

The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from the Enfield Shaker Museum

Volume X/No.2

Summer 1998

Building for Eternity: The Enfield Shakers Construct a Stone Dwelling House

The opening talk at the Enfield Shaker Symposium on April 25, 1998, was presented by Robert P. Emlen, who spoke on "Building for Eternity: The Enfield Shakers Construct a Stone Dwelling House." Following the progress recorded by First Trustee Caleb Dyer in the account book he kept of the construction, Rob explained why, when, and how the stone house was constructed. In addition to Caleb Dyer's account book, which is owned by the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, Rob cited events referred to in "A Historical Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the United Society of Shakers at Enfield N.H.," an anonymous manuscript written in 1858 and also owned by La Salette; and to "A Sketch of the Life of Caleb M. Dyer," an article published in 1904 by former Enfield Shaker elder Henry Cumings in *The Enfield Advocate*. Rob's talk, which was drawn from his 1979 article on this subject in *Old-Time New England*, is excerpted below.

The date "1837" carved in a granite block set high in the west gable end of the Great Stone Dwelling gives a misleading impression of the time which it took to plan and build the dwelling. Although it records the year in which the walls of the stone house were raised, it gives no suggestion of the years of preparation and the careful, conservative, and deliberate program of construction that allowed the Enfield Shakers to pay for their house as they went along and, in accordance with Shaker practice, to incur no debt in the process.

To begin with, the architectural planning for this project, the largest residential structure ever built by the Shakers, was far too specialized for them to rely on their own building skills. We know from former Elder Henry Cumings' retrospective writings that the Shakers retained the services of the local architect Ammi Burnham Young, designer of institutional buildings at Dartmouth College, at Kimball Union Academy, and at the Gilmanton Theological Seminary, to plan the stone dwelling for them. A series of architectural drawings at Hancock Shaker Village and in the Andrews Collection at the Winterthur Museum and Library may be early versions of Young's plans for the Enfield Shakers. (Continued on page 3)



In Solstice Light: Paintings of the Three Northernmost Shaker Villages was exhibited in the Stone Mill Building from June 20 through July 5. Sister Frances Carr and artist Gary Hamel stand in front of two paintings of Enfield's 1854 Cow Barn captured during the summer solstice of 1996. The buildings and landscape of Enfield, Canterbury, and Sabbathday Lake are depicted at different times of year reflecting the artist's varying emotional responses to his environment. Approximately half of the exhibition's 78 paintings will travel to the Shaker Village at Sabbathday Lake, Maine, and will be on view from August 8 to September 12.

From the Director

Dear Friends,

The opportunity to restore the original appearance of the Church Family landscape is one of the most exciting results of the Museum's purchase of the historic village core. Our long-term plan for site restoration, thanks to Board member Charlie DePuy's dedicated research and vision, received the Enfield Planning Commission's approval in April. This spring, the first stages of the plan were implemented.

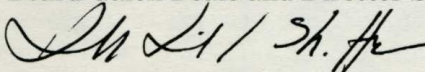
Utility poles and overhead wires that detracted so much from the site's appearance were the first to go. All above-ground electric and telephone wires to the Laundry/Dairy Building and the Great Stone Dwelling have been replaced with below-ground wiring. We also removed two non-Shaker elements, the gazebo and picket fence, which were erected along the front of the Great Stone Dwelling.

Prior to the opening of the Shaker Inn at the Great Stone Dwelling, the Museum regraded and improved all roads on site and installed an arrival circle for guests at the inn. Over the next four years, we will re-direct all parking (except handicap spaces) to small lots on the perimeter of the Museum campus. Caleb Dyer Lane will be returned to its original Shaker orientation, and a re-created Shaker fence, made of wood rails between

granite posts, will be installed around the core of the village. These steps will ensure a less-intrusive traffic flow and restore a more pastoral, 19th century appearance to the entire site.

