

The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from The Museum at Lower Shaker Village

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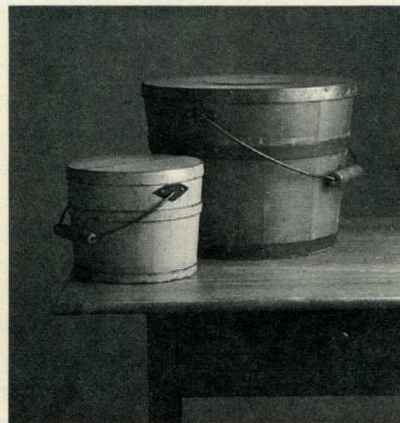
The Cooperage Industry of Enfield's North Family

by Galen Beale

Cooperage—the manufacture of wooden staved tubs, pails and buckets—was a vital early American industry. The earliest tubs and pails were laboriously made entirely with hand tools. However, the craft was rapidly mechanized and by the 1830s machine companies were producing pail and tub lathes, barrel saws, and a variety of other labor-saving equipment. The machine companies revolutionized the industry and spawned many tub and pail mills throughout New England and the Midwest. Enfield's North Family Shakers bought this modern equipment and developed a business that successfully competed in the World, and not only paid their debts, but supported the Family almost until its closing.

When the Enfield Shakers first established their community on the shore of Lake Mascoma, they built water-powered mills in which to do their woodworking. The equipment found in these mills gives an indication of the type of industries being carried on by the Shakers; as the equipment changed over time, so did the volume, quality and type of their mill products. This early machinery was both home made and commercially made, and planing machinery for the manufacture of bucket staves was an important part of early mill equipment. Water-powered planes were found in the community's first Grist Mill, built in 1798, as well as their 1812 Grist Mill. Two types of planes were described in

Enfield's first Grist Mill: a flat planer, still commonly used today by woodworkers to smooth wood to an even thickness, and a stave planer which planed the wood concave on one side and convex on the other.



"The building was about 60 x 32 feet, two stories in height....The power was furnished by an overshot water wheel thirty feet in diameter; buckets eight feet long. The north part of the mill was occupied by various minor machines for various uses. Among those were a fine edging and cut-off saws for staves, pails and tubs, also a plane for planing bottoms, for pails and tubs and for grain measures. This was like an ordinary hand smoothing plane, only it was wide enough to plane half bushel bottoms whole 16 to 18 inches wide. The motion was up and down, moved by a crank, the stroke about 24 inches. There was also another similar plane for planing staves for pails and tubs outside and inside with concave and convex blades for any desired size, there

was also a wood turning lathe."

By the mid-19th century all three of Enfield's families were making buckets. When the Church Family's mill burned in 1849, the Shakers immediately rebuilt a fireproof, stone mill building which stands today, and in 1850 three coopers were making pails and tubs there. That same year, the 2nd Family was also enlarging their cooperage business. Their Trustee, Jason Kidder, reported investing \$1,000 in a water-powered tub mill in which three coopers produced 600 tubs valued at \$900. Ten years later, they were producing 12,000 pails annually. The remaining Family at Enfield, the North, was also making buckets on a small scale.

The growth of the North Family's cooperage industry can be attributed to financial necessity. By 1855 this Family had built almost all their buildings, and all their bills were paid. They supported themselves by making brooms, selling lumber and other trades. But on April 10, 1856, tragedy struck the family. A fire destroyed 11 buildings. The family immediately set about to recover from this devastation and among the new buildings was a new mill, "a substantial two story and basement structure with slated roof," which in 1869, would become the Tub and Pail Factory. Recovering from the Fast Day fire was a financial drain on this small Shaker family and they needed to find additional sources of income. Three years after the fire, Enfield's North Family began to set up their cooperage business again with "more extensive, and better

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Sage Thoughts

by Happy Griffiths

BASIL - *Ocimum basilicum* - The French call basil *Herbe royale*, in Italy it signifies love, and in India holy basil is buried with the dead to protect from evil in the next world. Basil is one of the most popular herbs in the world, valued for culinary, cosmetic, and arrangement use. It has been used in American kitchens for over 200 years. The Watervliet, NY, Shakers grew and sold the seed by 1830; probably the other communities were growing it by the mid-1800s.

