



SOUTH UNION MESSENGER

Vol. LI, No. 2, 2022
South Union Shaker Village, Kentucky

SOUTH UNION “on the road”

Our museum’s educational focus has long been to interpret the history and impact of the South Union Shakers on site. Whether through daily admissions, focused tours, or special events, bringing people to our property was the ultimate goal. During the pandemic, those opportunities all but disappeared. Thankfully, we have seen more and more people buying admission tickets, scheduling group tours, and attending events.

Other opportunities to further our educational mission have also arisen during 2022. New research into the history of South Union produced a presentation called “The Use of Ardent Spirits: Alcohol and the Kentucky Shakers.” The topic had never been explored, but the available manuscript information is vast. Not only did the Shakers produce and consume cider, wine and brandy in Kentucky, but the South Union Shakers made whisky in their “still house” for nearly a decade before New Lebanon put a stop to it. This material was first presented at the Colonial Williamsburg’s 74th annual Antiques Forum in February and then again at the NSCDA’s Kentucky Culture Symposium, held at the Filson Historical Society in September.

South Union research was taken to other Shaker villages in 2022, including a workshop for the Decorative Arts Trust, held at the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill. The presentation compared furniture style and construction from both Kentucky communities. In August, we were on the road again, this time traveling to Enfield, New Hampshire for the Shaker Collectors Weekend. Our institutional history was highlighted in “Adventures in Good Collecting,” an examination of more than sixty years of discovering and acquiring South Union material culture.

Offsite presentations were also given at local Rotary clubs, at the Kentucky History and Genealogy Conference, the Society for Lifelong Learning, Louisville Genealogy Society, SOKY Genealogy Society and Western Kentucky University. Even with all of the time and travel involved, it is very satisfying to know that research and scholarship from South Union Shaker Village is being shared.

“Making Use of Ardent Spirits: Alcohol and the Kentucky Shakers” being presented at National Society of Colonial Dames annual Kentucky Culture Symposium at the Filson Historical Society in Louisville, Sept.2022.



FURNITURE FRIDAY COMES TO AN END

Sally Rogers

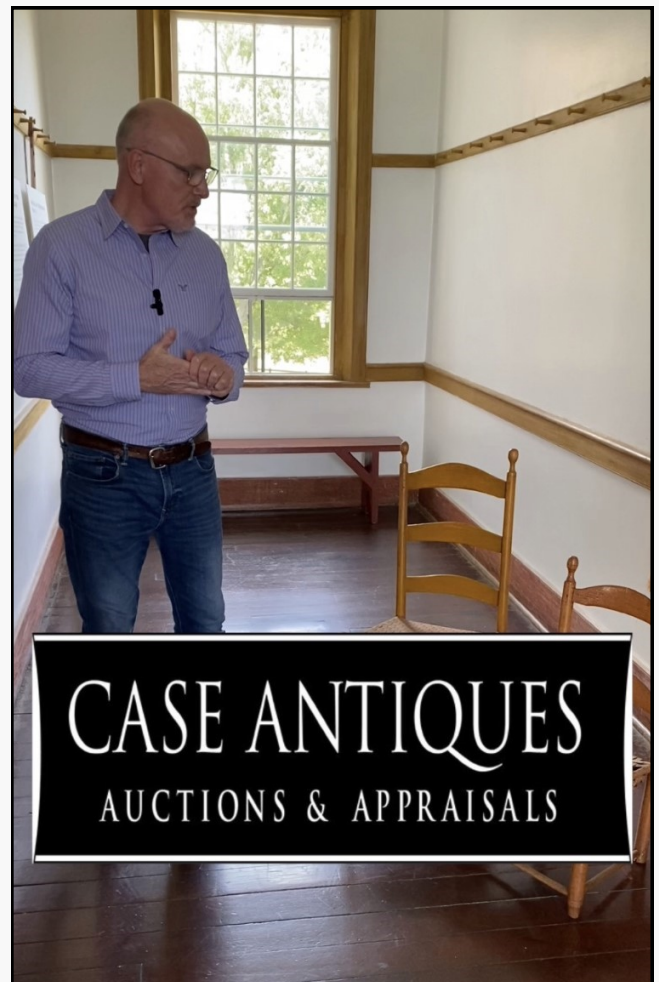
In January of 2019, SUSV shared on its social media pages a photograph of a desk that had once belonged to Elder Harvey Eads. The caption referred to this photo as “Furniture Friday,” and thus began the eponymous series that would carry on for the next four years. What started as a singular post developed into an educational series that reached thousands of people across the world through the power of social media.

