

The Friends' Quarterly

A Newsletter from The Museum at Lower Shaker Village

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Winter 1993

A Day Amongst the Pines

by Henry Cumings

(Excerpted from the *Enfield Advocate*, January 10, 1908)

The time is February 10th, 1857. It is a clear cold morning, the mercury marking 10° below zero. The snow lay three feet deep in the woods; but the roads were well trodden so that old Zeke ambled off at a lively pace, notwithstanding the load of five sturdy men with their saws, axes, dinner pails, etc., all loaded into a pung sleigh. Our destination was the pine woods just above the old saw mill, then known as the Lovejoy mill. The

gang this day was composed of Elder Orville Dyer, brother Simeon Childs, Francis Bradford, John Cumings and myself.

Arrived on the scene and the old horse picketed and given a generous bundle of hay, a tree was selected and four axes were ringing out their sturdy strokes on the frosty air. Four men could work easily on one of those large trees, two on each side, standing facing each other, one chopping right handed, the other left. After a half hour or so steady work the old monarch of the forest would begin to settle a little, after a few more strokes would come a snap and a groan and with a tremendous snap and a crash that could be heard for miles, the great tree that had been growing for two or three centuries or more

would come to the ground, crushing any smaller trees in its course and burying itself deeply in the soft bed of snow.



John Cumings and unknown companion working wood

Brother Simeon and perhaps one of the others would attack another tree, while the rest of us quickly trimmed off the few limbs, marked off the proper length for logs, usually sixteen feet, and the saws would begin to play. Once well started, Brother Simeon, who was a noted axman, would fall the trees as fast as the rest of us could saw them into logs. The trees, being from 125 to 160

feet tall, made from seven to nine logs each. When it came to dinner time we made a cheerful fire, using the dry limbs and the bark from some dead tree, and warmed up our meat and bread, having a pleasant picnic. . . .

At the time of which I am writing the old growth pine had been cut off and only a few small lots were still left, most of which was owned by the Shakers, all of which is now gone. I do not know of a single tree anywhere in the Mascoma valley where once there were thousands of these trees. . . .

The timber of the old growth pine was very valuable in many ways. This was especially so for its great durability and because it could be had in what is known as "perfectly clear" form, wide boards free from knots and other imperfections. It

was easy to work and but little liable to warp or shrink. . . .

Previous to the coming of the railroad, in 1847, there was only a local market for this valuable timber. So common was this timber that it was used very freely for building purposes. All the Shaker buildings erected before 1845 are largely of old growth pine. The outside boards, the floors, the clapboards and shingles and all outside and inside finish, doors and windows were of this timber. But the railroad changed everything. Many of the best trees were sold and taken off for masts, bringing \$100 apiece or more. Caleb Dyer also got a large order for long timber to be used in the railroad bridges over the Connecticut and Passumpsic rivers at White River Junction. To get out this long timber the saw mill...was built where the Shaker grist mill now stands. . . .

To close this sketch I will give the dimensions of a great tree that I had cut on the lot near Henry Wilson's place, in 1877. This tree measured five feet in diameter at the stump. It was 155 feet tall. When it fell it broke off 75 feet from the butt, and was three feet in diameter at that place. The butt log only twelve feet long sawed out 1200 feet board measure. The second log, fourteen feet long, also sawed 1200 feet. The whole tree measured a little over 3000 feet. It was slightly ring rotten, but as we worked it into pails and tubs there was but little loss on that account. It made a good many clear boards wide enough to make whole bottoms for 22 and 24 inch tubs.

Sage Thoughts

by Happy Griffiths

VALERIANA OFFICINALIS - English Valerian is a hardy perennial that was introduced to American gardens from Europe at an early date. Eventually it escaped to become naturalized in fields and meadows, particularly in New England. It became one of the more important herbs in the Enfield Shakers' medicinal herb industry.

Samuel Brown, a physician in the first half of the 19th century in Enfield, used the root of the Valerian plant and several other herbs for his Brown's Extract of English Valerian. For years this was a major source of income for the Enfield Shakers: in 1874 they sold \$4,000 worth. The Shakers claimed Brown's medicine to be the best remedy for the cure of "nervousness, lowness of spirits, debility, hypochondria" and other ailments.

Valerian is on the Food and Drug Administration's list of herbs generally regarded as safe. Contemporary herbalists call Valerian one of the most useful relaxing herbs, and recommend it for nervousness, anxiety, insomnia, headache and intestinal cramps. Some researchers have compared it to Valium without the side effects. Valerian affects cats the way catnip does.

