

The Friends' Quarterly

Newsletter of the Enfield Shaker Museum

Sharing history and hospitality



Vol. XXXIV No. 1
Winter 2025

UPCOMING EVENTS

For more details, visit our website at
shakermuseum.org

- Feb 9 **Re-use, Re-purpose,
Re-cycle a Garment**
- Feb 12 **Shaker Chair Seat
Weaving**
- Feb 14 **Valentine's Jazz Party**
- Feb 15 **Winter Wellness Retreat**
- Feb 21 **"This Reminds Me of a
Story"**
- Feb 22 **Salves, Tonics &
Infusions**
- Feb 23 **Enfield Shaker Supper**
- Mar 7 **Upper Valley Land Trust
& Smith Pond**
- Mar 8 **Beginning, Intermediate,
& Advanced Genealogy**
- Mar 15 **Tapestry Needle Felting**
- Mar 21 **Spinning Workshop**
- Mar 23 **Enfield Shaker Supper**
- Mar 28-30 **Fiber Arts Retreat**

We are adding programs and events
to our website calendar weekly.

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One Family's Impact on Enfield's Gathering Order

By Mary Ann Haagen



Enfield Shaker Village North Family. Real Photo Postcard. Photographer George Fellows. c. 1900. (Private Collection)

Enfield's North Family, or Gathering Order, was a place of transition for many, a long-term home for some, and the nexus of bitter conflict for a few. All three experiences are represented in the life stories of the Cummings family.

Edward Taylor Cummings' theological discussions with North Family missionary and Elder, John Lyon persuaded him to exchange his faith in Adventist prophecies for a Shaker life. Having made the choice for himself, he insisted that his wife and five children do likewise. The family was admitted to Enfield's gathering order in October 1844. For a time this new home provided Edward a place of spiritual peace.¹

The Shakers recognized Cummings as an enthusiastic and articulate "young Believer," and in 1847 he was appointed associate to his elder, John Lyon.² Not satisfied with ministering only to those already living in the gathering order, Edward soon felt called to preach Shakerism to the world. Reluctantly, his superiors gave permission for him to "go out". Writing to the New Lebanon Ministry in the summer of 1848 they acknowledged, "License or no he would have gone because the Lord called him. On account of his children who are amongst us, we gave that liberty and by it he is gone." Edward did return for brief periods that fall and winter, seeming to fulfill the Ministry's hope that, "if he can submit himself, we should be glad to have him return." But Edward's time away had only reinforced his inclination to "follow his own lead."³ After four years of communal life at the North Family, he left the Society. Because he had only placed his estate in trust, it was returned to him. This allowed Edward to leave the Shakers with his personal wealth intact. He made no effort, however, to reclaim his children, who remained with the Shakers.

Mary McGrath Cummings considered herself a long-suffering victim of her husband's serial religious enthusiasms. She had no faith in his conversion to Shakerism, and was strongly opposed to its principles. She and Edward had been married for seventeen years and she had survived eight pregnancies. Mary had five

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One Family's Impact on Enfield's Gathering Order *(continued from page 1)*

living children and was still nursing her youngest when her husband insisted that she follow him to the Shakers. Mary had no legal rights she could depend on, and she faced relentless pressure from both her husband and Shaker leadership to embrace a Shaker life.

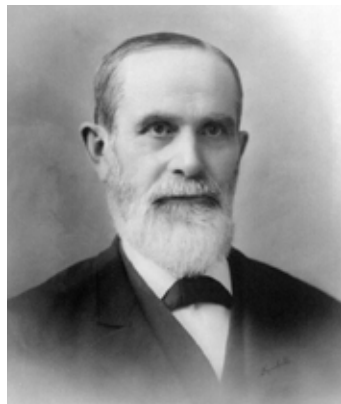
At the North Family Mary was somewhat reassured when her youngest children, Rosetta and Ann, were allowed to live with her. But after six months Edward indentured them to the Church, and they were removed from her care. In despair she left the society. She had lost her husband, her marriage, her children, and her financial security to the Shakers. Her only legal recourse was to sue for divorce.⁴

Apostate Mary Marshall Dyer included Mary Cummings' story in her 1847 anti-Shaker publication, "The Rise and Progress of the Serpent from the Garden of Eden to the Present Day." In 1848 Mary McGrath Cummings was a witness for the prosecution at the trial of the Shakers before the New Hampshire Legislature. Edward was still living at the North Family, and was in the hall when she testified.⁵ Two years later Mary died alone in Hopedale, Massachusetts.