For over a year, the weekly series was comprised of a photograph of a piece of furniture from South Union’s collection, accompanied by a detailed description of the object. When the museum closed to the public in March of 2020, the series changed to a video format. This allowed us to give a “behind the scenes” look at furniture that is not available to people who tour the museum on a daily basis. Through *Furniture Friday*, we have been able to educate our audience about the “southern” style of furniture-making at South Union and what makes it so unique.

The importance of these videos extends far beyond their reach on social media. As a curator, I have been learning along with our audience about these significant objects in our collection. The institutional and material culture knowledge in these videos is now saved in a digital format that can be accessed decades from now.

Now that *Furniture Friday* is coming to an end, we would like to express our gratitude to our members and followers on social media for watching and sharing the videos. We were honored this year when the Kentucky Historical Society recognized SUSV with an education award for our series. Many thanks to the Kentucky Museum on Western Kentucky University’s campus for allowing us to film several videos in their collection, as well as private individuals who invited us into their homes and let us record several videos there. The Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill was our first video that we filmed “on the road,” and what a great collaboration it was.

We would also like to thank Case Auctions for sponsoring *Furniture Friday* throughout 2022! It has been a pleasure to make this series and interact with our Facebook and Instagram followers. All of the videos are archived on SUSV’s website. We thank you for all of the likes, shares, and comments that helped us become better each week.



RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Pitcher and Bowl, W. Adams & Sons, Superior White Granite, ca. 1840, for exhibition purposes
Donated by Jane Diemer

A Collection of Secondary Material, books on the Shakers and material culture
Donated by Steve Cooper

A Collection of Reproduction Oval Boxes and Carriers, for exhibition purposes
Donated by Steve Cooper

My Bondage and Freedom, Frederick Douglass (1855) and *The Kentucky Revival*, Richard McNemar (1808), two titles that were part of the South Union Shakers' mid-19th century library, part of an on-going project to recreate that original collection
Donated by Ken Hatcher

A Collection of White Ironstone, pre-1870 shapes, including pitchers and bowls, chamber pots, soap dishes, and sugar bowls for exhibition purposes
Purchased with Acquisition Endowment Funds

THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCURACY

In our current exhibition plan, we feel it is important to interpret some of the rooms as they were originally used by the Shakers. Within the Centre House, for example, we make every attempt to recreate the kitchens and dining room, the infirmary, and a few retiring rooms so that visitors can experience what it may have been like when the building was occupied. Because the Shakers lived in the Centre House from 1833 until 1922, we must understand that spaces were fluid. Taste and style evolved, technology advanced, and usage changed. For that reason, our period room descriptive panels include the year that is being interpreted in individual spaces.

While it is impossible to be entirely accurate, there are many clues that help us know how rooms were furnished and how they were used. Understanding a specific period, contextually, is of utmost importance. In many ways, the Shakers lived just like other Kentuckians in the region. Having a grasp on regional customs and material culture helps to understand the Shakers. Additionally, knowledge of the standard rules and regulations put in place by the Shakers is also vital.

Finally, research manuscripts and historic photographs can also reveal a great amount of information about period spaces. While South Union has a vast collection of household furniture made and used by the Shakers, we have collected "smalls" to fill in the gaps for pieces that are missing. One current collections project is to acquire period-correct white ironstone (the pottery most found in archaeological research) for the retiring rooms, workshop spaces, infirmary, kitchens, and dining room. The pitcher and bowl at right were generously donated by Jane Diemer and perfectly fits the 1850s era we are attempting to interpret.



