

The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from The Museum at Lower Shaker Village

Volume VII/No. 2

Fall 1995

Scrumptious Shaker Spuds: 1839 In Enfield

by Daniel Eastman, member, Board of Directors, Education Committee

"Fruitful in every good work"

In *The Farmer's Monthly Visitor*, Vol. 1, No. 8, published in Concord, N.H., in 1839, the Editor, Isaac Hill, writes an interesting and unsolicited "World's People" accolade for the Shakers:

There is a class of people who exceed all others within our knowledge in the application of means to ends, in the methods of giving to domestic life all its comforts, in making and preserving every thing useful, in preparing their meat in due season, and in furnishing, not expensively, but in the best manner, such food as is conducive to health. That class is the people called Shakers.

He proceeds to describe his experiences while tarrying with the Enfield, N.H., Shakers on the night of 27th July, 1839, most particularly with regard to the subject of potatoes.

It was a matter of general complaint that potatoes, for some reason, were not good in 1838. They were wet and soggy when cooked, and were most disagreeable to the taste, everywhere, apparently, except at Enfield's Chosen Vale. For the Enfield sisters brought to Hill's table some which, as the potatoes appeared, so they proved to be:

not less welcome to the taste than any we have ever eaten: they were

mellow and mealy, and their flavor was all we could desire.

The sister in charge of cooking discovered the whole process of preparing old potatoes for the table nearly a month later than it is common to make use of the last year's supply. The preparation is begun by taking a quantity of potatoes, sufficient to last three or four days, from the cellar (where they should always be kept until needed), washing them clean and removing the sprouts. One day's potatoes only should be pared, not entirely, but two thirds of the outside skin, then soaked several hours in cold water. This operation is said to extract all those deleterious qualities which are disagreeable both to the eye and to the taste. The potatoes are boiled in a large kettle of water until about two thirds cooked, then most of the water is poured off, leaving the remainder to evaporate in steam over and through the potatoes. The result is that even those potatoes which are shrivelled with the lateness of the season will come out as mealy and fresh as the best of potatoes when taken ripe from the ground.

And now, a special Enfield Shaker potato recipe:

Potato Pie with Buttered Onion Crumb Top

4 cups mashed potatoes
1/2 cup cream
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1 1/2 cups cubed sharp cheddar cheese
1/4 cup finely chopped raw onion
1 cup buttered bread crumbs

Beat potatoes with the cream to make them fluffy. Season; put in baking dish and push little pieces of cheese within the potatoes. Mix onions and bread crumbs together and let this form the crust of the pie. Bake in 350° oven for 30 minutes; serves 4.

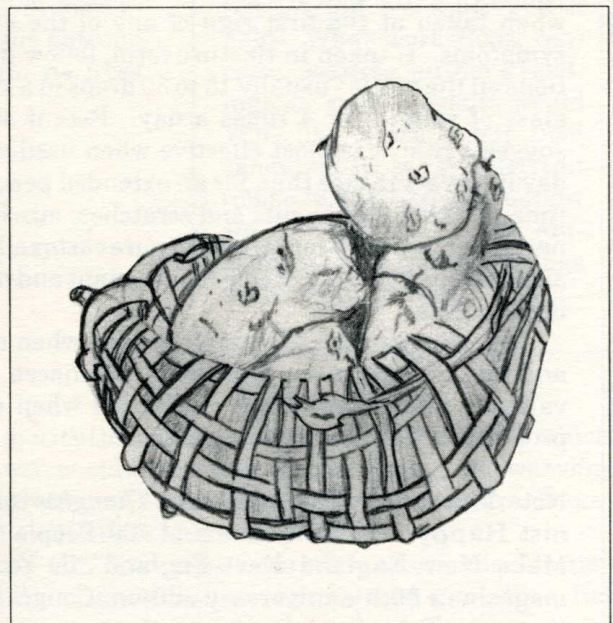


Illustration by Sarah Shaffer

Sage Thoughts

by Happy Griffiths

ECHINACEA (*Echinacea angustifolia* & *Echinacea purpurea*) - This popular perennial, also known as purple coneflower, is a native of North America where it grows wild in the Plains States and the South. It can grow as tall as 3 feet depending on soil conditions and the amount of sun it receives. Native Americans have long known the value of *Echinacea* and informed the early settlers about the uses of this plant.