A member of the mint family, basil is a good tonic for the digestive system. Steep a teaspoon of dry basil in a cup of boiling water to make a tea for stomach complaints. Basil is thought to have a slight sedative action, and thus is sometimes recommended for nervous headaches and anxiety.

Basil is a sun worshipper, growing best in hot weather. It needs adequate water and likes a rich soil high in organic matter. But don't overdo it: the flavor of herbs comes from their essential oils and too much nitrogen will yield an abundant crop but one with low oil content. Seeds and seedlings should not be set out until air and soil temperature are above 60°. Seeds germinate in 10-14 days and should be kept moist. Once seedlings are up, thin them; when they are 6 inches high, keep pinching the tips to produce bushier plants. After a heavy harvest, feed with fish emulsion and liquid kelp to encourage new growth.

There are many varieties of basil. Sweet basil, the most widely grown, has a strong clove-like scent. Smaller-leaved lemon basil has a distinct lemony aroma. Cinnamon basil, with its spicy scent, has a much more pronounced flavor in the fresh leaf than in the dried. Lettuce leaf basil has large, wide leaves that are milder than other green basil. Spicy globe basil is a small, compact plant. Purple basil and opal basil have showy purple leaves. Holy basil is vastly different in appearance; its leaves are small and fuzzy and it is used mostly in potpourris.

Basil is a good companion plant for tomatoes and peppers, because of its insect-repelling fragrance. For this reason some sources recommend planting basil near doorways to repel insects.

Sweet basil's wonderful aroma and flavor enhance many recipes and, as in the garden, it is perfect with tomatoes. Basil vinegar is easy to make and basil pesto is delicious served on pasta or toasted bread or stuffed under a chicken breast. With so many basil varieties to choose from, no wonder it is a favorite in today's kitchen.

From the Director

Dear Friends,

Lots has happened at the Museum at Lower Shaker Village since you received the last issue of *The Friends' Quarterly* in fall, 1993.

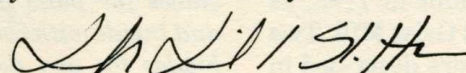
Let me introduce myself. I am Sarah Saville Shaffer and I've been Director of the Museum since late April. Carolyn Smith, who saw the Museum grow exponentially under her leadership since 1987, is now at the Shaker Workshops in Concord, Massachusetts. Deborah Coffin, formerly Education Co-ordinator and demonstrating craftsperson, served as interim Director from fall, 1994 until this spring. We are deeply grateful to her for keeping the Museum on an even keel.

I come to New Hampshire from the Washington, D.C., area, where I was Assistant Director of Decatur House (a National Trust for Historic Preservation museum,) served on the Boards of Directors of the Virginia Quilt Museum and Washington National History Day, and volunteered with the Washington Literacy Council. I'm delighted to be at the Museum at Lower Shaker Village and am looking forward to an exciting period of growth.

As you know, the Museum purchased the Laundry/Dairy Building in December 1991; in March 1993 the West Meadow Barn and the Stone Mill Building came into our stewardship, too. Five other Shaker buildings—the Great Stone Dwelling, the 1854 barn, the Ministry building, West Brethren Shop, and Bethany House—remain in the Village core. Now, we are working toward the possible purchase of some of these buildings and of the acreage on which our gardens are planted. This is an exciting prospect, and Museum staff, our Board of Directors, and several volunteers are working hard to make it come true. You'll hear lots more about this in future editions of the *Quarterly*!