Big changes have come to the Laundry/Dairy Building as well. We have completed a new accessible Education Center on the first floor of the Dairy Building and have painted the entire exterior of the Laundry/Dairy Building this summer. Both these projects were made possible by a generous gift from Dana and Martha Robes and by matching gifts from nearly a dozen Friends of the Museum. The Education Center is part of our constant effort to make the Museum and its programs accessible to all visitors. Coinciding with its opening is a new, wheelchair-accessible, exhibit on the Shakers' relationship with the World.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce that the Enfield Shaker Museum is one of four institutions in New Hampshire to be honored with an award from Inherit New Hampshire. The award recognizes the Museum's extraordinary efforts to save the village core, and was accepted on June 12 at the historic Rochester Opera House on the Museum's behalf by President of the Board Galen Beale and Director Sarah Saville Shaffer.



Sarah Saville Shaffer

Sage Thoughts: Native Americans and the Shakers

When Mother Ann Lee and her small band of followers first came to America in 1775 they settled in Niskayuna, a small town a few miles northwest of Albany. They worked hard at clearing the land, building homes and cultivating the soil to grow vegetables to help sustain them. They then turned to recruiting new members by holding a series of religious revivals. By 1800, eleven Shaker communities had been organized in the northeastern states and thereafter they expanded into the west. One small group of converts were the Native Americans who lived near the communities the Shakers had established.

The North American Indians were dependent to a large extent on the plants gathered from the wild, mostly plants and roots found in the shady woods. They also grew corn, beans, pumpkins, and sunflowers, and gathered many varieties of berries found in open clearings or sunny fields.

The early settlers and the Shakers gathered many of the same herbs, roots and berries, using them according to the ways the Indians told them. This was the start of the Shakers' important medicinal herb business. Many of the herbs and wild botanicals used then are

either still used today or are on the protected list due to being harvested to near-extinction. Some are considered to be dangerous and are not FDA approved. To list just a few of the herbs they collected: the common milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*, was gathered in the spring and boiled as a potherb. *Achillea millefolium*, yarrow, was used to make a stimulating tonic and to treat weak or upset stomachs. For common wormwood, *Artemisia absinthium*, the plant tops were boiled and applied as a warm compress on sprains, bruises, strained muscles and inflammations. *Eupatorium purpureum*, Joe-Pye weed or purple boneset, was used as a valuable remedy for all urinary disorders. Joe Pye was a Native American reputed to have cured typhus with an extraction of the root of this plant. *Taraxacum officinale*, dandelion, was recommended in diseases of the liver, constipation, and skin problems. It should be collected when the plant is in full flower.

The Shakers were the first in this country to produce herbs for hospitals and for the pharmaceutical market. Their products were known in the commercial world for their excellent quality. I think we can safely say we are indebted to the Native Americans who guided the early settlers to understanding the botanical pharmacy that was in their own back yards.

Happy Griffiths, Herbalist

We also know that by early in 1834 the Enfield Shakers had a detailed and explicit understanding of the finished form of the house. In their letter of February 11, the ministry of the New Hampshire Bishopric wrote to the Central Ministry in New York describing the dimensions of the dwelling, the nature and arrangement of the rooms, and their intention to build it of granite.

In the manuscript, "A Historical Narrative," we find the chronology of how the Enfield Shakers prepared for construction. In 1834 they moved the Brethren's shops off the present site of the house and to their present locations. They began hauling granite from their quarry in nearby Canaan, NH, to the construction site and began fitting the hundreds of blocks that would be needed to build the house. In 1835 they built a sawmill in the village of North Enfield, lacking sufficient water power in their own village to saw the lumber that would be required for this job. In 1836 they built a drying house for seasoning the newly-cut lumber they had skidded across the frozen lake from North Enfield, and then they dug a cellar 100 feet long and fifty feet wide.

Finally, in the spring of 1837, they were ready to begin raising the building. Caleb Dyer's account book, laboriously transcribed by Viola Hess, tells the story.

May 1, 1837. Luther Kingsley & his hands as masons commenced work upon the cellar walls of the stone dwelling house.

