



# SOUTH UNION MESSENGER

Vol. LIII, No. 1, 2024  
South Union Shaker Village, Kentucky

## A SEASON OF DOOR RESTORATION

Last year saw several significant restoration projects at South Union. Four of those projects were related to doors. In our last newsletter we reported the completion of the restoration of the original 1835 Smoke House door, funded by Rex and Suzy Payne. We also shared about the repairs made to the greatly-deteriorated 1921 door frame and transom leading into the boiler room. That project was paid for with a generous contribution by Wayne Metcalf.

In the fall, two missing Centre House interior doors were replicated by craftsman Roger Ryan. Both originals had been gone for more than fifty years. Using extant examples as a template, Roger crafted replacements that are difficult to discern from those made by the Shakers. The first completed was a six-panel door, now hanging at the entrance of Room #3 in the Centre House. As part of the project, two walls flanking that door, removed in the 1930s, have been replaced. Base plank, chair rail, and peg rail are being replicated by Jack Perry to match the original. The project is funded with a generous contribution by Kay Bender.

The second door made by Roger Ryan was a large, nine-panel door, crafted to replace one missing between the Centre House dining room and kitchen. Funded by John and Linda Tanner, this restoration will make quite an impression on visitors as they enter the ground level of the building. The door is situated beneath an arched passage into the dining room, over which the massive kitchen chimney system was constructed.

Both doors were painted with a color that was recently discovered by paint analyst Susan Buck. Small samples taken from original doors were examined by Buck, microscopically, revealing that the earliest layers of paint were a brilliant red-orange. For many years we used only visible evidence to replicate Shaker paint colors, surmising that the doors had been coated with a dark red paint. Current scholarship has now provided evidence that we could not have been more incorrect! According to data in Susan Buck's report, the paint was linseed oil-based with ground pigments.

The door leading from the Centre House kitchen to the dining room (right) was hung in place in December of 2023. Period hinges, similar to the originals, were purchased to add to the authenticity of the restoration. You must see the beautiful new paint color in person to really appreciate it. The newsletter will also be available on our website in color ([www.southunionshakervillage.com](http://www.southunionshakervillage.com)).



## VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Each year, SUSV honors someone who exemplifies the volunteer spirit of our founder, Deedy Hall. At the Shaker Breakfast in November we presented this year's award to Julie and Bill Kratts. Julie began volunteering as a docent in the Visitor Center in November 2022. She quickly proved to be very effective with museum guests and was eager to learn about the history of South Union. Julie then began to take on projects like cleaning blinds, polishing silver, and even caning chair seats.

Before long Julie had her husband Bill involved as well. Together, they volunteered to paint and repair the Visitor Centre porch railings and accessible ramp, with the help of other volunteers they solicited. During the summer, the Kratts donated a portable air conditioner for the meeting room in the Centre House. Bill, a retired electrician, wired the unit and our guests stayed cool in that space for the first time!

One project led to another and we have just now began a major electrical project in the Centre House, funded by Bill and Julie. The work is finally alleviate the last pre-1972 panel box in the building, allowing us the opportunity to eventually heat and cool the gift shop, to add electrical outlets, and to sleep a little better knowing the old fuse box and wiring is gone forever. Thank you, Bill and Julie, for the many amazing gifts you have given South Union Shaker Village.



## A MAJOR STEP FORWARD FOR THE WASH HOUSE

Architectural plans for the 1854 Wash House restoration have been accepted by the SUSV Board of Directors and we are awaiting the next step in finalizing the drawings for grant applications. An addition to the north side of the structure will eventually be constructed, the purpose of which will be to house HVAC, a second staircase, restrooms, storage, and an elevator. The decision was made to begin restoration on the old building as closely to its original construction as possible. Naming opportunities for each of the thirteen rooms will be available at cost of \$25,000.00 to \$40,000.00 each. This price tag includes replication of missing doors and interior trim, plaster restoration, finishing of original floors, and the addition of concealed utilities. Some spaces require more work than others.

