a very long meeting. We started in the evening, winter weather, as soon as our work was done, and arrived at the Meeting House before the meeting commenced. We had a powerful meeting; it lasted until nearly 3 o'clock the next morning. When we went to the door thinking to go home, we saw the snow had fallen so that it was ankle deep. I said to

*Continued on page 3*



## Gift Acknowledgements

The last issue of *The Friends' Quarterly* listed several items from The Museum's "wish list." We have since received helpful donations from the following supporters: thanks to **C.A. Russi** for a 35 mm camera, to **Galen Beale** for a portable space heater, and to **Diane Langley** for a refrigerator. All

these gifts are greatly appreciated. We still could use two cassette players, both portable (for the oral history project), or a stereo model (for Shaker music in the West Brethren's Shop exhibition area). If you have either of these to donate, please call The Museum at (603) 632-5533. □

## Sage Thoughts

by Happy Griffiths, Herbalist

Potpourri, a French word meaning "fermented in a pot," has come to mean a scented blend of dried herbs, flowers, and spices with a fixative to hold the scent. During the winter when the garden is under a thick blanket of snow, you can enjoy the fragrance of summer by creating a wonderful blend of natural plant materials to fill your home with aromatic delights.

The use of herbal fragrances dates back to the ancient Egyptians. The Shakers, with their extensive herb and rose gardens, created wonderful potpourris to scent their rooms, sachets to perfume their linens, and closet bags to repel moths and other insects from their clothing.

There is nothing difficult about creating your own potpourri. All materials must be "corn flake" chip dry. Rose petals and lavender flowers are the traditional main scents because they retain their scents longer than other flowers. The secondary ingredients, known as blenders, are used as accents to round off or enhance the main scent. These might include calendula blossoms, violet petals, and the leafy herbs such as mint, marjoram, thyme, lemon balm and rose geranium. Next, either crushed or whole spices are added along with dried citrus peels, if desired. All these scents are volatile and quickly evaporate without the addition of a fixative which holds the scent for longer lasting potpourris. The most popular fixative is orris root, the dried, crushed rhizome of the Florentine iris. Orris root can be purchased at any health food store. Finally, essential oils, which are concentrated plant distillates, are added to potpourris to increase the scent.

Try your hand at this basic herb and flower potpourri. 4 cups rose petals, 1 cup each lavender, sweet marjoram and rosemary, 2 Tbs. each cinnamon, crushed nutmeg and allspice, 1/4 cup orris root with 8 drops of rose oil and 4 drops of lavender oil. Mix together the roses, herbs and spices. Mix oils with the orris root and combine the two mixtures. Store in an airtight jar for at least 5 weeks, shaking the jar every few days. Follow the same method for this Shaker closet bag to repel moths: 1/2 cup each rosemary, tansy and mint. 1 cup southernwood and 1/4 cup ground cloves. Mix together and put into bags.

Potpourri blending is creative, fun and easy to do. After a while you will want to experiment with new combinations as you save summer in a jar.

## Agriculture Preserved in Museum Display Gardens

This year marked a dramatic expansion of The Museum's display gardens. By adding 3/4 of an acre of organically grown vegetables to the 11,000 square foot herb beds established the year before, a continuous agricultural space now stretches from the entrance of the 1854 Cow Barn to Route 4A. As the Enfield Shaker community was primarily agricultural, and with agriculture in our region rapidly giving way to development, The Museum felt it was important to establish a strong farm program as an integral part of its activities.

The vegetable garden was designed and operated in compliance with the codes of the New Hampshire Organic Farmers Association, with guidance from **Tim Sanford**. Future plans call for researching and implementing as much as possible the Shakers' past practices and crop varieties. In this first year organic methods were chosen as being the closest to the careful, thrifty farming of the Shakers. The vegetable garden was managed by **Richard Dionne**, with the assistance of **Norman Tourville**.

Participants in this summer's Village Gardener program tended the herb garden as well as the vegetable garden under the direction of Museum Herbalist **Happy Griffiths** and her assistant **Andy Green**.

Thanks to Village Gardener graduates **Irene Rogers, Eva Daniels, Joanne Spencer, Nancy Sycamore, Kitty Scherer, Helga Scherer, and Richard Vandall** for their dozens of gardening hours, and to the many other volunteers and Farmer's Market customers who helped make the new gardens a great success! □





Volunteer tour guide Ann Marie Disco (at left) addresses the fifth grade class of Donna Hazelton (standing at right) from Indian River School in West Canaan. School groups regularly tour The Museum's collection, and visit the buildings and grounds, under the guidance of staff and volunteer guides. Official 1988 volunteer tour guides also included: Barbara Bennett, Teri Elmore, Sue Hubbard, Lois Johnston, Joanne Spencer, Dick Vandall and Russ Yearke.

**The Friends' Quarterly** is a publication of The Museum at Lower Shaker Village. It is mailed as a service to Museum Friends. For information on the Friends program write: Membership Coordinator, The Museum at Lower Shaker Village, Box 25, Enfield, NH 03748, or call (603) 632-5533 or 632-4838.

**Museum Staff:**

Caryn Bosson, Assoc. Director  
Carolyn Smith, Assoc. Director  
Happy Griffiths, Herbalist

**Board of Trustees:**

Gregory C. Schwarz, President  
Stephen Powell, Vice-President  
Nancy King, Treasurer  
Harry Auger, Secretary  
Julie Adams  
Sister Frances Carr  
John Hayes  
Wendell Hess  
Thomas Hoare  
Kevin O'Reilly  
Dana Robes  
John Taylor

## 1988 Summer Season a Success

Guided tours, demonstrating craftspeople, beautifully tended gardens, a photographic exhibit and refreshments in The Good Room were some of The Museum's new offerings to visitors this summer. Daily attendance for the season was up more than 40% from last year, and with the new signs on Interstate 89 this figure should continue to grow.