THANK YOU, MIKE!

After more than 30 years in association with South Union Shaker Village, Mike Hosson has retired. Mike and his wife Sam became involved with the museum back in the 1990s when they demonstrated the textile arts at the Shaker Festival. Both Mike and Sam were skilled at weaving and spinning and possessed a wealth of historical knowledge as well. The Hossons were a vital component to our living history events for many years.

In 2000, Mike was hired as a docent and began to greet guests on a daily basis. He continued in that capacity until 2022. Mike not only had a strong grasp on the history of South Union, but made a very effective first impression on everyone who came into the Visitor Center. His unique orientation also included a spinning demonstration that helped give visitors an even more memorable experience.

We want to thank Mike for his many years of service at South Union Shaker Village. He is definitely missed here but we wish him and Sam the very best during this new chapter in their lives.



RESTORATION AT SOUTH UNION

Restoration projects have moved slowly this year, primarily because of illness among our trusted craftspeople and the unavailability of paint and other supplies. We have continued to move forward, however, with a variety of in-house improvements. One of those involves the picket fences in front of the Wash House and Centre House. The Shakers at South Union constructed plank fences around most of their buildings, gardens, orchards, and other lots, but built picket fences in front of the structures that were located on the main road through the village. We have attempted to recreate that plan using manuscript information and historic photos.

Some of the picket fences in front of the Centre Family building are nearly thirty years old, so its time for maintenance! Instead of simply painting the pickets this year, our maintenance man, Johnny Miller, is disassembling the fence one panel at a time. If needed, the posts are either replaced or straightened, and the rails and pickets are stripped and re-painted. The end result has been an amazing transformation. The process is slow but the finished product is making such a difference.

Other restoration projects that have been completed this year include the reconstruction of the sister's porch on the west side of the Centre House, thanks to a grant from the E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation. That foundation is also funding restoration of several of the Centre House windows as well as the restoration of the building's eleven dormers.

We are also continuing our interior "Restoration by the Details," in the Centre House, funded by Jack and Betty Kesler. The brothers' retiring room on the second level of the buildings is next in line. Many thanks to the Keslers for the work they have made possible!



SOUTH UNION PROFILE: MARIA PRICE

Hundreds of people joined the Shakers at South Union during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Because the Shakers kept meticulous records, we know many of their names and, in some cases, can gather details about their lives from the manuscripts that have been preserved. For some, there is a great amount of information but for others there is very little. Often, a personal object that has survived offers insight into someone's life, even when written records are scant. Such is the case for Maria Price.

Maria Price was born in Indiana on October 16, 1807. She came to the Shakers as a child, joining the community of West Union with her family. Located in Indiana Territory, near Vincennes, the Shaker village was short-lived, established in 1811 as part of the Shakers' westward expansion from the northeast into Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. After a series of difficulties, West Union closed in 1827, the first major setback for the Shaker movement. Members of the community moved to other western Shaker villages, including South Union.