The Shakers had hired a crew of stone masons from Boston who were experts in the fine art of lifting and setting blocks of granite, some weighing upwards of a ton.

June 10. 3 door sills set and 3 sides pretty much to the top of the cellar windows. Also, the flooring timbers on all except the north space.

In the basement, the walls were almost finished, including the massive arched partitions running the length of the building beneath the central hallway. The sills for the first-floor doorways were in place, and framing for the first floor was laid around the masonry base for the kitchen stoves in the north east room.

June 17. Door sills all set. East door posts and caps raised.

At the east, or lake, end of the building, the enormous granite posts and lintel were now in place.

June 24. Window frames all set and posts and stone work up to the middle of the windows except one tier.

The builders are first setting wooden window frames and then laying the stone blocks against them.

July 1. Windows all capped on the first loft. Commenced raising the first loft.

In this entry Caleb reveals for the first time how the interior of the building was constructed. After the stonework of each story or "loft" was completed, an interlocking frame of large wooden timbers was "raised" and assembled to support the floor, wall and roof structure.

July 8. Finished raising Monday notwithstanding it was considerable rainy. No mason work done Monday on account of raising but all hands engaged in raising the window frames. The stone work up one third the height of them.

July 15. Window caps all on the second story & just ready to raise the stage.

In this entry Caleb confirms that work on the exterior walls was being conducted from staging—wooden scaffolding of ladders, platforms, and braces—which was raised as the work progressed from story to story.

July 22. Got the stone work raised one third the way up the third loft. Windows and all the frames set except at the west end.

July 29. Raised the flooring timbers on the fourth loft. Stone work all done up to the tops of the third loft and stagings raised. All in readiness for commencing on the fourth loft. The stone work of the third loft was laid in 9 1/2 days.

By this time the work was moving so smoothly that the house grew in height from two stories to three stories in less than two weeks.

August 5. Had the front wall up to the top of the fourth story window frames and other three sides up 1/3 of the way to the windows. The broad southern wall was the first one to be finished up to the roof line.

For the Shakers, the "front" of the house faced across the lawn to the meeting house, not out to the road. (Continued on the insert)

The Friends' Quarterly is a publication of The Enfield Shaker Museum. It is mailed as a service to Museum members. For information on membership write:

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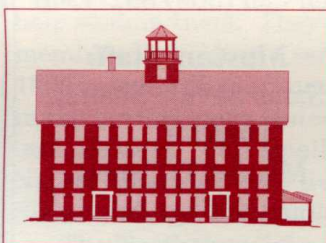
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Shaker Inn Opened in June

Congratulations to Historic Inns of New England! The Shaker Inn at the Great Stone Dwelling opened just in time for Dartmouth graduation weekend on June 12. Rave reviews about the restaurant and lodging are pouring in and the Inn has received excellent publicity including a lengthy story on the national AP wire service. The Museum welcomes Innkeeper Howard Stone and his entire staff, and looks forward to a longstanding collaboration.



Shown above, the Laundry/Dairy Building receives a new coat of paint. The paint colors were selected to match historic paint samples identified in the Museum's 1995 Historic Structures Report. Notice also that the overhead wires have been removed, one of the Museum's first steps in restoring the historic appearance of the village landscape.



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July, 1998

Dear Members,

There have been so many new and exciting changes at the Museum this year. Since the purchase of the historic core, change is everywhere: buildings are being repainted, site work continues, and the Inn is open! All this is due to the hard work of many people, including our Director, Sarah Saville Shaffer.

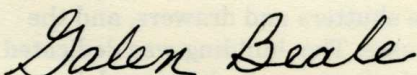
As some of you have heard, Sarah has recently announced her resignation effective at the end of July. The Board deeply appreciates her hard work, her many accomplishments, and her dedication to the Museum. Sybil Williamson is chairing the Search Committee. This is an expanding museum with a bright future and we expect to attract many well-qualified applicants for this position. Michael O'Connor will provide continuity at the Museum in the interim.