A full schedule of workshops offered participants the opportunity to put their "Hands to Work." More than 260 people from all over New England came to learn skills practiced and perfected by the Shakers.

Other activities, such as Summer Sundays, the Festival of Shaker Crafts and Herbs, the Peter, Paul and Mary Concert, the Antique Show and Sale, and the Old-Time Shaker Harvest Festival rounded out the season and drew an additional 6,500 people to the

village and Museum.

1988 marked The Museum's second full season of operation. The total of more than 10,250 visitors attracted is the result of hundreds of volunteer and staff hours. We will continue to plan a variety of events and activities, with an emphasis on education, as we prepare for the coming year. If you are interested in being part of the planning and implementation of these programs please let The Museum know. Your support and interest keep this museum growing. □

## Holiday Dinners Offered

In the spirit of celebration, good food and fellowship The Museum is again offering Shaker Holiday Candlelight Dinners this year. These will take place on *Saturday, December 10* and *Saturday, December 17*, served in the diningroom of the Great Stone Dwelling and featuring dishes prepared from authentic Shaker recipes. The menu for both evenings will be:

Creamy Egg Nog  
Sparkling Cranberry Punch  
Pumpkin Soup  
Roast Turkey with Sage Dressing  
Broccoli with Dill Sauce  
Agreeable Onions  
Baked Yams  
Mushrooms in Sherry Butter  
Caraway, Herb &  
Cheese Onion Breads  
Cranberry-Apple Pie

Reservations for continuous seating from 6:00 to 8:00 pm are being accepted. The cost is \$12.50 for the public, \$10.50 for Friends, and \$6.50 for children under 12. Please call The Museum office at (603) 632-5533 to reserve your place at a Holiday Dinner. Space is limited, so early reservations are suggested. □

### Cover Story Continued...

Esther, "what shall we do or how can we find the little foot path that leads to our house through the woods?"

While we were contemplating our condition a black streak appeared on the snow before us. We started out in faith and followed it to George Hill, to the woods, and safe to our house—then it vanished. Always after this when there was snow on the ground and we were going to meeting this black streak would go before us on the snow and lead us safely. When the ground was bare and dark a bright streak would go before us leading us safely. After a while we moved on the hill above the second family buildings so as to be nearer the meeting house.

Esther, as her tombstone indicates, later became an Eldress.

In the end, my search for Webster Hill's long lost aunts has revealed a fascinating, and still mysterious story about three of the women who are buried in the Shaker cemetery at Enfield. I am hoping our continuous research will help us learn more about the Shakers who lived, worked and died in Enfield, New Hampshire. □



## Volunteers Honored at Celebration

The Museum may not yet be rich in material assets, but we do have a wealth of people who regularly contribute their time, skills and talents. The volunteer corps has grown to a total of nearly 90 people who have contributed in some way during the past year. Of these, more than 50 now contribute on a regular basis.

On October 23 The Museum honored its indispensable volunteer staff at a potluck celebration. Sixty guests dined on homemade dishes and on baked chicken with Shaker tarragon sauce prepared by the **Shaker Inn**, baked goods donated by **Blacksmith Bakery**, and ice cream donated by the **Baited Hook Restaurant**.

After dinner, singers **Mary Ann and Jessica Wilde, Becky Brady, Charlie Bosson** and **Michael Green** greeted the group with a welcome song written by the Enfield Shakers. Then many of those in attendance were able to recognize themselves in a slide presentation illustrating volunteer activities of the past season.

The climax of the evening was the award ceremony. Certificates



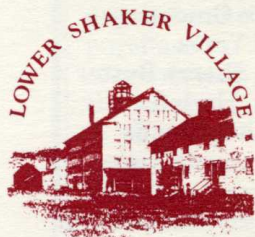
*Some of the volunteers awarded for their contributions at the 1988 Volunteer Celebration. Front row (l.-r.): Elaine Loft, Becky Powell, Jessica Wilde, Sue Hammond, Becky Brady, Sue Hubbard, Greg Schwarz, Tim Jennings, Charlie Bosson; second row (l.-r.): Jennifer Congdon, Andy Green, Kitty Scherer, Deborah Rearick, Lois Johnston, Nancy Gray, Roger Gibbs; third row (l.-r.): Happy Griffiths, Rosemarie Eshelman, Joanne Spencer, Lynn Anderson, Richard Dionne, Nancy Hall, Arleen Adams, Krissy Johnson, Mary Ann Wilde, Michael Green, Harry Auger, Jim Loft, Steve Powell; back row (l.-r.): Teri Elmore, Lisa Griffiths, Irene Rogers, Joe Thompson, Brownie Smith (not visible), Betty Cattabriga, Bob and Mildred Guyette (not visible), and Tim Sanford.*

were awarded to volunteers who helped in numerous capacities over the past season, as gardeners, office helpers, archeologists, carpenters, craftspeople, trustees, committee members, tour guides, event helpers, quilters and cross-stitchers...to name just a few!

The celebration concluded with the raffle drawing for the herb quilt. The proceeds totalled \$2,061 which

will benefit the museum herb garden. The lucky winners were: **Marjorie & Paul Knee** of Concord, NH

If you would like to get involved in museum activities as a volunteer, we are more than happy to have you join our diverse and interesting group. Just call The Museum at (603) 632-5533 and let us know you're out there! □



**The Museum**  
Box 25 / Route 4A  
Enfield, NH 03748  
(603) 632-4838 or 632-5533

---