

# The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from the Enfield Shaker Museum

Volume XIV/No. 4

Fall 2002

## "And here, Elder Daniel, is where I stand."

### Letters of Elder Abraham Perkins

By Mary Ann Haagen

In 19<sup>th</sup> century Shaker community letter writing was primarily the privilege of its leaders. Surviving trustee correspondence offers insight into business transactions and financial concerns of the Society. The spiritual health of Shakerism is the overriding theme of correspondence between Shaker elders and ministers.

Abraham Perkins, 1807-1900, was one of the important spiritual leaders of the New Hampshire Shaker Societies. He was also a prolific correspondent. In his autobiography and surviving letters we have an important record of events that impacted on his spiritual well-being and that of his Shaker family.

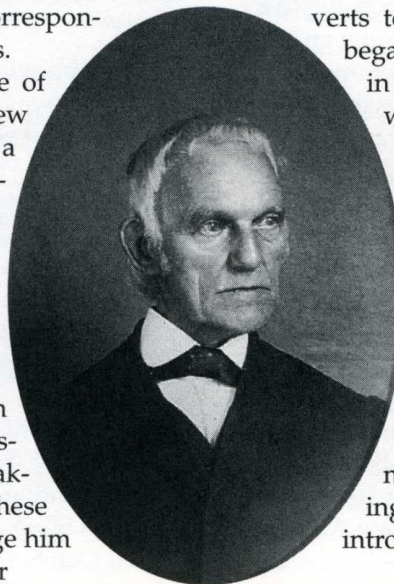
Abraham Perkins joined the Enfield, NH Shakers on March 27, 1827, at age 19. For the next eighteen years he filled roles in his community typically assigned to promising, committed young men. He was caretaker of the boys, schoolteacher, and tailor. These responsibilities did not require or encourage him to engage in written correspondence. Our primary record of his experience during these years is his autobiography, written in 1880.<sup>1</sup>

From 1845 until 1894 Elder Abraham served as either Minister of the New Hampshire Bishopric or as Elder of the Church Family at Enfield. In his autobiography he wrote, "Whoever has had any experience in these respective offices may understand the weight of labor therein; none others can possibly comprehend it."<sup>2</sup> His correspondence bears witness to the responsibility he felt. As early as 1854 he expresses anxiety about Shakerism's failure to attract new converts.

"Winter yet clings to us in a most forbidding manner. What is still worse to relate is that spiritual darkness has become so dense that it can be felt. We find but few that love the gospel; they therefore shun its devotees as we would shun a pest house, desiring nothing of us but to eat our chickens and make such discoveries as may be flattering to their natures and help prop up their selfish curiosi-

ties. We cannot even pick up many winter Shakers. When is that glorious time coming when Zion will be sought after with that interest with which men now seek for gold?"<sup>3</sup>

Perkins was not alone in his concern about a lack of converts to Shakerism. In some societies individuals began to suggest that celibacy should be forsaken in order to gain and retain members. Perkins was adamant that Shakerism could not be renewed or popularized by compromising its founding principles. In 1862 he wrote: "How much, dear Ministry, we are all suffering for the want of a deeper baptism in Zion in this element. If those called to the gospel could all feel the importance of adhering closely to first principles, could understand that our Fathers and Mothers had the right of the matter, that God through them had given the essential and necessary revelation. That it needed not the ingenuity of the present age to bring out and introduce innovations to improve and make the gospel more mighty and powerful."<sup>4</sup>



Elder Abraham Perkins (1807-1900)  
Enfield, New Hampshire  
Collection of John and Marjorie Carr

In September 1863 Abraham Perkins was removed as first Minister of the NH Bishopric, and he returned to Enfield where he served as First Elder to the Church Family. On July 19<sup>th</sup> the society at Enfield had been devastated by the shooting death of Caleb Dyer. By September it had become clear that Dyer's involvement with local businesses, particularly the Alpheus Conant Company, had compromised the Society. Perhaps Abraham Perkins was returned to Enfield to stabilize the situation. Perhaps he was being disciplined for the crisis that the community found itself in. He wrote to Elder Daniel Crosman, "Well Elder Daniel, I can but exclaim, great are Zion's sufferings in these days. Sometimes I inquire, 'Why is it so? I frequently receive a ready answer: 'Many of your burdens, much of your sufferings you have brought upon yourselves in the same way your nation has involved itself in trouble.'"<sup>5</sup>

(Continued on page 4.)





*Before.* As this photo shows, the East Brethren Shop needed both repair and repainting. This was before 100 volunteers appeared on the scene.

## Museum on the Move

Aggressive campaign to restore  
Museum buildings begins with 'Painting Bees.'