John Taylor Cummings - Eldest son, John, was 13 when the family joined the Shakers. He may have taken advantage of additional schooling at the Church, but he remained a member of the gathering order for eight years. John's tenure at the North Family was atypical. Usually, promising young men were transferred to the Church soon after coming into the family. But John showed great promise as a craftsman, and at the North Family he had a gifted mentor in Joseph Severance. Severance had exceptional skill as a carriage maker, wheel wright, mill wright and house carpenter. Working alongside his teacher, John became a skilled woodworker and mechanic in his own right. When he joined the Church Family in 1852 he was ready and able to take charge of its mills and machinery. Younger brother, Henry, wrote, "Besides his mill work John became a master carpenter and builder and had charge of all the building done by the family, always furnishing his own plans. In 1854 he built the large cow barn, the next year the adjoining buildings." After being admitted to the Church, John never again lived at the North Family.⁶



John Taylor Cummings (1829-1911)



Henry Cummings (1834-1913)

Henry Cummings - Henry and his brother Enoch came to Enfield as 10 and 8 year old boys. Though they lived at the North Family for a short time, both boys were raised in the Church Family boy's order. Henry reconnected with the gathering order in 1853 when he became school teacher for the boys of the North and Church families. In 1859, after a four year appointment as associate elder at the Church, he moved to the gathering order and was named its associate elder. John Lyon was nearing the end of his life, and needed the support of someone young and capable. Henry remained an associate until 1863 when he was appointed first elder. From 1863 until 1881 he served as a spiritual leader of the family, public preacher for the Society, and Shaker missionary to the world.⁷

In 1866 Henry was asked to assume financial as well as spiritual responsibility on the brothers' side. As first trustee of the North Family, his greatest challenge was to retire a \$12,000 debt occasioned by the unscrupulous dealings of a former trustee, Austin Bronson. It took eleven years to accomplish this, and he succeeded by retooling and re-invigorating the bucket and pail industry.⁸

The Gathering Order was a point of entry for spiritual seekers, and also a place of second chances. If a person left the Shakers but later wished to return to the Society they could appeal to the North Family elders for "another privilege." "Aaron and Susan Smith who visited Shirley, and tried to find some fault with poor brother Henry Cummings and we hardly know who and what else, have returned to Enfield and made desperate efforts to be retaken, promising if they can be received, to come to almost anything. Aaron has found that the troubles in others were in his own heart. The sympathy of Br. Henry and the Eldresses became so excited by their penitence and petitions, that they have given them a second trial in their Family, and we hope they will do well."⁹

For almost twenty-five years Henry remained deeply committed to his Shaker faith, and to the North Family's mission of gathering converts. He worked tirelessly to sustain his community economically and spiritually. But no amount of effort accomplished what was most needed – a next generation of Believers. He lost faith in Shakerism's ability to attract adults who would prove faithful, and therefore despaired of Shakerism's future as a communal society. In May, 1881 he resigned his leadership roles and left the Shakers for married life in the world.¹⁰

Enoch Cummings - After his short sojourn at the North Family, Enoch moved to the boys house at the Church, and lived in that family until he apostatized in 1863. Although he had learned dentistry as a Shaker, and pursued a lucrative career as a dentist, after leaving Enoch deeply resented his Shaker life, and did what he could to undermine his siblings' continued commitment to the faith.¹¹

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One Family's Impact on Enfield's Gathering Order *(continued from page 2)*

Rosetta Cumings probably had little memory of the months she spent at the North Family as a young child. Like her brother Henry, she became re-acquainted with that family through the children who attended school at the Church. For four years Rosetta was the teacher for both the boys and girls school sessions. In 1870 she moved into the North Family to serve as companion to Eldress Laura Foster. In this smaller family she gained firsthand knowledge of the spiritual leadership required of an eldress. Her experiences served her well when she was called back to the Church and appointed to the Elders order. She continued to carry heavy leadership burdens either as Church Family Eldress or Trustee for the rest of her life.¹²

Several years before the Enfield Sisters moved to Canterbury they contemplated selling the Church Family property and moving to the smaller, more manageable North Family farm and residences.

“We are thinking strongly of all going there, [to the North Family] if we could get a good sale for this place. The size of the place is much better adapted to our present numbers, than this large farm, & so many large unoccupied buildings. As yet we have made no real move in this direction, only to talk quite a good deal, & sort of plan toward it in our minds.”¹³

In fact the plan was never implemented. The Canterbury Ministry decided, instead, to reunite those living at the North Family with the Church. So Rosetta was responsible for overseeing the close of Enfield's gathering order.¹⁴



Rosetta Cumings (1841-1925)



Ann Cummings (1844-1927)

Mary Ann Cummings the youngest Cummings child, was raised in the Church family and, as an adult spent many years in the Trustees office as a deaconess. In 1881 she went to the infirmary to serve as a nurse, and two years later moved to the North Family to replace deaconess Ann Emerson, who had died of lung fever. In 1885 Ann took on the role of associate eldress. Her mentor was Sarah Curtis, whom she succeeded as first eldress when Sarah returned to the Church in 1888.

