
The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from the Enfield Shaker Museum

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Museum Buys Ministry House

Another Shaker building has been added to the Museum complex. The Enfield Shaker Museum purchased the Ministry House on March 30th, the ninth building to be acquired since the Museum's founding in 1986. The 1854 Barn is now the only Shaker-built structure on the Church Family site which remains in private ownership.

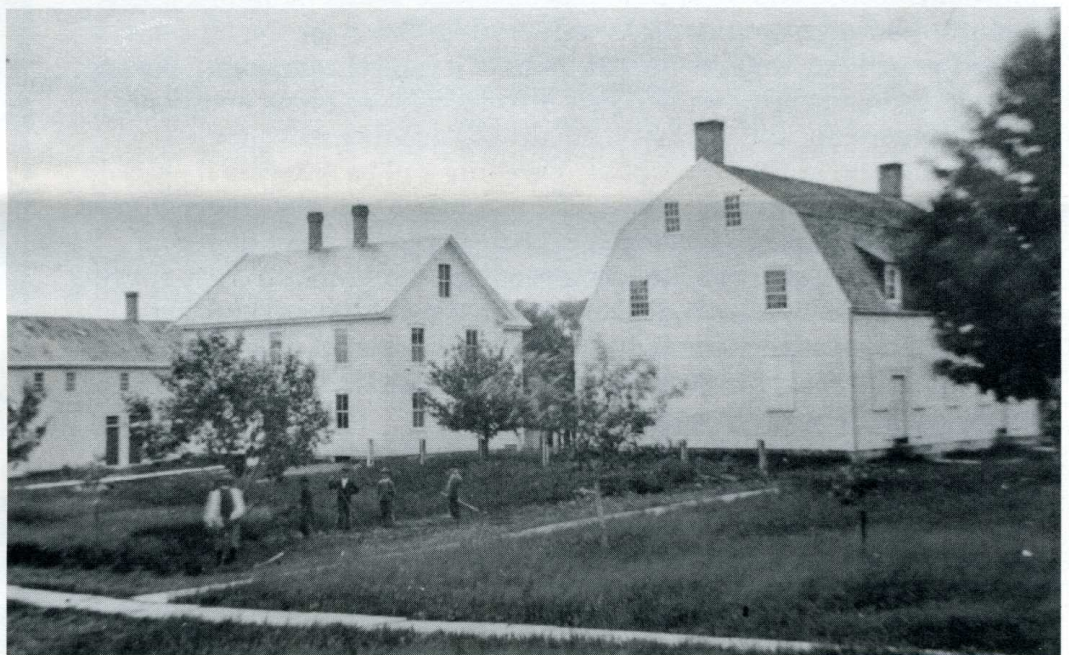
The Ministry House was built in 1880 and replaced a smaller Ministry Shop that was sold and moved into North Enfield where it can be seen today. In 1929 when the LaSalettes built the Mary Keane House, they moved the Ministry House to its current location.

The Ministry House is the last important structure built by the Enfield Shakers, and is in good condition. The exterior looks much as it did when the building was first constructed, and the interior retains its original staircase and most of the original built-ins and peg rails. The installation of kitchen and bath facilities represents the most significant interior alteration. The building is currently rented as both residential and commercial space, and the Museum anticipates no change in this arrangement for the short term.

In addition to the fact that this purchase allows us to ensure the preservation of the building, the Ministry House also provides important benefits to our interpretive program and our overall site planning. Historically the Ministry House served as both a dwelling and work space for the members of the New

Hampshire Bishopric, and now the Museum has the opportunity to interpret the Shakers' hierarchy of leadership and spiritual guidance. The building also physically and visually links the Laundry/Dairy Building and other stops on the walking tour with our two buildings on the other side of Route 4A. Sitting at the southern gateway to the Museum, its acquisition helps insure the integrity of the entrance to the site.

Its greatest value, however, lies in the fact that the significance of this complete historic complex is larger than the sum of its parts. The buildings of the Enfield Church Family depict the workings of a progressive spiritual and social community. Visitors often express feelings of awe and reverence that the spirit of the former Shaker community still lives on at this site. It is this spirit that the Museum is working to preserve and interpret.



In this Enfield photo (c. 1890) the Moses Johnson Meetinghouse (1793) is on the right, the Ministry House (1880) in the center, and the Ministry Wagonhouse (1828) with Seedhouse addition (1842) is in the left background. Note the Shaker brother and four boys mowing among the fruit trees in the yard.