The wheels of this important restoration have been set in motion in a very significant way with a \$113,000.00 contribution from SUSV Friends member Brian Lankford. Brian's generous donation will restore three rooms on the main level of the building, one of which is pictured below. We are incredibly grateful for this impactful gesture of support for restoration at South Union. To learn more about Brian Lankford's historical connection to South Union, see the article on page 6.



The level of restoration need varies from room to room and the financial commitment can be adjusted accordingly. There are seven large rooms (33.5 feet x 37.5 feet) and six smaller rooms (20 feet x 22.5 feet).

If others are interested in adopting a Wash House room, please contact **Tommy Hines:** [director@southunionshakervillage.com](mailto:director@southunionshakervillage.com) or **Sally Rogers:** [info@southunionshakervillage.com](mailto:info@southunionshakervillage.com)



## WELCOME, BETH ANN!

Everyone at South Union Shaker Village would like to welcome our newest staff member, Beth Ann Kistler. Hired in June 2023 as Operations Assistant, Beth Ann administers activity related to our gift shop, including planning, merchandising, and ordering. She also helps with other projects related to administration and development. Beth Ann has put her very gifted personal touch on our gift shop and is carrying several new products related to the Shakers and the museum collection. If you haven't visited in a while, you need to see the newly designed space.

Beth Ann Kistler is a native of Kansas and has lived in nearby Auburn for eight years. She and her husband Thad have three daughters. We are very happy to have Beth Ann on staff!



## HAPPY 200<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY, CENTRE HOUSE ... OR IS IT?

The datestone on the Centre House clearly reads "1824," marking two hundred years since it was cut and mortared into the façade of the building. But, is the Centre House really two hundred years old? The Shakers began digging the structure's foundation in April of 1822. Two years later the outer brick walls were complete and the date of completion was incorporated into a long lintel that crowned a central window and two flanking narrow windows. The building was under roof by December of 1824.

Then the work stopped. The Centre House stood incomplete for twenty-six months, without windows, flooring or interior woodwork. Apparently, other construction projects took precedence and the village's workforce was also occupied with the many money-making industries that the Shakers had established. By January 1831, the tongue and groove, white oak flooring was being installed, the last large carpentry project in the building. Later that year, built-in cupboards, created in the carpenter shop, were installed, and plaster work began.

Finally, on May 7, 1833, the Shakers moved into the new Centre House. According to records, the building was still not completely finished. The stone sink for the kitchen didn't arrive until two days later and the stone steps were not delivered until August 31. There was also some plastering to be done in a last minute staircase addition on the north end of the building.

So, 200th Happy Birthday to the Centre House façade! We are glad you're still around.



## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

### Side Chair, ca. 1890

Mule-ear style, slat-back, ash construction, belonged to the donor's grandfather, Byron Collins, formerly a school teacher in Auburn, Kentucky. Mr. Collins told his granddaughter that the chair "came from Shakertown."

Donated by Mary Jane Collins Newton

### Additions to the Ironstone Collection

Ceres Shape, registered 1859, for use in the Centre House dining room and kitchen exhibits, including:

Vegetable tureens (2), saucer, handleless cups (3)

Donated by Bill and Carol Lancaster,  
in memory of Sally Scrimgeour

Vegetable tureen, sugar bowl, teapot

Donated by Janice Stork

Vegetable tureens (2), sugar bowl, cream pitchers (2),  
table pitcher

Donated by Saddler Taylor

Soup bowls (2), handleless cups (5)

Donated by Scott Mullins

Saucers (7)

Donated by Jim and Mara Kerr

Table pitcher

Donated by Rick and Adele Armbruster



### Food Safe, ca. 1830

Poplar with eight punched tin panels, old blue-gray over red paint, long associated with the Thurman family, Warren County, Kentucky. The Thurman family lived for several generations at Mill Point on Drakes Creek, the site of a grist and sawmill operated by the South Union Shakers from 1817 until 1829. The Shakers owned and maintained acreage there until 1863. The safe could possibly be of Shaker manufacture.