Valerian can be propagated from seeds or root divisions. Roots may be divided in the spring or fall and should be planted about 12" apart. It grows in most soils but prefers rich, moist, well-drained soil in full or partial sun. Once established, it self sows and spreads by root runners. When plants become weedy and overcrowded they lose their vitality. Thin them by harvesting the roots, which contain their valuable chemical compounds. This is usually done in the fall of the second year. Beware when you dig it, for about the second day it takes on the characteristic disagreeable odor from which it gets the nickname Phu plant!

Happy Griffiths, Museum Herbalist, gives classes on herbs throughout the summer and fall. She welcomes questions addressed to this column.

Board Gains New Trustees

The Museum's Board of Trustees has welcomed four new members in recent months, bringing new expertise, enthusiasm and energy. We're pleased to introduce:

Linda Boucher's background in education (she has an undergraduate degree, is working on her M.A., and teaches reading at the Cardigan Mountain School in Canaan, NH), ties her to the Shakers in more ways than one. Not only was education an important part of the Shaker communities, but lack of education about Shaker life is one of the areas Linda would like to see improved in her tenure on the Board. "I've met people who think the Shakers were just a strange cult. Who they were, what they stood for - these are important not just locally but nationally." Linda lives in Enfield with her husband Jay and their two sons.

Patti J. Laurie has lived in the area all her life and is committed to seeing its heritage preserved and passed on to future generations. Her interest in the Museum began with a visit in which she was impressed by the peacefulness and quietude surrounding her as she toured the grounds and exhibits. Volunteer service at the Museum led to increasing involvement for Patti, and led to her becoming "more and more interested in the Shakers and their contribution to society." As a Board member she will work to help establish the Museum's financial stability and expand its ties to the community.

Anthony Lozeau has a first-

hand connection with historic preservation: in 1991 he opened the office of Moose Mountain Realty in the historic Hewitt House of Enfield, which he and his partners had spent two years renovating into apartments and offices, while also having it placed on the National Register of Historic Places. He has been involved in building Elderly and Handicapped housing in the area. "I am excited about the prospects for growth of the Museum at Lower Shaker Village and the historic preservation of several Shaker buildings in the near future," says Tony. A lifelong resident of Enfield, he lives there with his wife Francine, a Museum tour guide, and their two children.

Sybil Williamson's list of volunteer work could fill pages! It ranges from class agent for her alma mater, Bates College, to Vice-President of programs for the local League of Women Voters. She recently retired from the position of Manager of Membership Services for the Friends of Dartmouth College's Hopkins Center for the Arts and Hood Museum of Art. From that work she brings experience in planning, developing and implementing non-profit membership programs, working with volunteers, and fund raising. "The Museum is a great resource, and I believe it is important to integrate knowledge and understanding of this historical community with present-day life." Sybil lives in Etna, NH, with her husband J. Peter Williamson, and has three grown daughters.

Sip and Support The Museum

The Museum recently introduced a membership premium as a bonus for new members: an off-white stoneware mug, imprinted in dark red with the Museum's logo—an historical photo of the Great Stone Dwelling.

The mugs are a bonus for all who join the Museum in its current membership drive, but between now and May 15, current members may purchase the mugs for \$5.00 each, plus postage. Call or write the Museum to order.

Recent Acquisitions

We would like to thank the very generous donors for enhancing the Museum's collection with the following items:

Six 10-foot peg rails from the fifth floor of the Great Stone Dwelling
Gift of Shaker Workshops, Concord, MA

Porcelain dish used at North Family, Enfield, NH
Gift of Marion Davis Moffatt

Shaker Flax Wheel (Sabbathday Lake, ME), Hetchel, Swift
Gift of Marilyn S. Anderson

Child's Sweater Drying Form
Gift of George and Priscilla Brooks

Three Enfield Shaker Bonnets, Navy Blue Shaker Sweater, two
handwoven Enfield Shaker Neckchieves, Child's Cape, two Chil-
dren's Neckchieves
Gift of Ann Tarney

Buff colored Dorothy Cloak, Canterbury, NH
Gift of Twing Fiske Coulson

#3 Mt. Lebanon Side Chair, Shaker Anodyne Bottle (Enfield, NH),
three Shaker Textile pieces (Canterbury, NH), Shaker Book Press,
Palm Leaf Bonnet, two pairs Knitted Stockings, handwoven Scarf,
Silk Shawl
Gift of Deborah C. Rearick