For many years, Museum visitors and members have posed the same question: when is the Museum going to fix up and paint the West and East Brethren Shops and the Museum Store? Painted bright yellow, these three buildings were all in varying states of disrepair, with peeling paint, dry rot, and leaking roofs.

A conservative estimate of the cost of restoring these three buildings was over \$24,000. This included reglazing the windows, replacing rotted siding, and painting with two coats of finish paint. Faced with this daunting figure, the Museum drew a lesson from history, organizing an old-fashioned Shaker 'Bee' to draw together volunteers to tackle the job.

This effort, chaired by members Bob Knapp and Meredith Smith, brought together 100 volunteer painters over the course of four days. Along the way, the Museum went through 61 gallons of paint, 120 hotdogs, and 70 paintbrushes. The result, simply put, is a new Museum that reflects quality, professionalism, and beauty.



*During.* A team of Museum volunteers, trustees, neighbors, and staff begins the painstaking process of scraping years of loose paint off the East Brethren Shop.

Several businesses rose to the call for help as well. Peter Guay of G&L Glass in Lebanon, New Hampshire, arrived during the first Painting Bee, quickly surveyed the scene, loaded up all the windows and drove away. One week later, six sets of sash showed back up at the Museum com-

pletely re-glazed and with all the broken panes replaced. Over the coming three weeks Peter and his brother Dave at G&L Glass reglazed and restored every window in the West Brethren Shop and all the storm windows and screens from the East Brethren Shop as well, all as a donation to the Museum.



*After.* The East Brethren Shop shines in its new coat of paint. The color chosen, a light yellow was based on paint research.

Once the windows were back, volunteers began to ask about the 'wavy' look of the new panes. As it turned out, the glass that replaced all of the broken panes in the windows of the West Brethren Shop is historically accurate 'cylinder' glass, blown in the traditional manner by a company in New Jersey. This glass was a gift from Shaker Workshops in Ashburnham, Massachusetts, the company that creates the reproduction Shaker furniture available in our Museum Store.

Much work remains to be done. Soon, our Caroline Cannon and our neighbors at Dana Robes Wood Craftsmen will be making an historically appropriate door for the West Brethren Shop. The Museum is working to finish painting the Store, and the windows in the West Brethren Shop are still being painted and will be in by the end of October. And the Painting Bee is about to become a Museum tradition. The Museum is already planning for the exterior restoration of the historic Ministry House and more work on the Laundry/Dairy building to occur during the summer of 2003.



*Before.* Museum staff member, Michael O'Connor, sets up in anticipation of the first 'Painting Bee.' In this photograph the extensive deterioration of the West Brethren Shop is amply evident.



## Our Volunteer Painters

Jerry Ankerfelt	Donna Butler	G. McCall Guyton-Edmiston
Bev Ankerfelt	George Butler	Anthony W. Hall
Karl Ayres	Sharon Carr	Karen Hambleton
Cynthia Barton	Richard Clapp	Winifred Hamilton
Dave Barton	Monte Clinton	Nicoll P. Haneman
Galen Beale	Lannie Collins	William A. Harper
Jean Beard	Craig Daniels	James M. Harris
Benny Benton	Del Delmastro	Ezequiel O. Hart
Mary Benton	Linda Devlin	Julio P. Hartstein
Gary Blake	Judy Finsterbusch	Robert M. Hatch
Dick Blodgett	Karl Finsterbusch	Austin C. Hawley
Ruth Blodgett	Clark Griffiths	Min He
Barbara Brady	Happy Griffiths	Deborah M. Healy
Earl Brady	Peter Guay	Richard Heck
Dick Brown	Javier Guerrero-Orvananos	Mike Hemberger
Mary Brown	Utku Gelmeden	Laurie W. Higginbotham
Sheila Brown	Xuehui Guo	Jeremy B. Hintze
Michael D. Holland	Young Sun Kwon	Bob Rudd
Richard J. Holland	Yang-Jin Kwon	Grace Rudd
Vivian Horovich	Bill Lacey	Rob Rudd
Elizabeth S. Howard	Jan Lacey	Jill Schoenberg
Ching-Yee Hu	Cedrik Lachance	Nancy Scovner
Alexandra B. Huffman	Marco A. Lagos	Karen Sluzenski
Jonathan E. Hunnicutt	Kerry J. Larkin	Linda Stamm
Eui Chul Hwang	Marjorie M. Lathrop-Allen	Greg Stuckert
Koichi Imura	Joshua A. Lauer	Leslie Taylor
Carlos A. Ingles	Edward A. Leadley	Bernard Tenbrock
Elizabeth E. Jackson	Dong Goo Lee	Marilyn Tenbrock
Jae Ho Jang	John T. Lee	Chuck Thompson
Julia A. Kidd	Dave Miller	June Watson
Kristin J. Kilbourne	Michael O'Connor	Walter Watson
Paul Kim	Clinton Pitts	Diana Wieland
Eun Ji Kim	Becky Powell	Deb Williams
Sameer M. Kirtane	Nick Powell	Rob Wright
Jacobus T. Knijn	Steve Powell	Polly Wright
David J. Kressel	Sandra Price	John Yaffee
Thomas Kuchler	William Romero	