Our Calendar of Events is jam-packed with workshops, concerts, hikes into history, and special events. I hope you'll take advantage of your membership discount and attend as many of these as possible. In addition to all these offerings, we are presenting "From Butter Beans to Slippery Elm: A Collection of Shaker Ephemera." This exhibit of Shaker printed materials on loan from Alana Major-Parkinson is on display throughout the summer.

One of the most enjoyable parts of my job is meeting the many volunteers who work at the Museum and getting to know the members who support us in so many ways. I cannot overstate the importance of the contribution you make to the Museum at Lower Shaker Village when you renew your membership, attend a special event, or bring a friend to tour our exhibits. I look forward to meeting you—please be sure to introduce yourself the next time you visit the Museum.



Cooperage, continued from page 1
Machinery.¹

The next decade brought more financial misfortune to Enfield's North Family. Four years after their Fast Day fire, the North Family found itself deeply in debt because of a fraudulent Trustee, Austin Bronson. Henry Cumings, the Trustee who succeeded in stabilizing the North Family 17 years later, reports what happened:

*"The first serious blow at the financial prosperity of the Society came on the North family in 1860, when it was found that Austin Bronson, who had been trustee of that family for eight years, had allowed debts to accumulate against him to the amount of \$12,000. When Bronson took the business from True W. Heath in 1852 the family was free from debt, did not owe any bills. True was one of the old style financiers who went without what he could not pay for."*²

William Wilson, who was appointed to replace Bronson, came from the Second Family which had successful businesses in medicinal herbs and brooms. While Wilson was Trustee, the main North Family industry was the manufacture of flannel shirts, drawers and hose. Wilson was slowly repaying the Family's debt, but perhaps the Shakers were impatient with the rate of repayment for, in 1866, Henry Cumings replaced Wilson as Trustee. Cumings improved and expanded the tub and pail industry and paid off the remaining debt over the next ten years.

At the time Cumings took over as Trustee, the North Family was producing 70 tubs and 22 dozen pails annually, as well as selling flannel shirts and drawers, lumber, fruit trees, and maple sugar. Three years later, the production of the North Family's Pail Shop, now run by a combination of steam and water, was the Family's main money maker, reporting sales of \$1,460.

Enfield's North Family, with only 11 adult males in 1870, had two industries that provided most of their support: the sale of medicinal roots and herbs, and cooperage. The Family decided to focus their efforts on cooperage knowing they could make more products in less time and with less hired help than was possible in the herb business. They invested another \$1,000 in their mill which now ran two tub and pail machines for four months a year, employing three men and producing 300 dozen pails and buckets. By 1876, Enfield's North Family was earning \$4,990 from cooperage; the following year their debt was paid.

Advertising that they specialized in tubs and pails made from old-growth pine, the North Family's cooperage business competed successfully in the World. This success, however, had taken a toll on the Shakers' resources. The old-growth pine Cumings so proudly advertised was disappearing. Feb. 2, 1877. Enfield. *"The Shakers have this week cut from their land north of this village probably one of the largest remaining monarches of the forest in this vicinity, in the shape of a huge pine tree which was 140 feet high, 6 1/2 feet in diameter at the stump and 15 feet from the butt over 4 feet in diameter and perfectly round, except for a little ring rot near the ground. It was drawn to the pail factory at the N.F. Shakers to be manufactured into tubs, pails, etc."*³

Cumings' hard work over the years repaying the North Family's debt had also taken a toll. In 1877, with the Family's debt paid, Cumings moved to the Church Family. Four years later, he left the Shakers for good. On May 18, 1881, at age 45, Cumings married Enfield's Sister Arabella Churchill. Cumings thought the Shakers were going to run out of money, so he left while he was still young enough to earn a nest egg. The couple moved away from Enfield and Henry Cumings took up the trade of

broommaker.

Paper and tin pails began replacing the wooden staved bucket in the 1870s, eroding the market. The number of New Hampshire mills making pails, tubs or pail stock dropped to 24 by 1899. The remaining mills either made decorative work such as planters, or branched out into making bobbins, boxes, clothespins, chair stock and shoe pegs. The North Family Shakers went out of the cooperage business in 1892. The mill's steam engine and equipment were sold, and the building converted into a cider mill. In 1895 the North Family Pail Factory burned to the ground.

