

# The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from The Museum at Lower Shaker Village

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Spring 1989

## O Hear Their Music Ring

by Mary Ann Wilde

The outdoor services held on Mount Assurance, the feast ground of the Enfield Shaker community, were a rich spiritual feast, designed to strengthen and sustain believers. First hand accounts of services at Shaker feast grounds, and the songs which give voice to the symbolic power of the feast day's rituals provide insight to the spiritual sustenance offered to believers so many years ago.

As believers walked up the hill to the Holy Mount, they sang marching songs which spoke to them of the spiritual journey that each one embarks on when becoming part of a Shaker community.

While we're marching,  
while we're marching,  
To Jehovah's holy ground;  
While we're marching, while we're  
marching,  
See his glory shining round.  
Bright celestial hosts are shining,  
O hear their music ring;  
Loudly echoing through the heavens  
Praises to their Lord and King.

The songs and the terrain reminded them that the journey was ongoing, and often uphill, with temptations and distractions ever present possibilities. But the journey takes place in community and therein lies critical support and encouragement. What is essential is to keep moving forward in the faith.

Now my dear companions, is the time  
to start anew  
Anew, anew, for the Kingdom of  
heaven.  
With faith and zeal and courage strong  
We will ever be marching on,  
Toiling on, struggling on, for a perfect  
Heaven.

At a resting place part way up the hill, believers were encouraged to throw off any burdens, bad feelings or other encumbrances that hinder spiritual progress. Though the burdens shed were not tangible, the physical act of throwing



them down the hill identified the need to cast off attitudes or patterns of behavior which hinder us in developing as human beings. The Shaker song "Come life, Shaker life, come life eternal, shake shake out of me all that is carnal" is a reminder of the specific Shaker challenge to live a celibate life. But another speaks more universally:

Shake, shake, shake off, leave all  
death behind you.  
Break, break, break off every band  
that binds you.  
Labor for the gifts of God for they will  
make you free, free  
Travel in the narrow road of low  
humilite, te.

One of the first ceremonies within the feast ground proper is the honoring of those oldest in the faith. "May the first born of Mother Ann's children stand in a body that the young might march around them. For their light is great and shineth

even unto God's throne. And when you have sung a song of praise, ye may go to the ancients and light your lamps, that you may have light to direct you on your way." Again, no actual lamps are lit. The light is inner light of lives lived in the faith. This ritual simultaneously encourages "the first born" to share their life experience and inner light, as it makes clear the respect that the younger believers are expected to show to those more traveled in the Shaker way.

Many of us are just beginning to pay attention to the importance of one of our most precious natural resources, water. It is significant that water

is honored at least three times in the feast ground service. The center of the feast ground is referred to as the holy fount. From the "fountain of everlasting strength" believers are invited to drink. The fountain is also the source of water in the ceremony of planting spiritual seed. A third ritual, bathing in the waters of the fountain, was an important symbol of purification and community. "The elders gave us sponges, and filled a tub with the waters of the Fountain, and we dipped our sponges therein, and sponged and showered each other till we felt perfectly free and simple."

O Halen Halen Vinda!  
Come O ye children of the living God.  
Come bow down low and wash, bathe  
and shower  
In the holy, holy fountain of the Lord  
your God.

*continued on page 4*



## Sage Thoughts

by Happy Griffiths, Herbalist

From the beginning the apple was a staple in Shaker life. Thousands of bushels were harvested each year to be used in the kitchens, dried for winter use, made into cider, or sold to the World's People. Cider and vinegar were made as early as the 1820's. A journal entry from 1828 shows that cider sold for \$1.00/barrel and vinegar for \$3.00/barrel. Shaker applesauce was as well known in the early days in New England and New York as the Shaker seeds, brooms or herbal medicines and extracts. Apple slices added to boiled down cider and simmered until tender was a favorite dessert. Another popular dessert was rosewater flavored apple pie.

With the decline of the United Society less emphasis was placed on the manufacturing of various goods and the raising of livestock. They turned their energies instead to farming and fruit growing describing this as part of their "physical and moral revolution."

This spring eleven apple trees on dwarfing rootstock were planted next to the Museum Herb Garden in consultation with Frank Griffiths. These trees, all antique varieties, have been properly planted and pruned and with a good growing season may bear fruit as early as next year. The varieties selected for the orchard include: Ribston Pippin, Spitzenberg, Black Gilliflower, Cox Orange, Fameuse, Grimes Golden, Golden Russet, Lady Baldwin and Gravenstein.