Ann Cummings used poetry and her gift of song to preach her faith and to guide her family of “young believers.” In a surviving manuscript hymnal kept by her sister Rosetta, more than twenty spirituals composed, or received by inspiration from the harp of King David are attributed to Ann.¹⁵

After serving for five years as first eldress of the gathering order, Ann returned to the Church to again take up her deaconess role at the Trustees Office. In 1902 the needs of the North Family again took precedence, and Ann resumed her duties as eldress in the gathering order. She remained the spiritual head of that family until it was closed in 1913.¹⁶

Edward Cummings' decision to bring his family to the Enfield Shakers profoundly changed his life and the lives of his wife and five children. Likewise, the history of Enfield's North Family was dramatically shaped by their rejection of, or lifelong contributions to its mission of gathering spiritual seekers into the fullness of a Shaker life.

Footnotes:

1. Report of the Examination of the Shakers of Canterbury and Enfield Before the New Hampshire Legislature at the November Session, 1848, pp. 141-144.
2. The term “young believer” refers to a person recently converted to Shakerism, not to his or her age. Young believers are only beginning to experience the requirements of the faith including humility, obedience to one's elders and union with one's spiritual family.
3. Canterbury Ministry Correspondence, 31 August 1848. Western Reserve Historical Society Shaker Collection, IV A 13, Cleveland, OH.
4. Affidavit of Mary McGrath Cummings, *The Rise and Progress of the Serpent from the Garden of Eden to the Present Day*, Mary Marshall Dyer, 1847, pp 141-144.
5. Ibid, Report of the Examination of the Shakers of Canterbury and Enfield.
6. “Historic Sketch of a Well Known Shaker” *Enfield Advocate*, 11 August 1911.
7. The Collected Writings of Henry Cumings, Mary Ann Haagen (Ed.). Couper Press, 2012.
8. Beale, Galen “The Cooperage Industry of Enfield's North Family,” *Enfield Shaker Museum Friends' Quarterly*, v. 7 # 1, 1995.
9. Canterbury Ministry Correspondence, 7 Dec. 1862, Western Reserve Historical Society Shaker Collection IV A 7, Cleveland, OH.
10. “Elder Henry Cummings Renounces Shakerism” 20 May 1881, *Granite State Free Press*, Lebanon, NH.
11. Emlen, Robert, “The Hard Choices of Brother John Cumings” *Historical New Hampshire*, v. 34 no. 1 pp 54-65, 1979.
Haagen, Mary Ann “Cummings and Goings: The Impact of Shakerism on the Family of Edward T. Cummings.” *American Communal Societies Quarterly*, v. 4 no. 1, 2010.
12. “Autobiography” in “A Collection of Miscellaneous Songs, Benedictions, Valedictions and School Songs Collected in the Church, Enfield N.H. 1859, Rosetta Cumings.” Manuscript # 241. Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, NY.
13. Rosetta Cumings to Marion L. Carroll, 1 October 1913, Marion Carroll Collection, Shaker Library, United Society of Shakers, New Gloucester, ME.
14. “Decision to Close North Family” *Enfield Advocate*, 11 April 1913
15. Rosetta Cumings Manuscript Hymnal #12769 Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, NY.
16. Enfield NH Shakers, Record. #769, Canterbury Shaker Village Archive, Canterbury, NH. This document lists dates of appointment to offices of trust. Ann's work life can be traced using this record, beginning with her first appointment in 1870.

Enfield Shaker Museum Preservation Update

We have been very busy with preservation projects in the Church Family at Enfield Shaker Museum this past summer and fall. If you haven't visited recently plan to come this year, there are lots of things to see!

Thanks to a National Park Service Save America's Treasures grant the Stone Machine Shop has many newly restored windows and the exterior masonry has been repointed. **David Lewis** has been steadily working on the windows in the building for several years and he is on schedule to complete the job in the fall of 2025. **Jeremy Brown** restored one of the window openings that had been turned into a doorway. He matched the stones and mortar of existing windows, replaced the missing granite sill and now that restored has been installed you cannot tell that the window was ever gone.

Gary Wood has been working in the Church Family Laundry/Dairy and has beautifully restored the built-in, pegrails, and doors in a room on the third floor. The first in what we hope will be a continuing restoration effort in this building.

Tim Baker has been working in Room 4 of the Great Stone Dwelling. The work started with the removal of 6 tons of concrete from the floor and walls of the room. To date the missing walls have been rebuilt, the original clothes press has been rebuilt and now houses an ADA bathroom. This past week we started restoring the original plaster ceiling and walls. When completed, this room will be available for overnight guests who need a room on a lower floor with an ADA bathroom.