Echinacea is most effective in stimulating the immune system in various ways to ward off viral, fungal, and bacterial infections and to increase the body's resistance to disease. One of its compounds, echinacin, has been shown to be an antiviral agent that behaves in a way similar to the body's own interferon. The easiest way to use *Echinacea* is in tincture form, which can be purchased in health food stores and herb shops. You can make your own by digging up a three-year-old root which you then wash and chop, place in a clean glass jar, and pour alcohol over to cover. Seal the jar and let stand for about 4 weeks, shaking the jar daily; then strain and discard the roots and bottle the tincture. The leaves and flowers also contain some medicinal properties and these should be gathered during the summer months, whereas the root should be dug in the fall after a hard frost or early in the spring before the plant has started to grow.

Echinacea is an excellent remedy to fight off common colds, sore throats, flu symptoms, swollen glands, upset stomachs, cystitis and infections of the upper respiratory tract. It is most effective when taken at the first sign of any of the above symptoms. If taken in tincture form, follow directions on the bottle - usually 15 to 30 drops in a small glass of water 3 or 4 times a day. Recent study suggests that it is most effective when used at 10 day intervals rather than for an extended period of time. To treat minor cuts and scratches, mix *Echinacea* tincture drop for drop with pure castor oil and apply to the wound. It is safe for pregnant and nursing mothers.

As we come into the winter season when colds and the flu are more prevalent, *Echinacea* is a valuable alternative to all antibiotics when used properly. Don't leave home without it!

Note: Museum herbalist and *Sage Thoughts* columnist **Happy Griffiths** is one of "60 People Who Make New England New England" in *Yankee* magazine's 60th anniversary edition. Congratulations, Happy!

From the Director

Dear Friends,


How quickly the summer has passed! Our Shaker Gardens were just showing the first hint of bloom when I arrived in April, and now Happy and Kitty, our Herbalists, and the Village Gardeners are harvesting our last crops, drying our last herbs and flowers. They'll spend the fall and winter just as the Enfield Shakers did, putting up garden produce and preparing herbs for the next spring's planting. Now, the trees around Mascoma Lake are changing color and we're looking forward to greeting "leaf peepers" before the season ends.

It has been a busy summer everywhere at the Museum at Lower Shaker Village. (See our article on restoration activities and curatorial goings-on in this *Quarterly* for more information on what we've been doing.) One highlight of the summer was our special exhibition—*From Butter Beans to Slippery Elm*—a wonderful collection of colorful and elegant Shaker paper. We are very grateful to Alana Major Parkinson for opening her collection to our visitors. The exhibition runs through the end of October, so if you haven't yet seen it be sure to drop by the Museum while you're out enjoying the autumn foliage.