*After. The West brethren Shop nearing completion. Painted its original colors, this photograph shows the beginning of installation of the window sash restored by Peter and David Guay at G&L Glass. This work was a donation from the Guays and their company.*

## From the Director

*"I can't believe the change. It's so beautiful. It looks like Williamsburg."*

I must confess that few of us here at the Enfield Shaker Museum would have expected just six weeks ago that our visitors would be comparing us to Colonial Williamsburg. All the more remarkable, this visitor was referring to the West and East Brethren Shops and our Museum Store, three buildings located at our entry that were not long ago considered eyesores.

This newfound appreciation for the beauty of our Museum comes at the end of a marathon six-week effort focusing on the repair and painting of three major buildings. As this edition of the *Friends Quarterly* points out, the effort has been solely the result of the hard work of our volunteers. No one was paid to do any of the work, and in all, 100 volunteers repaired, power-washed, scraped, primed, and painted.

This spirit of volunteerism has spread to other areas of our Museum as well. This year, Museum herbalist Happy Griffiths took on the job of organizing our annual Harvest Festival. Thanks to the work of a remarkable team of volunteers the event drew a record 649 visitors. Thanks to the hard work of our food volunteers, led by Shirley Haddock, Karen Sluzenski, and Barbara Brady, we sold 24 pounds of popcorn and made three trips to the store to buy more hotdogs, cider, and milk.

In one other area volunteers are also leading the way. This month kicks off our Annual Fund campaign, our annual drive to raise support through gifts and grants. A team of 15 volunteers has come together to tackle this challenging job, and very soon you will be receiving a request for support. As detailed in this issue of the *Quarterly*, our goals are aggressive, and our needs are great. It is my hope as director that you will join with all of us in making a strong donation this year.

Someone asked me a few days ago if the Museum can sustain the momentum we are currently enjoying. My answer was simple: it is not a question of if, but how. We must continue to marshal our volunteers, and we must present our case for annual support. With your help an even brighter future awaits us.

Rob Rudd  
Director



*Painting for a good cause. Dartmouth students race to complete painting of the Museum Store. With only three hours at the Museum, the team worked feverishly to complete the project.*



*47 Tuck School at Dartmouth students pose with their part of their handiwork. They painted the Museum Store as part of their participation in the Tuck School's Initiative on Corporate Citizenship.*



**Letters of Elder Abraham Perkins** (Continued from page 1.)

Despite the difficulties the Society faced, Abraham Perkins did not lose faith in himself, in Shakerism or in his beloved Enfield. In 1865 he wrote of his continuing commitment to Shakerism's future.

"I do see beams of light radiating in this direction, giving hope of a future, which buoys up my spirit, renews my courage and gives me strength still to toil on for Zion's sake. I see a work before me. I behold not only in the distance, but directly at hand, all that my mental and physical powers can manage."<sup>6</sup>

In 1867 Perkins was recalled to the Ministry of the NH Bishopric. As the number of adult converts to Shakerism decreased, the Society placed its hopes for the future in the many indentured children in their care. Elder Abraham's correspondence reflects the sense of responsibility he felt for their spiritual support.

"O Alonzo these things bear upon my mind ponderously; and when I look upon the young, the little few that are growing up amongst us, I mentally inquire, are you able, are you willing, are you equal to the sacrifice required? In answer I say in my heart, it lies with you."<sup>7</sup>

After ten years as Minister to the New Hampshire Societies, Perkins asked to return to Enfield. He was again appointed First Elder of the Church. It was not a retirement position however. In 1882, after twenty years of legal battling, the lawsuit brought against the Shakers at the time of Caleb Dyer's death was finally settled. The decision was in favor of the Conant Company, and the Enfield Shakers were once again in spiritual and financial crisis. Elder Henry Blinn wrote to Benjamin Gates:

"Elder Abraham writes me that he shall meet you in Boston, also writes that they must borrow from the bank some \$14,000 to hand over to Davis, as ordered by the Court. What will be the result of borrowing such a sum of money and giving a note for it? How many bad things follow our transgressions. The Enfield of today are to be pitted as they are made to suffer for the transgressions of others."<sup>8</sup>

It is not surprising that Elder Abraham began to feel his age. In 1883 he wrote, "I am aware that I am growing old; just think of years numbering three fourths of a century! It is about time to be fledged. A few more feathers upon my wings, and I shall venture a flight."<sup>9</sup>

In fact he was not even close to take off. He would continue to serve as First Elder of the Church Family at Enfield for another 12 years.