Donated by Ted W. Barr and Frederick A. Thurman

### Quilt, ca. 2005

Made by Dorothy Jones, using promotional t-shirts from various Shaker Festivals. Originally raffled as a fund-raiser for South Union Shaker Village, the quilt was won by Elaine Disch. It was then gifted to the donor by Elaine's daughter in 2022.

Donated by Kathy Moriarty

### South Union Railroad Sign, ca. 1860

Metal sign, black with yellow lettering "South Union," that once hung from the eaves of one of the railroad buildings at South Union Station.

Purchase with Acquisition Endowment Funds

## RESTORATION NEEDS

**Centre House Windows:** We are at the half-way point with the repair, re-glazing, and painting of Centre House windows. If you would like to adopt one, the cost is \$800.00 per double-hung window.

**Wash House Windows:** There are 28 windows waiting restoration. The good news is that 41 windows have been completed. The cost to adopt a Wash House window is \$500.00.

**Ministry Shop, South Union Hotel, Smoke House, and Milk House** windows are either complete or in process!



## UNDOING THE DAMAGE

When Oscar Bond purchased a large portion of the Shaker village of South Union in 1922, the 1824 Centre House was one of the buildings he chose to spare from demolition. The building was initially used for a few years to house some of his employees. The structure had remained unoccupied for nearly a decade by 1935 when he decided to remodel the Centre House for use as a hotel.

Oscar Bond was owner of Bond Brothers Tie Company, the largest supplier of railroad ties in America during the first half of the 20th century. Bond had a great deal of expendable income in 1935, even though the Depression was still impacting most Americans. According to a January 1936 article in Louisville's *Herald Post*, Bond had just completed the installation of eighteen bathrooms in the Centre House.

Most of the work was accomplished by Mr. Bond's carpenter, Ulysses "Slim" Trogden. Ironically, Mr. Trogden was still in Logan County in 1972 when the museum purchased the Centre House. Deedy Hall hired him to close the openings that he had made in the walls in 1935 to create access from the hotel bedrooms to the new bathrooms. The photo above is of Slim Trogden "undoing the damage" that he did nearly 40 years earlier. Bond's hotel, by the way, never opened.

In the 1970s, the museum decided to leave two of the bathrooms for visitors, one for gift shop staff, and two additional bathrooms were kept in the office area. By the late 1990s, all of Oscar Bond's bathrooms were finally gone, allowing for rooms to be interpreted correctly once more, while alleviating the risk of leaking pipes in the upper floors. The archival photograph below (left) was made in the early 1970s when bathrooms were being removed and 1930s passageways closed. On the right is the same space today, interpreted as it was originally used, a deacon's closet, where supplies were kept and administered to members of the Centre Family when needed.



## WILLIAM S. LANGFORD: HIS EXPERIENCE WITH THE SHAKERS

William S. Langford, born about 1826 in Spencer County, Indiana, married Susan Angelina Bates on November 10, 1846. The couple had five children. On February 24, 1862, William mustered in Company I, 53<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, Indiana Infantry as a Captain. In May, 1864, however, Captain Langford tendered his resignation from the army because of the death of his wife. Langford was left with five children to care for.