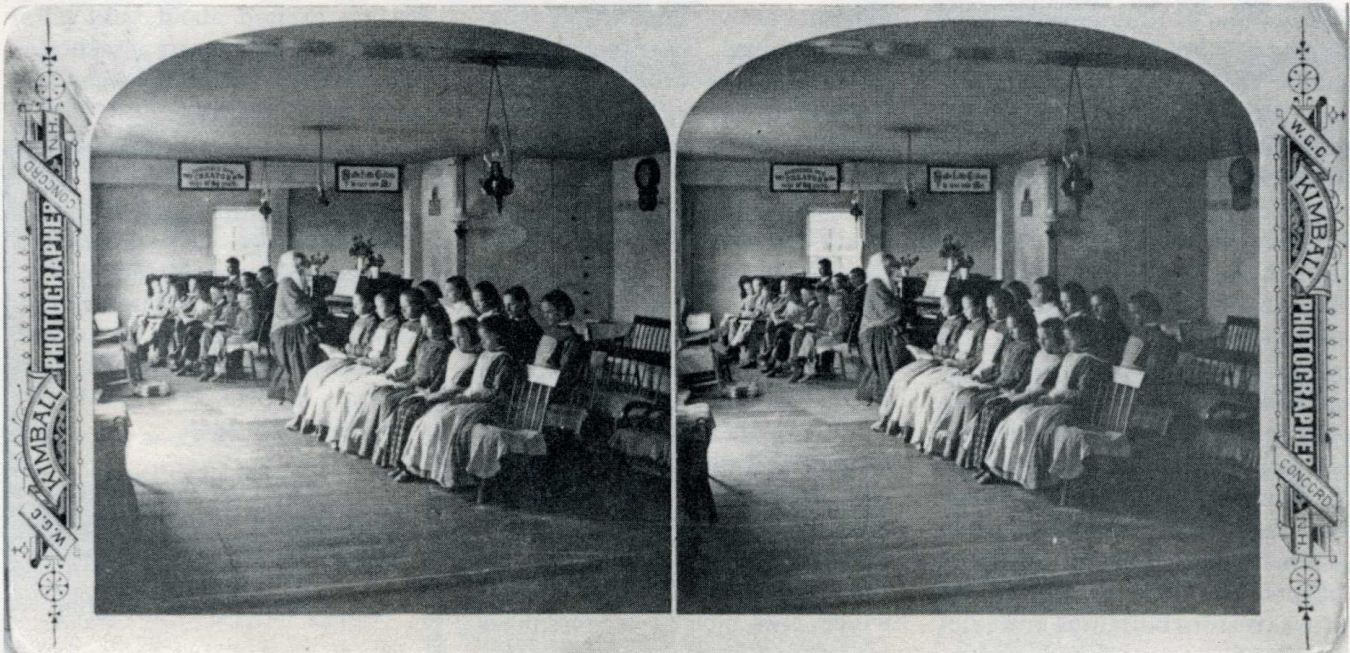
Let's look into the future, now ...

- Mark your calendars for the Holiday Gift Extravaganza (Saturday, November 25, 10:00 - 5:00) and the Christmas Cookie Fair (Sunday, December 10, 1:00 - 3:00).
- We've changed the look of the Shaker Store and are stocking lots of gifts and surprises for the holidays. We're expanding the Demonstrating Crafts Area and will introduce a new exhibit of some of our collection that focuses on Shaker use of technology.
- We're already planning next summer's loan exhibit. Constantine Kermes, the Pennsylvania artist who draws much of his imagery from Shaker and Amish life, has agreed to exhibit several of his works here next July. That exhibit will coincide with the Shaker Seminar's visit to Enfield - a double treat for much of our audience!
- We're planning a lively schedule of workshops and special events for 1996 - see the box on page 3 for information on how you can tell us what sorts of programs you'd like to see us develop.

In short, there are always lots of reasons to visit the Museum at Lower Shaker Village. I hope we'll see you soon!



From Our Photo Files



View #18 from a series of 24 published by W.G.C. Kimball of Concord, NH. This undated series of photographs was made for use in a stereoscope - a hand-held viewer through which two slightly different photographs were viewed in combination to give a sense of depth. Stereoscopes provided entertainment for many American families in the late 1800s. Cards showing natural wonders (such as the Grand Canyon) and man-made marvels (e.g., the Eiffel Tower) were especially popular. The fact that a series of views of Chosen Vale was published shows how curious the World's People were about Shaker communities. The Shakers welcomed the attention for the converts it might attract.

From Shaker Autumns Past...

Nicholas Briggs, writing in *Forty Years a Shaker*, published in installments in 1920 and 1921 by the *Granite Monthly*, recorded this autumn memory from his life at Canterbury Shaker Village, where he lived starting in 1852 at the age of 10.