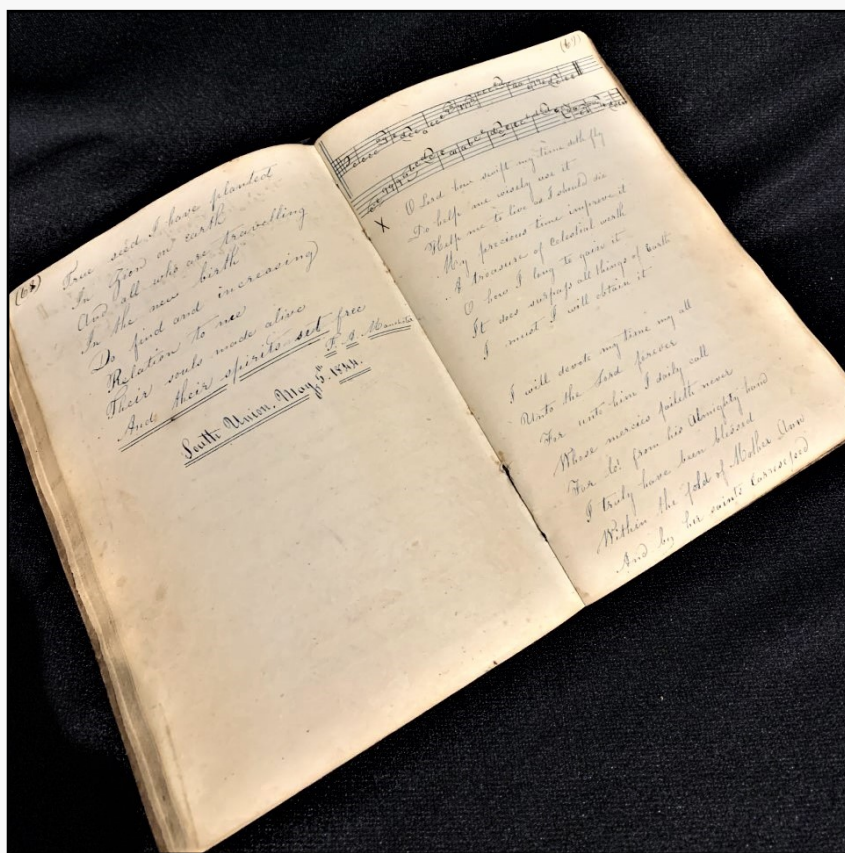
After the 1827 census, Maria Price is not mentioned in manuscript records until 1837 when she was engaged in one of the community's textile industries. A decade later the journal writer recorded that Maria was part of a group who traveled to Elkton, Kentucky to "preach and sing for the citizens." In August of 1852 she accompanied five other members of the community on a journey to the Shaker villages of Pleasant Hill, White Water, and Union Village.

In 1863 Maria Price was subpoenaed to appear in court in Indiana on behalf of a relative who was suing the Shakers. The "Widow Davis," daughter of James Price, formerly a Shaker at West Union, was hoping to regain land that had once belonged to her deceased father. Price's acreage had been sold by Shaker Trustee Nathan Sharp at the time of the dissolution of West Union in 1827. South Union's journal keeper, Elder Harvey Eads, called the proceedings a "wild goose chase" and apparently he was correct. Maria returned to South Union a week later "having done nothing towards accomplishing the object of the trip."

The following year, records indicate that Sister Maria was ill, "bad with erysipelas," an infection of the skin often affecting the face. In April of 1865 she was once again listed as one of the community members who were seriously ill. Maria obviously rallied as three months later she and Sister Sally Rice accompanied Trustee Urban Johns to Bowling Green so that he could have impressions made for false teeth.

Throughout the remainder of the 1860s and into the 1870s, there are no additional references in the written records to Maria Price, other than her name in the annual census. On April 12, 1879 the journal keeper noted, "Another veteran gone - Sister Maria Price departed from the scenes of earth about 1 AM." Her funeral was the following day. Services were held in the meeting room of the Centre House, the building that she had called home for nearly thirty years. The journal writer noted, "funeral services pleasant, lasting one hour. I said pleasant because all felt that the deceased was happy."

One object survives from Maria Price's belongings. A manuscript hymnal, dating to the 1840s, contains songs written at South Union, Pleasant Hill, Union Village, Mt. Lebanon, and others simply labeled "eastern." The singular journal reference to Maria's participation in a public singing performance in 1847, along with the extant hymnal, leads us to assume she had a musical gift, or at least an appreciation for it.