The trees were a gift of **Frank and Eleanor Griffiths** of Grafton Pond. As a result of their generosity, Museum visitors can now look forward to the beauty of apple blossoms in the spring, lush foliage in the summer and a bountiful fall harvest.

## A Festive Day

On the one perfectly sunny day during nearly three weeks of rain, the third annual Festival of Shaker Crafts and Herbs brought hundreds of visitors to the tents erected next to the Great Stone Dwelling. In fact the tents, which great gusts of wind flattened on Friday night, proved to be the only hitch during the otherwise successful event.

Sister Frances Carr, a member of our Board of Trustees, came from Sabbathday Lake, Maine to talk about cooking with herbs. A large audience enthusiastically sampled three herbarily seasoned dishes prepared from recipes found in her book, *Shaker Your Plate*. Other speakers included Christine Wittman, who discussed herbal tinctures and salves and Linda Kowalski, who taught about how to dry herbs and flowers for decorative use.

Museum Herbalist **Happy Griffiths** led tours of the herb garden, which had been carefully weeded, pruned and raked by **Andy Green, Kitty Scherer, Eva Daniels and Nancy Sycamore**. **Ann Semprebbon**, a local artist, painted wild flowers and other nature scene for the many visitors.

Much of the success of the Festival is directly attributable to the many volunteers who generously donated their time and expertise to this event. We would like to give credit to our demonstrating craftspeople, including: **Roger Gibbs**



*Festival visitors experience the softness of an angora rabbit first hand.*

(tinsmithing), **Marge Gibbs** and **Galen Beale** (poplarware construction), **Robert Calvert** (beekeeping), **Sugar River Spinners** (spinning) and **Shaker Workshops** (chair taping).

The volunteers who staffed the front gate, parking lot, food booth, museum and plant check booth included: **Barbara Bennett,**

**Caryn Bosson, Eva Daniels, Carolyn Freese, Peter Gianforte, Nancy Gray, Andy Green, Sue Hammond, Roslyn Levin, James Loft, Kathy Morgan, Becky Powell, Kitty Scherer, Brownie Smith, Nancy Sycamore, Suzanne Wallis, Jean Watson and Judy Zimicki.** Many thanks—we could not have done it without you!

*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.

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## Shaker Revels

On July 13, 14 and 15 the hillside overlooking Lower Shaker Village will once again resonate with the music, dance and spoken word of the Enfield Shakers. This out-

door performance will begin in a beautiful meadow overlooking the Great Stone Dwelling and other historic buildings of the Church Family. Act one will suggest daily life in the Shaker Community: the work, trade, care of children and connections with other Shaker communities as well as the World's People. It will also include a dramatization of the testimony of Jane Blanchard, a young woman who came on foot from Norwich, Vermont to join the Enfield Shakers. Through her testimony, Jane Blanchard shares the experience of making such a momentous decision; her fears, doubts and eventual affirmation of Shaker life.

The theme of the spiritual journey runs throughout Shaker theology, dance and song literature. That concept is symbolized in the second act by the procession of cast and audience to Mt. Assurance,

the feast ground used by the Enfield Shakers. Drawing on the written accounts of these services, the audience will witness in the present day a dramatization of the outdoor services called Spiritual Feasts.

Shaker Revels is written and directed by **Mary Ann Wilde** and choreographed by **Carol Langstaff**. It is a production of Revels North in cooperation with The Museum at Lower Shaker Village. Shaker Revels is made possible in part through grants from Chubb Life America (Concord, NH) and the Ella F. Anderson Trust.

Tickets are available in advance from the Museum. The cost is \$6.50 for adults, \$5.50 for Friends of the Museum and \$4.50 for senior citizens and youth. On Friday, July 14 there will be a "Meet the Cast Party" following the performance, reservations are required.

## See the Garden Grow

The Museum's 1.6 acre organic garden, now in its second season, is planted with over twenty different varieties of both modern and heirloom vegetables. Serving as both an educational tool and a source of income, the garden is a flourishing reminder of the community's agricultural heritage.

With the help of a \$2,500 grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Fund, the Museum has hired a Farm Coordinator for the 1989 summer season. **Sonia Swierczynski**, a resident of nearby Norwich, Vermont, was chosen for her agricultural, retail and volunteer experience. In addition to organizing and orchestrating the Farmers' Market, Sonia will oversee the garden volunteers, research and create educational exhibits and help to plan the gardening conference which the Museum will be sponsoring this fall. In an effort to involve the community, the Museum has inaugurated an Organic Produce Shares program. In exchange for a set fee, shareholders will receive nearly 300 pounds of fresh vegetables during the 1989 growing season.

