

# The Friends' Quarterly

## A Newsletter from The Museum at Lower Shaker Village

Volume III/ No. 3

Summer 1990

### "Dr. Brown Has a method peculiar to himself, of extracting the acid of the Valerian..."

by Galen Beale

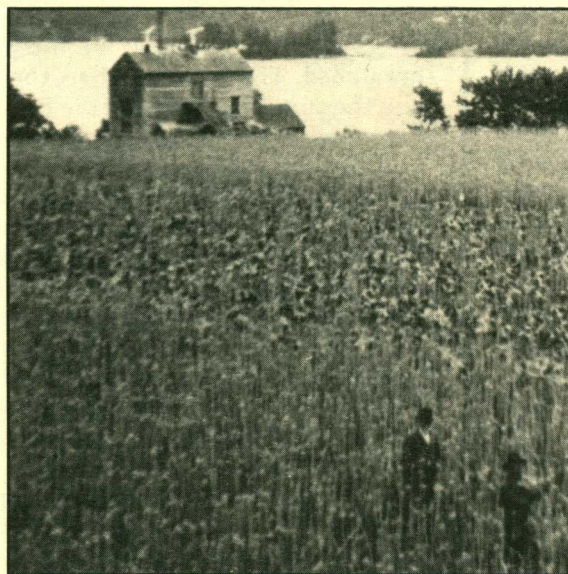
Dr. Samuel Brown, Physician of the Second Family of Enfield, New Hampshire Shakers, worked out a formula for an herbal medicine called "Brown's Pure Fluid Extract of English Valerian" in the late 1840s, and turned it into a profitable business for the Family for many years.

Born in 1797, Brown became interested in medicine as a young man and apprenticed under Brother Ezekiel Evans who was in charge of the Second Family's medicinal herb business. Largely self-taught, Brown also learned his trade from the physicians and doctors from Enfield Center who regularly assisted these Shaker physicians.

While the medicinal qualities of valerian had been known throughout history, the herb was available in America only in dried form, and the large amount of the dried root necessary for an effective cure caused many unpleasant side effects(2). Its use had been largely abandoned as a result, and opium or morphine was used instead, with their attendant side effects.

The Second Family imported valerian roots from England and planted them in their gardens(3). Brown was able to extract the essential oil of the fresh root, and with this oil, make a medicine that was powerful but had no side effects. The medicine was prepared from a 20 gallon formula(4) which called for eight ounces of valerian oil dissolved in two gallons of alcohol. To this was added four ounces

of poppy extract and one ounce henbane (opium poppy and henbane are both strong narcotics.)



*Enfield Shaker Valerian Distillery*

Four gallons of burnt sugar were then added and the rest - almost half of the recipe - was alcohol.

Brown's Extract of Valerian was recommended for "every disease arising from mental affection and nervous exhaustion"(5), and could be used internally or externally. Brown submitted his medicine to the sixth Exhibition of the Mechanics Association held in Boston, September, 1850, and it was awarded a medal by the Committee of Chemicals for the purity and strength of its preparation.

Dr. Brown died in 1856, but the Enfield Shakers continued to sell the Extract of Valerian. They published several catalogs filled with testimonials and distributed the medicine through wholesalers in Boston and New York.

In 1879, the Church Family took over the business(6) and reported they were manufacturing over 50,000 bottles a year, at the cost of 35 cents per bottle(7). The Enfield Shakers were still selling Valerian in 1918, when they reported over \$400.00 of income from the medicine on their tax return(8).

Valerian, (*Valerian officinalis*) also known as garden heliotrope, is a perennial herb which spreads slowly by rope-like white runners. Its hairy foliage is topped in June and July by tight clusters of pinkish-whitish tubular flowers. The root, harvested in the fall, is the medicinal part of the plant. Valerian is a powerful nervine, stimulant, carminative and antispasmodic, and the extracted drug remains valuable today.

In the home garden, valerian is a good companion plant for vegetables, and a spray made from the plant is said to both strengthen plants and attract earthworms.

#### References:

1. Facts Concerning Brown's Pure Fluid Extract of English Valerian (Enfield, New Hampshire, 1879). Manuscript in Western Reserve Historical Society Shaker Collection, Cleveland Ohio.

2. & 3. *Ibid*.

4. A Receipt for Compounding the Celebrated Brown's Shaker's Pure Fluid Extract of English Valerian, made in Enfield, New Hampshire, S.F. (n.d.) Manuscript in Canterbury Shaker Village Archives, Shaker Village Inc., Canterbury, New Hampshire.

(Continued on Page 4)



## Sage Thoughts

by Happy Griffiths

**DANDELION** - *Taraxacum Officinale*  
This familiar but often maligned herb, is a welcome sight in the early spring with its bright yellow, solitary flower-heads which turn a fluffy ball of seeds. Whether the Dandelion is a native American or naturalized plant has often been debated, but it is found in most sections of the world. With the exception of the stems, every part of the plant can be used, making it one of our most useful herbs.