"The Family owned a fine chestnut grove a half mile away, and when the frost opened the burs [sic] we boys were right on hand. We gave half of all we got to our caretaker who dried them and gave to us thru the winter, or he might sell part of them and treat us to candy."

1996 SEASON

We're planning our 1996 season ... And we want YOUR help. What workshops, concerts, lectures, author's readings, or special events would YOU like to see in our 1996 calendar? Please give us a call (603.632.4346) and tell us how we can make sure the Museum at Lower Shaker Village serves your interests.

Calendar Notes

This year's **Harvest Festival** was held on September 30, a glorious day. Always a special delight for families, the festival had lots of harvest-time activities for the children to try--cider pressing, candle dipping, rag weaving, making corn husk dolls--and parents who couldn't resist got their turn too. This once-busy time in the Shaker year offers visitors the feel--without quite so much work!--of an old-time harvest.

Coming on Saturday, November 25, from 10 to 5, the **Holiday Gift Extravaganza** offers a fantastic selection of handcrafts and artwork, wreaths and other seasonal decorations, and delicious regional food specialties. Hot beverages and pastries will be available to revive hungry shoppers. It's worth the trip to discover special handmade treasures amid the serenity of Lower Shaker Village, far from the malls.

Restoration and Curatorial Activities

The summer of 1995 was a time for planning at the Museum at Lower Shaker Village. Our Historic Structures Report was completed and approved by the Board of Directors at a meeting in July. Representatives from the N.H. State Historic Preservation Office, the town of Enfield, the Lower Shaker Village Community Associations, and other neighbors in the Village also greeted the Report enthusiastically and will, we hope, support us as we work to implement its recommendations. In August, the Board of Directors finalized our Long Range Plan, the document that will guide us into the next century. The Plan outlines five goals critical to our future (restore buildings and relocate functions; sustain and improve the Museum's services; improve the Museum's public image and visibility; attain financial self-sufficiency; and acquire and preserve additional Shaker buildings, artifacts, and lands) and maps out the steps we must take to meet those goals.

We were busy with much-needed preservation work, too. The Stone Mill Building was the focus of our activity: asbestos shingling was properly removed and disposed of and the intrusive post-Shaker

entrance alcoves and furnace room were removed. Twenty percent of the funds donated during our 1994 Annual Appeal were dedicated to building preservation and helped pay for all these projects. Our 1995 Annual Appeal opens soon, and again 20% of all gifts will be used for preservation. In addition, a generous grant from Dana Robes permitted the Wood Craftsmen to start the restoration of window sash in the Stone Mill Building.

We've also been active on the curatorial front. Our summer Intern, Lauren Taylor, spent much of July helping to start an inventory of our collection. Ultimately, we will have a file for each artifact which will include a worksheet containing the object's description, history and condition; a photograph; and any additional information we can garner. Work on the inventory will continue for several months. We accessioned three new objects during the summer: two North Family sap buckets (see the last issue of the *Quarterly* for more information on the North Family's cooperage business) which were donated by K.C. and Alana Parkinson; and a child's Dorothy cloak, given by the American Friends Service Committee.

We are excited about both gifts, which strengthen our interpretation of Shaker life, and are eager to put them on display.

The Friends' Quarterly is a publication of The Museum at Lower Shaker Village. It is mailed as a service to Museum Members. For information on Membership write: The Museum at Lower Shaker Village, #2 Lower Shaker Village, Enfield, NH 03748. Or call (603) 632-4346.

Museum Staff:

Sarah Saville Shaffer, Director
Michael O'Connor, Administrative Assistant
Happy Griffiths, Herbalist

Board of Trustees:

Dominic Albanese
Charlotte Barrett
Dan Eastman
John Gilbert
Mary Ann Haagen
Patti Laurie, Treasurer
Janet Milne, Vice-President
Stephen Priest
Marty Pusey
Sybil Williamson, President

Newsletter Editor:
Becky Powell



The Museum
Route 4A
Enfield, NH 03748
(603) 632-4346

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Enfield, N.H.
Permit No. 1