The Shakers believed that "if you have a lovely garden, you should lead a lovely life." Visitors to the Museum this summer will find many lovely things to see in the garden.



*Revels cast prepares for the July '89 show.*

## Museum Awarded Grant

The Museum has received a \$1500.00 grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Fund. This funding will support the development of guidelines for the restoration and protection of the historic Shaker buildings at the site. These guidelines will be developed by a group of volunteers as the result of several planning workshops led by facilitators in the fields of imaging, conceptual design and conservation planning.

By involving professionals from various disciplines in the planning, the Museum hopes to guarantee long-term protection for the historic buildings and grounds, develop high standards for restoration and maintenance, and establish an economic means for implementing the plans developed.

The first half of the planning process will use the futures-invention approach to creative problem solving and will be facilitated by Dr. Gray Cox, of the College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, ME. This process will allow those participating to generate a shared vision for the future of the site and Museum and then determine the actions necessary to achieve that vision.

The final set of workshops will be led by an expert in conceptual design and conservation planning, Walter Cudnohufsky, of Conway Design Associates, Conway, MA.. The sessions will focus on developing action plans and specific guidelines for design, restoration standards, and evaluation procedures.



**MUSIC continued from page 1**

These holy waters will strengthen your souls  
And enliven your spirits to rejoice in freedom

Before the Lord and his holy Angels.

Again there were no actual baths taken here. But the ritual of sponging symbolizes the ongoing process of purifying oneself spiritually through confession, and the need to accept and give help in that process of cleansing.

A fourth ritual, receiving spiritual wine, contributed considerably, to the bad press which the Shakers received regarding drinking and intoxication. Even the songs which refer to this celebration must have scandalized many of the World's People.

I have found the true vine and have tasted its wine

Which has made me to stagger and reel;

And to such it belongs to break forth into songs,

To express how delightful they feel;  
By a bountiful use of this heavenly juice

I forget all my sorrows and woes;  
Give me plenty of this, I want no other bliss,

And I care not much how the world goes, goes, goes,

And I care not much how the world goes.

Though no actual liquor was consumed, spiritual wine was intended to "make the love of your Parents operate and take effect." The dancing, whirling, laughing,

and leaping however were real indeed.

Much about a Shaker's daily life was quiet and orderly. This was a time and place for exuberance, foolishness; for bowing and bending, hopping and jumping. All were encouraged to release false pride, and self control that was a hindrance to true humility. The song "Who Will Bow and Bend Like a Willow" captures some of the energy, even ecstasy, of this part of the Shaker feast.

Who will bow and bend like a willow

Who will turn and twist and reel

In the gale of simple freedom,

From the bower of union flowing.

Who will drink the wine of power

Dropping down like a shower,

Pride and bondage all forgetting

Mother's wine is freely working.

Oh, ho! I will have it.

I will bow and bend to get it.

I'll be reeling, turning, twisting.

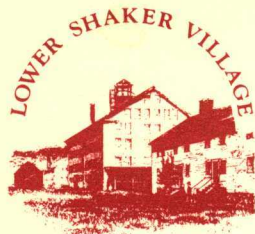
Shake out all the starch and stiff'ning!

The journey up Mount Assurance, the casting off of burdens, the honoring of elders, the purifying powers of spiritual waters, the freedom of Mother's wine, give us a sampling of these day long services at the feast ground. The extent to which an individual was able to find meaning in these symbolic acts determined the satisfaction and power that the rituals and celebrations could have for that individual.

## Laundry/Dairy Building Update

In our last newsletter, we told you about the efforts to secure the Laundry/Dairy Building as the Museum's home. Negotiations with the owners of the building, are moving forward. In the meantime, we have been given permission to use the space for programs. During the next few weeks volunteer work parties will descend upon the building with brooms and dustmops.

Many thanks to the Friends who have shown their support for the Museum's plan to purchase the Laundry/Dairy Building by sending donations to "get us started." We really were not asking for your money (you will definitely be hearing from us when we are ready to solicit funds!) but we appreciate your vote of confidence. The notion of having a home of our own is at once exciting and daunting. We will continue to update you on our progress in future issues of *The Friends' Quarterly*.



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