

# The Friends' Quarterly

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## Long Live the Apple, Part 1 By Galen Beale

*"Long live the apple and next live the peach.  
Long live all fruits that live within our reach."*<sup>1</sup>

Apple trees have always played an important part in the Shakers' lives. Shaker songs, drawings and diaries reflect the importance of this agricultural crop and its many uses. Sources frequently mention the concerns of tending the orchards and harvesting and preserving these fruits. The writing of Eldress Bertha Lindsay of Canterbury remind us of the spiritual significance of the apple tree as well, noting the many Biblical references to the tree with which the Shakers were so familiar, from the Serpent's temptation of Eve to the biblical expression, "the apple of one's eye."

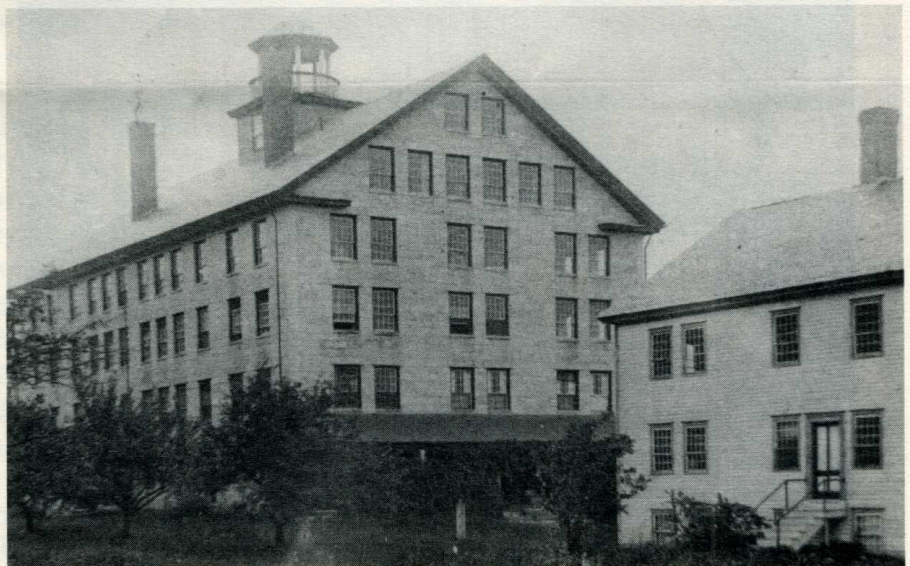
A spiritual message received in a meeting at the Watervliet community in 1839 illustrates such symbolic use of fruit trees: Mother Lucy said that Mother Ann had planted a ... *beautiful tree here, bearing twelve different kinds of fruit; namely "Faith, Hope, Charity, Meekness, Humility, Thankfulness, &c"* And on the top of this tree was spread the gift of Love, which spread luster over all its branches, [and] greatly beautified all the variety of Fruits... Mother wanted that we should partake very largely of the gift of Love, it's, she said, a gift we very much needed. She would have nothing of any other kind of fruit, but such as was found to grow upon this tree.<sup>2</sup>

Shaker settlements inherited a long tradition of apple cultivation. When Europeans began to settle in America and discovered that the indigenous

apple was a sour crab, they brought their favorite fruits, seeds and scions from the Old World. The first American apple orchard was planted in 1625 on the slopes of Beacon Hill in Boston. The distribution of the apple kept pace with the progress of settlement, seeds being carried by Indians, traders, and white missionaries far into the wilderness.

Elder Henry Blinn of the New Hampshire Shaker Bishopric acknowledged the importance of orchards when describing the early settlement of this country: *"The first thing that occupied the mind of the pioneer of the new country was to find a shelter for the body, and then to arrange a section of land for an orchard."*<sup>3</sup> Most of these early settlers planted apple seeds around their small homesteads. Fruit grown from seeds often does not resemble the fruit of the parent, so these indeterminate varieties were known as "natural"

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*This view of the southeast corner of the Great Stone Dwelling and the 1794 Dwelling House reveals some of the many fruit trees planted around the community.*