He was ever watchful for signs of spiritual revival in the world that would bring converts to a Shaker life. He wrote frequently for the Shaker Publication, *The Manifesto*, which he considered an important tool for missionary outreach. He maintained a correspondence with leaders of other Shaker communities, and he wrote to young believers encouraging them to be faithful Shakers.

The last great challenge of his Eldership – the closing of the Second Family – reflected the continuing crisis of dwindling membership. In Dec. 1893 Elder Abraham wrote wearily:

"The dissolving of the Second Family has been long contemplated and a removal of its members to the church and the family at the north has commenced...This breaking up and dissolution of our families and Societies brings burden and trial. Its necessity is to be very much regretted. It pains me sorely."<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after the two families were consolidated, Perkins announced that he would retire to Canterbury. He hoped that by removing himself, the people would unite under the leadership of Elder William Wilson, who had been Second Family Elder. The decision was a necessary but difficult one. From Canterbury he continued to minister to old friends and young believers through his letters. Delmer Wilson, of Sabbathday Lake, Maine, cherished his correspondence with Elder Abraham. Letters to Enfield Sister Flora Appleton reflect Perkins' fatherly affections, and untiring efforts to nurture the faith of young Shakers.

In 1899 he wrote:

"My Beloved Daughter Flora,  
Now for a social confab. Your innocent play days at my workroom commenced in your early childhood. Those seasons gave you joy, as they also did me, moving my heart to love you and seal you as a daughter, I hope, for eternity"<sup>11</sup>

Elder Abraham died on Aug. 12, 1900 at the age of 92. A letter announcing his death declared, "The beautiful sheaves of his noble life, ripened to full maturity, have fallen without a blight into the heavenly granaries of our God."<sup>12</sup> The legacy of his spiritual leadership was faithfulness. Our understanding of Shakerism in the 19th century is enriched by the correspondence he left behind.

1 "Memoir of Abraham Perkins, Enfield, NH March 1880." Addenda to the document are made in December 1892 and October 13, 1898. Dartmouth College, Special Collections. Hanover, NH

2 Ibid

3 Ministry, Chosen Vale to Ministry, Lovely Vineyard. Apr. 5, 1854 IV A 14 Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH. (OCIWHI)

4 December 7, 1862 Abraham Perkins to Ministry, Harvard, MA. IV A 7, OCIWHI.

5 A Second Book of Alonzo Hollister, p. 86 "A letter from Abraham Perkins to Elder Daniel Crosman." E.D. Andrews Shaker Manuscript Collection, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

6 Abraham Perkins to Elder Giles Avery, January 18, 1865. IV A 15 OCIWHI.

7 Abraham Perkins to Alonzo Hollister, Nov. 10, 1873 IV A 15 OCIWHI.

8 Henry C. Blinn to Benjamin Gates, Jan. 15, 1883, Dartmouth College, Special Collections, Hanover, NH.

9 Abraham Perkins to Eldress Lydia Dole, May 6, 1883 IV A 15 OCIWHI

10 Abraham Perkins to Alonzo Hollister, Dec. 10, 1893 IV A 15 OCIWHI

11 Abraham Perkins to Flora Appleton, Nov. 18, 1899 Bertha Lindsay Papers, Shaker Village, Canterbury, NH.

12 Canterbury, NH Shakers to Enfield, NH Shakers, Aug. 12, 1900 IV A 8 OCIWHI



## 2002/03 Annual Fund Targets Major Museum Projects

Committee formed to raise annual support.

Each year at this time, our Museum asks its members, friends, and donors to join in making a year-end gift to the Museum's Annual Fund. This year, that work is being done by a blue-ribbon committee, organized by Museum trustees Caroline Cannon and Galen Beale.