On August 1, the Museum will host a Gala Evening at the Great Stone Dwelling. This will be an occasion to celebrate our accomplishments of the past year, to thank Sarah for her tenure as Director of the Museum, and to bid her farewell. Your invitation is in the mail; I hope you will attend this special event.

We hope to see you at the Museum this summer and fall for some wonderful events: our second Heirloom Appraisal Day on September 19; our Silent Auction of fine crafts and arts which runs from September 19 until October 10; the popular Harvest Festival on October 10; and of course the regularly scheduled workshops and tours of the Great Stone Dwelling throughout August. Music, dance, and art events are also scheduled: Joan Feierabend will exhibit her work in the Stone Mill Building starting July 25; Barry and Shelley Phillips will perform in the Great Stone Dwelling October 9; and the Pontine Movement Theatre will present a Shaker-inspired performance in late October. A benefit auction in November closes our season.

Please join us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Galen Beale".

Galen Beale
President, Board of Trustees

August 10. After the stone work completed for the body of the house the masons and other hands commenced getting up timber and continued in the raising line of business through the week. Raised the first set of purlin plates and the square part of the belfry and staging raised for commencing on the stone work at the east gable end.

With the stonework four stories high all around, the crew turned to framing the room and the belfry, and to raising the staging to granite in the gable ends.

August 19. Have completed raising the roof and have dug and laid the foundation for the portico at the east end.

Here we learn that the broad stone porch was added after the stonework on the house was finished, probably to keep the east wall clear for the builders' staging.

August 22. Completed laying the body of the house.

September 2. The chimneys are all out at the roof except the arch or cook room chimneys. Posts set at the corners of the piazza and penceling (finishing mortar joints) of the house all done. In the last of August the eight brick chimneys rising through the house were leaned into pairs and combined into four stacks as they emerged above the roof line.

September 19. The slaters arrived here a little before noon, 3 of them and a tender, trimming slate, building staging, then commenced putting on the slate. Six hands commenced boarding the roof.

As the builders started nailing roofing boards to the rafters and purlins, a new crew of hired tradesmen arrived on the job and started fastening slate to the roof.

October 7. The main roof of the house finished slating, and the belfry and the bell deck finished, except painting the last time over. The portico all finished except part of the slating. The moldings in the windows half put in. The jet to be painted over once more.

The eaves of the stone house were some forty feet above ground level, far higher than any ladder would reach, and while the builders' staging was still in place they used it to give the woodwork several coats of paint.

October 14. The staging all down and cleared off, the work all painted twice over and the portico. The jet to the main building finished painting. Under floor not quite half laid in the lower loft. 7 hands and 2 boys now left to work.

By mid-October Caleb had reduced the work force to a handful of masons and assistants, and was looking forward to dismissing them all before winter.

October 21. Under floors completed in the lower loft. Painting pretty much done on the outside except the portico and a few windows. Stones to catch the water from the eaves set and drains all finished.

Now that the roof was finished, it was displacing rain from an area of 5,800 square feet and concentrating it at the bottom of a few downspouts. On the ground the stone masons were setting granite splash blocks and catch basins to lead the water into underground drains and away from the building.

October 28. The house all shut up by means of boards all set in the doorways and in the cellar windows. The Stone Shed cleaned away, and we are pretty much in readiness for leveling off the dooryard. The glass all in except the cellar windows and side lights to the doors which will not be put in until another season. We are in hopes to dismiss all our hands after another week.

November 3. The ground all leveled off and slicked up so that it looks nice. The ministry arrive here from Canterbury.

Thus Caleb's journal records that the stone house was raised in just six months. Before it was closed up for the winter the first flooring was laid, so that the lumber could dry in place.

In the spring of 1838 the Shakers finally completed an aqueduct to bring water from their Mountain Pond to the Church family's woodworking mills, and work began on the doors and windows, the shutters and drawers, and the pegs and balusters for the stone house. Construction continued for the next three years. The building was dedicated and first occupied in of June 1841. And, Henry Cumings proudly noted, the family had not run in debt one dollar. They had taken the time to build it right. They were building for eternity.