High in protein, calcium, iron, riboflavin, niacin and vitamins A, C and B1 (thiamine), Dandelions were once used to cure scurvy. The juice of the root is still used by herbalists to treat diabetes and liver diseases; it is also one of the best herbs for building up the blood and curing anemia. In addition, it is said to act as a diuretic and has been prescribed as a mild laxative.

The leaves are gathered in the early spring before the stalk has grown tall. The very young leaves are less bitter than the larger ones and can be used fresh in salads. The older leaves may be blanched to remove bitterness and then used as a salad green or cooked like spinach. In many areas, dandelion roots are used as a coffee substitute. The roots should be gathered in the fall, washed and roasted in a slow oven for at least 2 hours, or until brown and brittle. Gather the flowers in the summer to make a delicious wine. The flowers may also be used to make a yellow dye for wool or silk.

Although enormous quantities of its roots were used in several Shaker remedies, the Dandelion has never been in danger of extinction in Enfield. In a detailed description published in 1848 Corbett's Compound Concentrated Syrup of Sarsaparilla was said to be made entirely of vegetables and herbs, including the familiar Dandelion. Extract of Dandelion was made in large quantities here in Enfield as it was in the medical departments of many Shaker communities.

The next time you are out walking, gather up some of this wonderful, edible tonic and digestive aid; your body will thank you!

## A Case for Preservation

On Saturday, June 30, 1990 an advertisement appeared in the Valley News which sent shock waves through the Upper Valley. This advertisement, complete with photographs, offered for sale three of the remaining Shaker buildings at Lower Shaker Village.

These are the 1854 Cow Barn, the 1880 Ministry Shop, and the 1819 East Brethren Shop (remodeled and renamed Bethany House by the LaSalette Brothers while they owned the property.)

The buildings were billed as a "once in a lifetime offering...of superb investment quality" and described as commercial or residential in nature with spectacular lake side views. The Museum does not disagree with this assessment of the buildings. We are however alarmed that there is no mention of the historic value of the buildings and site in this offering.

In 1993 Lower Shaker Village will celebrate its bicentennial. Although the site has undergone many changes in its two hundred year history, for the first time the integrity of the village as a unit is now threatened. This is a case where the whole is significantly more valuable than the sum of its parts. If the Enfield Shaker Village becomes a group of unrelated parts much stands to be lost.

The current owner of the historic village core is First Leader Corporation. The main interest of its principal partners is the renovation of the Great Stone Dwelling for operation as an inn and restaurant. The Museum has been actively negotiating with First Leader for more than a year with regard to the future of the site. Although progress has been made, it has been slow and at this time First Leader feels it has no choice but to put these buildings on the open market. The sale of these buildings to outside parties may not only affect the integrity of this site as a whole. It could also result in major alteration or damage to the priceless historical and educational value of the buildings.

Several solutions to this problem are possible. One is for First Leader to work with the Museum to develop protective covenants and/or easements for the buildings and grounds. In that way regardless of who purchases the buildings the historic nature of these properties is protected. These covenants need not limit the function of the buildings to their original Shaker uses but could ensure uses compatible with the nature of the property.

A second possibility is that an organization or individual interested in historic preservation could agree to purchase the buildings. In this case the Museum would be willing to work with the new owners to restore and use these buildings in an historically sympathetic manner.

The Museum is also looking at the possibility of raising the funds to purchase the buildings itself. This solution appears last on the list not because we would not like to see this happen, but because of the time and effort needed to organize and manage a successful capital campaign. In the current situation time is of the essence. The Museum is not likely to have enough time to put together a major campaign before the buildings are sold to another party. The most likely way that the Museum could obtain the buildings is if one or more "angels" came forward to donate the funds necessary.

At the moment we are putting out a call for support to all quarters. As the advertisement states, this sale is a "once in a lifetime offering of authentic Shaker properties." If we miss the opportunity to save this priceless piece of our heritage, it may be lost to us forever. By now you should have received a letter asking you to write in support of historic preservation at Lower Shaker Village, if you have already responded to this letter, thank you. If you have not please take a few minutes to write a few notes to those listed.



## Museum Honored with Private and Federal Funding Awards



The Museum has recently been honored with private and federal funding awards totalling \$23,200. These include a \$17,200 General Operating Support Award from the federal Institute of Museum Services, a \$2,500 grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Fund, a \$3,000 grant from The Corporate Fund and a \$500 grant from the Mascoma Savings Bank Foundation. The awards, each highly competitive, are a recognition of the quality and value of the Museum's work since its founding in 1987.

The Institute of Museum Service (IMS) Award was made to museum director Carolyn Smith by First Lady Barbara Bush at a White House ceremony on May 18, 1990, International Museum Day. (See photo above.)

In 1990 a total of \$17.6 million was awarded by IMS to 390 museums nationwide. These were selected from among 1368 applicants. The award was given to the Museum at Lower Shaker Village based on its leadership and professional excellence in its operations. The Museum received the maximum award possible, amounting to 10% of its operating budget.