Maroon colored Dorothy Cloak, Canterbury, NH
Gift of Hilda May Stenbeck

Book, *The Shakers*, by Charles Edson Robinson, 1983
Gift of Valerie Conley

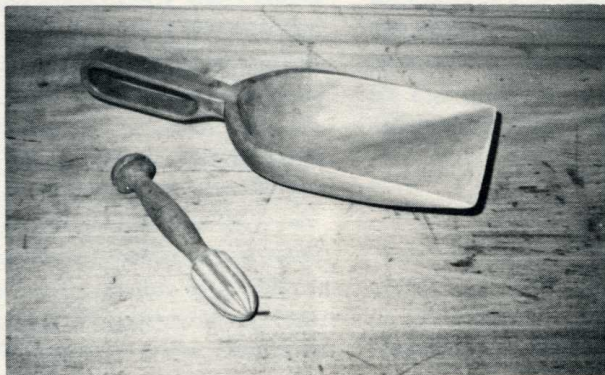
Shaker Wooden Scoop
Gift of Mary Ann Wilde and Kenneth Robb

Shaker Lemon Reamer
Gift of E & R, Ltd.

Stereopticon View of Shaker Bridge, Enfield, NH
Gift of Jeffrey H. Hinman

Publication, *Historical New Hampshire*, Vol. XXX No. 3, Fall 1975
Gift of Robert P. Emlen

Iron Shaker Stove and Wooden Shaker Cheese Press
Gift of Richard and Lillian Eastman



Funds From the Oven

The Shaker kitchen sisters baked cookies with names like "Best Out Cookies," "Graham Puffs," and "Lafayette Jumbles." They may have been surprised, then, but not displeased, to see the Meeting Room of the Great Stone Dwelling filled with "Snicker Doodles," "Cashew Shortbread" and "Peanut Blossoms," at the Museum's most recent fund raiser last December 13. A Holiday Cookie Sale, featuring goodies made and contributed by Museum volunteers, attracted eager buyers from as far as 80 miles away. Originally scheduled to last two hours, the sale ended early when nothing but crumbs remained. "We took in over \$1,000 and could have sold more cookies if we'd had them," said Cookie Sale organizer Deborah Rearick. "We definitely plan to make this an annual event; next year we'll just have to line up more bakers!"

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

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Happy Griffiths, Herbalist

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New Manager for Shaker Store

Jean Beard remembers the exact day last year—"April 19, the day after Easter"—she began her job as manager of the Shaker Store, and her life has been a whirl of vendor contact, inventory, and staffing issues since. Carrying a wide variety of goods related to the Shakers, the Store provides much of the revenue needed to run the Museum, and is also the first point of contact for Museum visitors. Jean supplemented her learned-on-the-job retail experience and former career in school administration by training as a Museum tour guide, making her the ideal person to greet visitors, guide them to the sights, and help them in selecting the perfect memento or gift for those at home.

Jean worked for the Museum a few years back when herbal and garden-related gifts were sold in the West Brethren shop. Her experience there, and in setting up the gift shop at Kendal of Hanover, NH (the continuing care retirement community where Jean makes her home), readied her for the challenging task of running the Museum's shop. Jean began with only the store counter or borrowed office space in which to place and track orders or work on staff sched-

uling; this summer she gained a real (if tiny!) office in the lower level of the former dairy building. There, she is "never at a loss for something to do; the time just flies when I'm here."

This winter will see Jean establishing a standardized consignor's form, and, if all goes well, putting the store's inventory on computer. Jean noted that many people who visit the store, especially out-of-towners, call back later to order something special they had seen, or ask whether the store has a catalog. Perhaps creating that catalog will be Jean's next challenge.



Director Attends Seminar

Museum Director Carolyn Smith was one of 18 participants selected to attend the three-week "Seminar for Historical Administration" at Colonial Williamsburg, VA, last November. Sponsored jointly by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the American Association of Museums and the American Association for State and Local History, this intensive program covers all aspects of running a historic site. Participants from large and small institutions all over the country attended sessions whose topics ranged from Financial Management to Ethics to Site Interpretation. Among the many areas for which she found inspiration and ideas, Smith is focusing on improved exhibit presentation and training of site interpreters.

A jam-packed schedule still left time for field trips to other historic sites, immersion in Williamsburg's stimulating atmosphere, and trading insights with other participants. Smith says, "In addition to gaining a wealth of information, I established important contacts with other museum professionals, which will be a continual source of information and support for years."



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