A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tommy Hines

It has been a year of successful recovery at South Union Shaker Village, as we've seen the return of group tour business and a greater number of children's tours. Our events have also been well-attended and each of our Farm to Table events "sold out." I want to acknowledge as well the generosity of our membership and of other donors and foundations. Without that support, we would not be able to function as we do. Thank you so much to those who donated to the annual appeal, renewed memberships, sponsored events, and funded special projects.

Many people have asked about the status of the Wash House. Currently, the building stands ready for restoration to begin. We have contracted with an architect who has submitted a plan to construct an addition to the back of the building. Proposed is a three-story structure that will provide an accessible entrance and house an elevator, storage space, rest rooms, and mechanicals for heating and cooling. The next phase is to create documents necessary to apply for grants. We hope to be able to move forward significantly in 2023.

We have had several people ask about donating to accomplish small restoration projects. For those who might have interest in helping out, here are a few options.

Exterior Lighting at the Centre Family

\$6,800.00 for six chamfered wooden posts with copper lanterns to light areas around the 1818 Meeting House foundation and 1846 Ministry Shop

Exterior Lighting at the South Union Hotel

\$5,500.00 for five chamfered wooden posts with copper lanterns to light areas around the South Union Hotel for nighttime events

Window Restoration

\$600.00 for a Centre House window
Thirty windows remaining to be restored.

\$500.00 for a Wash House window

One window on the façade and six windows and two cellar sashes on the east end to be restored.

2022 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Each year, South Union Shaker Village recognizes someone who exemplifies the volunteer spirit of our museum's founder, Deedy Hall. The recipient for 2022 was Jerri Tarpley, someone who has been devoting time and talent to our organization for many years.

Jerri and her husband Blake live on a farm that was once part of the South Union Shakers' land holdings. She creatively uses flowers and other vegetation found on the farm to decorate our buildings for a variety of special occasions. For well over a decade Jerri has designed floral arrangements for our Holiday Market preview party and for other gatherings as well. More recently she has decorated the South Union Hotel for our Farm to Table meals, creating a beautiful, natural arrangements that fit perfectly with the historic atmosphere of the building.

Jerri Tarpley has for many years created an environment of warmth and beauty on our historic spaces. We are grateful for her generous gift of skill, good taste, and kindheartedness. After receiving the award, Jerri asked if this meant she had to retire, to which we responded, "definitely not!"



THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION

General Fund

\$10,000.00—Edith Bingham
\$5,000.00—Susannah Scott-Barnes
\$5,000.00—Martin Brown, Jr.
\$3,500.00—E. Hanlin and Jane Bavely
\$3,000.00—Ridley Wills III
\$2,020.00—Kay Bender
\$1,000.00—Anonymous Foundation
\$500.00—Odd Fellows Aeolian Lodge #51
\$500.00—Hank Brockman
\$200.00—Everett Sutton
\$200.00—Donna Hill
\$125.00—John Campbell
\$50.00—Maggie Selvidge
\$50.00—Carol Dyche-O'Brien
\$50.00—Monica Champriss

Restricted Funds

\$500.00—Richard Clay (Wash House window)
\$500—Rex and Susi Payne (collections)

Event Sponsorships

\$500.00—Brent Stinnett (Shaker Breakfast)
\$200.00—Anonymous (Shaker Breakfast)

In Memory of Thelma Newberry

Dennis Newberry

In Memory of Steve Hall

Rex and Suzi Payne

In Memory of James Burgher

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SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Vintage Baseball Game—April date TBA

Shake, Ride & Roll bike event—June 10

Shaker Breakfast—November 4

Holiday Market & Preview Party—December 1-2

Plus

Five **Farm to Table** meal events will soon be
added to the 2023 calendar!
Stay tuned for more information.

South Union Shaker Village has recently begun a partnership with ***Compost Bowling Green*** so that our Farm to Table meals will become zero waste events. We feel strongly about this step forward and are certain that our Shaker predecessors would approve. Farm to table, then back to farm.



Harvest Moon Farm to Table in the
1875 Grain Barn, September 10, 2022

SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE

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