Left to right: David Lewis measures a window opening in the Stone Machine Shop, interior shot of restored basement window opening, and exterior view of restored window opening.



Left to right: Restored built-in in Church Family Laundry building, Room 4 ceiling and walls before plaster repair, and Room 4 ceiling and wall with prep work completed.



ESM Hires New Education Coordinator

Enfield Shaker Museum is pleased to announce the hiring of Maddie Dusseault [Duso] as Education Coordinator. Maddie has been an elementary educator in Maine for 4 years, since my graduation from University of Vermont in 2020. While in school she spent a semester abroad in New Zealand studying international education and the Maori culture.

Her passion is knowledge and growth through experiential learning. She is looking forward to collaborating with the many scholars of the museum and creating more opportunities for the Shaker legacy to grow. Make sure to introduce yourself to Maddie the next time you visit the museum.

Recent Acquisitions by Michael O'Connor, Curator

Since the last edition of the Friends' Quarterly the museum has received a number of very interesting artifacts. They include donations of a maroon Sabbathday Lake Shaker cloak given by Kathy Elfstrom in the name of Constance Ries Graham, an Enfield table with splined top donated by Dr. Frances Dolloph in memory of Francis P. McGrath, a yellow swift whose family story relates it was made at Enfield Shaker village donated by Judith Mary Smith, a Nelson Chase patented stereopticon donated by Richard Dabrowski, and the purchase of an Enfield work counter with 12 drawers.

The work counter was purchased from a family with a camp on Mascoma Lake. The counter was in the camp when the previous owner's grandfather purchased it in 1946, meaning the counter has likely not been more than a mile from the village since it left the Shakers.

The splined-top Enfield table is undergoing paint restoration by Gary Wood this winter along with a similar table purchased by the museum in 2021. The donor, Frances Dolloph, received the table from her father who purchased it at a yard sale in Enfield in the mid-1950's. Unlike the large work counter that has never left the shores of Mascoma, this table resided with Frances in Utah. Her desire to see the table returned to Enfield spurred her to drive from Utah to deliver it to the museum this fall. Photographs and more information about these recent acquisitions and many more artifacts is available at the museum's online collection catalog which can be accessed from the museum's website.



Left to right: Frances Dolloph with the splined top Enfield table. Twelve drawer Enfield Shaker counter, and close-up of drawers from Enfield Shaker counter.

Enfield Shaker Museum

447 NH Route 4A ♦ Enfield, NH 03748

Enfield Shaker Museum is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational institution whose mission is to protect, enhance, and utilize its historical structures, landscape and Shaker cultural heritage. Gifts and donations are tax-deductible.

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2024 Harvest Festival

The **2024 Harvest Festival**, held on September 21, was a successful and enjoyable family event which featured craft activities and demonstrations, horse drawn wagon rides, live music, great food, and more. One of the biggest draws of the day was sheep herding - folks of all ages were enthralled by the speed with which the sheep dog herded the sheep into position. Over the course of the day, the Museum hosted more than 800 attendees of all ages.



Guido (the donkey) happily greeted all visitors!

The success of this year's event would not have been possible without the support of more than 90 volunteers and staff. As our longest standing event, it makes us proud that the Harvest Festival continues to appeal, year after year, to a new and growing audience.

Sincere thanks to our sponsors:

- Adimab**
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Enfield Shaker Museum Mounts Exhibit at the New Hampshire State Library

August 6, 2024 marked 250 years of the Shaker experience in America. In honor of this lengthy legacy and thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Enfield Shaker Museum staff and volunteers worked with Sarah Margolis-Pineo, museum curator and Sharon Koomler, Shaker scholar to research and design *Chosen Vale: The Shakers of Enfield, New Hampshire*.

The exhibit explored the important history and legacy of the Enfield Shaker community. Drawn primarily from the collection of Enfield Shaker Museum, *Chosen Vale* is an exhibition of material culture highlighting the designs, industries, and everyday lives of the Enfield Shakers.

The exhibit was on display at the NH State Library in Concord, NH during August and September 2024. If you missed the exhibit, do not despair, we are hoping to remount the exhibit at the Museum in the near future.



SAVE THE DATE ENFIELD SPRING SHAKER FORUM APRIL 25 - 27, 2025

Keynote presentations by:

Dr. Kara French, a scholar of gender, sexuality, and religion. Her book *Against Sex*, examines celibacy and chastity as practiced by Shakers, Catholic religious orders, and Protestant sexual reformers.

Chris Moore, director of music education at 317 Main Community Music Center, in Yarmouth, Maine has a passion for preserving the rich musical tradition of Shaker music.