
The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from the Enfield Shaker Museum

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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.