1. Cumings, Henry. "Early Inventions of the Shakers", (March 31, 1905) Nellie Pierce Collection, Hanover, NH.

2. Anonymous, A Historical narrative of the Rise and Progress of the United Society of Shakers, Enfield, N.H. 1782-1858. Copy at the Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, NY, no. 16,622/9765. pg. 94.

3. Cumings, Henry. Scrapbook "E", Enfield Public Library, Enfield, NH.

4. Scrapbook, Nellie Pierce Collection, Hanover, NH.

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

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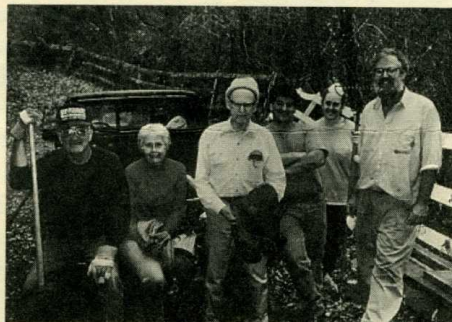
Facilities Update

This spring the Board welcomed John Gilbert, who will chair the Facilities Committee after being a member of it for several years. He joins the Board at a point well into the restoration planning. A space needs survey was conducted to determine our current needs and what types of spaces will be needed to accommodate the expanding operations of the Museum.

After determining what types of space we need, we commissioned Jay White of the Burley Partnership in Waitsfield, VT, to complete an Historic Structures Report for the Laundry/Dairy Building. The report is the Museum's primary planning document and lays the groundwork for all future work. It includes a chronology of the building's development, determined by archival research and physical evidence in the building, an authenticity index which rates each room in the building by the quality of its remaining Shaker fabric, site plans, proposals for uses of each restored area, schedules for needed repairs and a sequence of recommended restoration activity.

As the report was completed, the Museum acquired the Stone Mill Building, West Meadow Barn and

18 acres of land on the west side of Route 4A. The Historic Structures Report was expanded to include the Museum's new holdings. Suggested plans are to house the Shaker Store and admission point in the first floor of the Stone Mill Building with all parking on the west side of Route 4A.



SMB Clean-up Crew: Earl Brady, Sue Hammond, Eugene Beard, John Gilbert, Karen Sluzenski, Charlie DePuy. Not Pictured: Charlotte Barrett, Carl Krieg, Michael O'Connor

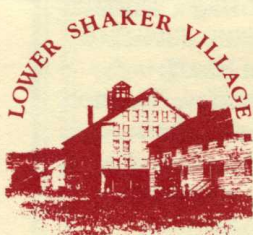
As the HSR approaches completion we are implementing some of the recommendations for immediate repairs. These are stabilization projects to prevent further deterioration. Last fall a work crew mobilized to clean up at the Stone Mill Building and the West Meadow Barn. A tremendous amount of trash was removed from around the buildings and inside

the barn. We also removed soil from the sills and plastic sheeting from the ceiling of the barn. This spring a work crew organized by Mary Ann Haagen and Charlie DePuy removed trash from the woods surrounding the Stone Mill Building. Next, look for the removal of non-Shaker additions to the Stone Mill Building and of asphalt siding on the West Meadow Barn. We will also begin work with Dana Robes Wood Craftsmen on the replication of missing windows at the Stone Mill Building, thanks to a generous grant from Dana and Martha Robes.

If you have an interest in the restoration work going on here and would like to volunteer to help, call Michael O'Connor at the Museum (603/632-4346); there is plenty of work for everyone.

Museum Wish List

- Vacuum Cleaner in good working condition
- Office quality photo-copier
- Lawn and garden tools and equipment
- Macintosh computer with hard drive
- Tape drive back-up system



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