

The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from The Museum at Lower Shaker Village

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A Move Without Much Ceremony

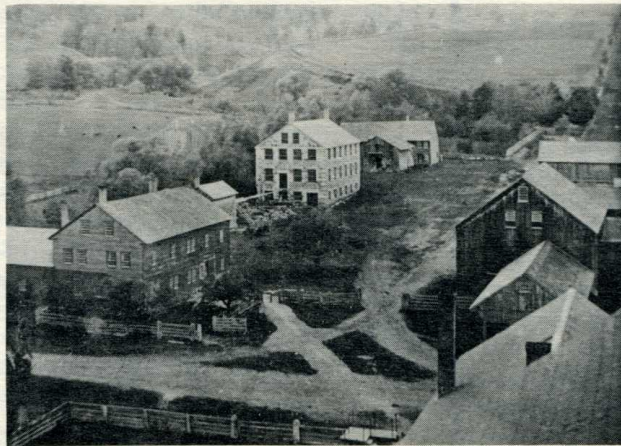
One of the challenges facing The Museum is reconstructing the plan for the Enfield Shaker community as it once existed. Records of the construction, location, destruction, and /or relocation of the buildings from this community provide clues to the architectural history of the village. One source of information about the buildings and their history is a series of articles written for a local newspaper in 1910 by Henry Cumings titled "Village History". During the early 20th century, Henry Cumings, a member of the Enfield Shaker community for almost 20 years, wrote a number of accounts of Shaker life and history for the *Enfield Advocate*.

The third article in the series, "Some of the Houses that have Been Moved in Enfield", gives the following account of moving the Currier's Shop.

"The first I shall mention is the house known as the Laffee house on Baltic Street. About 1852, houses being in great demand, C. M. Dyer with the consent of the Church Family Shakers, decided to move a building known as the Currier's Shop, which stood just above the stone mill near the tan house. This building was erected about 1835 to finish leather in. After the burning of the old grist mill in 1849 some machinery was put into it and used until the stone mill was completed in 1850.

The building was got ready to move by placing it on two long spruce trees, the end being shaped like a sled runner. A day was set and invitations were sent to the farmers about town who owned

oxen to come to the moving bee. The Shakers had a dozen yoke of heavy oxen and enough responded to swell the number to thirty-six yoke. A pair of heavy cart wheels were attached by a strong cable to each shoe and the heaviest oxen were put next the building, the



The Currier's Shop was part of this complex of buildings until 1852. Today the Stone Mill building stands alone.

others were arranged something according to size and when all was ready there were two strings of cattle, eighteen yoke in each team with a driver to each pair.

The route taken was across the field towards the North Family Shakers coming into the highway just south of the brick office, following the road to the North Family Shakers boat landing, then on to the lake. It was February and the ice was twenty-eight inches thick and did not give perceptibly.

John Jones of this place was in charge of the job and everything went smoothly, the only mishap being the breaking of a chain or two.

At noon the building was fairly on the ice. Then the oxen were baited, not being unhitched and

the men were served a bountiful lunch, all eating from the hand without much ceremony.

In those days those who went to such a bee gave their service as a neighborly act and neither expected or received any other compensation but thank you and the remembrance of a kindness freely rendered to others.

After the lunch was over and the team well rested a start was made as I recollect no stop was made till the shore was reached. A landing being made where the Cox orchard was afterwards set out, thence up the hill to where Wells Street now ends, and following near where that street now is, down Union Street crossing the railroad, near where the passenger station now stands, and across the mill pond on to the spot where it was to

stand.

This building was 26 X 36 feet, two stories. It was raised up, the basement put under and finished for two tenements. I do not know whether Dyer rented it for a time or not, at any rate T. Laffee bought it before very long."

The T. Laffee referred to in the article was Thomas Laffee whose granddaughter, Mary Laffee Hill, still lives in Enfield. Mrs. Hill provided The Museum with a copy of a bill of sale which shows that Thomas and Catherine Laffee bought the building and land described above from William and Betsey Smith in 1864 for \$750.00. The Laffee family owned and lived in the house for the next 110 years. Today the house is the home of the Langley family. □