The New Hampshire Charitable Fund granted \$2,500 to the Museum in May, 1990 from an organic farming fund. This is the second year in which the Museum received this funding. This year's grant was given to sponsor a new Museum project in organic herb

production (See New Herb Garden Established).

The Corporate Fund grant was awarded to the Museum on June 27, 1990 for board development, including a consultancy on strategic planning and creation of a board manual and new board member

orientation materials.

The Corporate Fund review process is very competitive and projects funded are those that best serve the goals of promoting sound management practice, organizational development and planning.

The Mascoma Savings Bank Foundation Grant will be used to build an entrance ramp to the Museum and Store which will make the first floor of the Laundry/Dairy Building handicap accessible.

*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, Route 4A, Enfield, NH 03748, or call (603) 632-4346.

### Museum Staff:

Carolyn Smith, Director  
Nancy Taube, Education Co-or.  
Caryn Bosson, Publicity Co-or.  
Happy Griffiths, Herbalist

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## New Herb Garden Established

When Isaac Hill visited the Enfield, NH Shakers in 1839 he wrote that their herb garden covered five acres on "the margin of the Mascomy pond." Beginning this summer the Museum's herb gardens will be reclaiming old ground by expanding to more than an acre.

This experiment in production gardening is made possible by a \$2500 grant from the NH Charitable Fund, which has been supporting our efforts to protect and enhance the agricultural space here. The NH Dept. of Agriculture has awarded the Museum a grant for constructing specially designed sales stands.

Thousands of visitors have admired the Museum's display beds since they were put in over three years ago. Now next to these beds, more than a dozen varieties of herbs are being grown strictly for sale.

Growing herbs for sale represents the revival of a thriving Shaker enterprise. These herbs, however, will not be processed into medicines. Rather, the organically grown herbs will be sold fresh, through several local markets.

The production garden is managed by Sonia Swierczynski, who served as Farm Coordinator during the 1989 season. The display beds are tended by Happy Griffiths, the Museum herbalist, with help from the Village Gardeners.

This new venture may not "yield annually in cash its thousand, if not its thousands of dollars," Isaac Hill's claim of the 1839 garden. But it should become self-supporting. Garden lovers who wish to contribute to its success can now become official "Friends of the Garden." These special friends will help assure that the Shakers' gardens continue to flower and to thrive for all to see. To become a Friend of the Garden, please send a \$5 contribution (or more!) to: "Friends of the Garden," The Museum at Lower Shaker Village, Enfield, NH 03748.



## Laundry/Dairy News



*The new Shaker Store open for business*

As usual, we bring news of the Museum's latest move - at least this time, it is under the same roof! Expanding to fit our space (doesn't everyone?) the Shaker Store is now housed in Dana Robes' former workshop and the Museum has taken over the second floor of the dairy building (where the store

has been located since last October.) The purpose of this latest move is to give both the Museum and the Store the additional space they so sorely needed. Of course, moving always involves a lot of work. In this case, the workshop needed to be slightly renovated to accommodate the myriad functions of a retail operation and space for our demonstrating craftsmen. At the end of April, **Charlie Bosson, Priscilla Geer, Dave McIntyre, Jay and Jesse Davis, Jim Loft, Steve Powell, John Taylor, Susan Connery** and the staff spent a weekend washing walls, windows, and ceilings; re-

moving "extraneous matter" (i.e. wood and metal) from these areas; disconnecting an elaborate electrical system; chipping glue from the floor and hauling away debris. Next, **Ken Robb, Dave McIntyre** and **John Taylor** labored to hang new sheetrock on the lower half of the walls. **Earl Brady** replaced the wood trim and others cut through a new door, painted the walls and gave the room a final cleaning.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the store and museum will be in place, and permanent craft displays will have joined the Shaker Store in the workshop. Throughout the summer, the staff will continue to fine tune the new arrangement. We hope you will stop by to visit us soon for a tour of the new spot!

(Contd from Page 1)

5. Facts Concerning.
6. Blinn, Henry C., Historical Notes Having Reference to the Believers in Enfield, New Hampshire, 1897, Vol.II. SVI, p. 87.
7. Facts Concerning.
8. Tax Return Information, Enfield, New Hampshire, n.d.), SVI.
9. Hylton, William H., Editor, The Rodale Herb Book, (Emmanus, Pennsylvania, 1974), p.612.

## Yearly Coverage

In the past, the Museum has sent out a single Calendar of Events, listing the workshops, lectures and special events scheduled for the "summer" (May-October) season. Each year, the Calendar has grown; the 1989 Calendar actually covered May through December.

In an effort to spread Museum

activities over an entire year, the 1990 schedule has been expanded to include winter and summer activities. As such, we now feel it is necessary to produce two calendars. The first Calendar, covering June through October, was mailed in mid-April. The second Calendar, covering November through May, will be mailed in mid-September.



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