This year's Annual Fund targets and will support six key initiatives:

- **Restoration of the Museum's Ministry House**, including replacement of the basement bulkhead and rotted siding, and repairs to the roof. In addition, the Annual Fund will pay for **paint and supplies** for our next Painting Bee.
- **Improved and increased programs for schoolchildren** and field trips and the development of more **new exhibits** and **improvement to the Museum's galleries** in the Laundry/Dairy complex.
- **Continued restoration of the Shaker West Brethren Shop**, including roof work and improvements to the "Building in the Shaker Spirit" exhibit inside.
- **Better and more advertising and brochures** for Museum visits and programs, and the creation of **new Museum classes and workshops**.
- **Repairs to the front of the Mary Keane Chapel** including regrading and replacing the front sidewalk so it rises to meet the first step.
- **Payment toward debt owed on the Great Stone Dwelling and Mary Keane Chapel.**

This year you, our members and donors, will be able to elect what area of the Museum's efforts you would like to support. In addition, and for the first time ever, we will be recognizing every donor to the Annual Fund on a plaque that will be placed at the entrance to the Museum.

Our fundraising goal for the year is \$100,000. We invite everyone to join in this crucial fundraising drive by making a gift today. For more information on pledges, gifts of stock, or other giving questions, feel free to call Rob Rudd at (603) 632-4346.

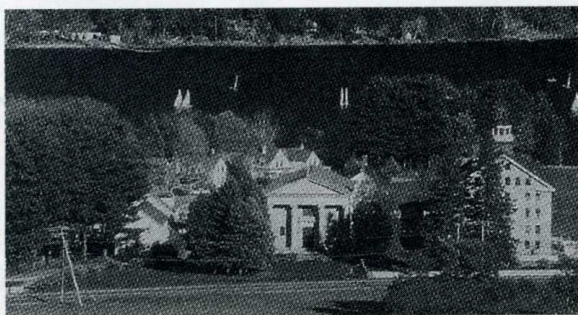
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Linda Stamm  
Sybil Williamson

**P.S. Late Breaking News** - We have already raised **\$23,000** toward our annual goal!

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## Shaker Inn Operation for Sale



Historic Inns of New England, the limited partnership that has operated the Shaker Inn since 1998, has put their 35-year lease for the use of the Great Stone Dwelling as an inn and restaurant on the market. The Great Stone Dwelling, purchased by the Museum in 1997, is not for sale.

Along with the lease, the partnership is hoping to sell the furnishings and equipment in the Shaker Inn to an individual or organization interested in managing the inn and restaurant. There is a possibility that Don Leavitt and Richard Miller, the current innkeepers and general partners of HINE, will take over the lease from the limited partnership and continue to operate the Inn.

The Shaker Inn serves as a source of revenue for the Museum and we are hopeful that the sale of the lease can be accomplished as smoothly as possible. It is also our hope that when a new operator is found that the attention to historic detail, use of appropriate furnishings, willingness to cooperate on joint programming, and inclusion of Shaker recipes on the menu that have been a part of our relationship with Historic Inns of New England will continue.



## Museum Store Features New Local Crafts for Holiday Season

The Museum Store now features many items bearing the museum's name logo. These products, created by local craftspeople, serve as wonderful reminders of the museum. The newest additions include pewter magnets, scented candles, plain and creamed honey spreads, beautiful photo note cards of our site, and boxed bayberry candles.

As part of our effort to increase the representation of fine craftsmen working in the Shaker aesthetic, we now carry Willy Hill Pottery by Steve Abrams in red and deep cobalt blue, a reproduction salt glaze from Hale Farm Village, and John Zentner's red and blue glaze ware, as well as blue and green salt glaze from Salmon Falls Pottery. Cobalt glass from Vermont Glass Works and reproduction nineteenth-century glass from Hale Farm Village are also wonderful additions. Other new products include merino wool scarves and throws, fine ash Shaker baskets by Ruth Boland, pewter jewelry, hand-hammered iron, brass, and copper utensils from Ararat Forge, and carved wooden boxes and holiday ornaments by George Saridakis.

During the winter we will be offering a series of special sales for museum members. In addition to your 10% members' discount, add an additional 5% for a total 15% discount on featured items. In the month of November, stock up on all your holiday candle needs with the additional 5% off all hand-dipped Mole Hollow Candles. The perfect holiday gift is always a Shaker box—a primary symbol of the Shaker heritage. In December, our extensive line of cherry boxes from Orleans Carpenters will be eligible for your 15% discount. And in January, all pottery will be featured for the 15% discount.

Remember, the museum store has a variety of holiday ornaments in tin, wood, glass, and pewter, as well as the perfect gift or gift certificate!

## Christmas Cookie Fair Sunday, December 15, 2002. 1:00 pm.

An annual favorite! Select from more than 100 different varieties of homemade cookies. All cookies sold by the pound. Come early, we often sell out. If you are willing to bake cookies to help with this important fundraiser, call the Museum at (603)632-4346.

*The Friends' Quarterly* is a publication of the Enfield Shaker Museum.

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