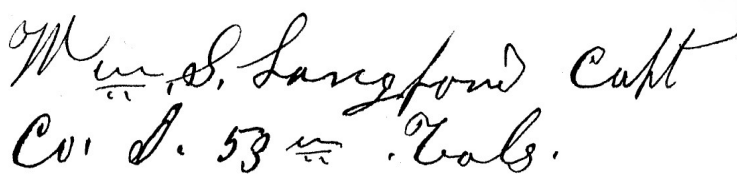
Shortly after the war ended, William took his four youngest children and left Indiana, traveling south in search of a better life for his family. Shaker journals indicate that the family arrived at South Union on September 5, 1865 just five months after the close of the Civil War. The journal writer noted, "Maj. Wm. S. Langford brot his 4 children & committed them to our care and charge until they are, or shall become of Age." (Record C)

William S. Langford lived in the community for several years, working for Bro. John Perryman in the grist mill, eventually becoming a probationary member on May 17, 1867. While at South Union, Langford met Sarah Jane Peaches. According to depositions obtained from William S. Langford's Civil War pension file and written by South Union Shakers Jane Cowan, Annie Ingram, and John Perryman in 1905, the Shakers allowed William and Sarah live in a private dwelling after Williams claimed the couple was married. In Cowan's deposition, she cast doubt on the fact that they were actually man and wife, noting that "Peaches was a rough character and Langford was no saint." However, living both in and near South Union for nearly a decade, William was able to stay close to his children.

In 1872, William S. Langford left Kentucky and moved to Grenada, Mississippi. His children, who were between the ages of fourteen and twenty years old, stayed behind. All of them would eventually leave South Union, the last in 1876. The journal writer noted, "Florence Langford goes by the train today - aged 19 - but says she "Cannot make a Shaker and does not want to stay until she is dead old and then go."

While William S. Langford was not well-suited for Shakerism, he obviously trusted the community to take good care of his children, to provide them with an excellent education, and to equip them for adulthood. The Shakers held no grudges and continued to be in contact with Langford. On one of his seed selling trips, Brother John Perryman stopped in Grenada, Mississippi, and spent a few days with William in his home.

William S. Langford died on January 15, 1884 in Grenada, Mississippi, leaving behind his fourth wife, Ellen. His body was taken back to Boonville, Indiana, where he was buried next to his first wife.



The image at left is of Capt. William S. Langford's signature, penned upon the signing of his probationary agreement with the Shakers, May 17, 1867. The original document is in the collection of WKU's Kentucky Library.

*SUSV Friends member Brian Lankford is the great-great-great grandson of Capt. William S. Langford. According to Brian, the spelling of the family's last name alternated between generations until his grandfather chose the spelling "Lankford."*

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Tommy Hines

We are off to an exciting start in 2024! There are lots of restoration projects on the schedule and there may be more if grants for which we have applied are awarded. We also look forward to a busy schedule of tours and events, including our popular Farm to Table series.

We are most grateful for the many contributions made for general support and those designated for special restoration projects. Your membership donations are also so important to the livelihood of South Union Shaker Village, as is the spring annual appeal that will be unveiled in the coming weeks. Thank you for your loyal support of our preservation efforts. Come see us in 2024!

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION

## General Fund

Edith Bingham—\$10,000.00  
Martin Brown, Jr.—\$5,000.00  
Anonymous—\$1,000.00  
Dent and Phyllis Morriss—\$1,000.00  
John Campbell - \$225.00  
Carol Dyche O'Brien - \$100.00  
Steve Marcum - \$100.00  
Erica Truesdale-Greil - \$50.00  
Diane Heise - \$50.00  
Michael Biscoe—\$25.00

## Restricted Funds

Estate of Grover and Mary Corum—\$21,311.75 (special project)  
Dottie and Wayne Metcalf—\$4,800.00 (South Union Hotel window restoration)  
Tim and Robyn Minor—\$2,400.00 (Wash House window restoration)  
Kay Bender—\$1,590.06 (Centre House restoration project)  
John and Linda Tanner—\$1,000.00 (Centre House restoration project)  
John and Linda Tanner—\$1,000.00 (collections)  
George and Darlene Kohrman—\$500.00 (collections)  
Rex and Suzy Payne—\$500.00 (exhibits)  
Bill and Julie Kratts—undisclosed amount (Centre House electrical project)

## Event Sponsors

Atmos Energy—\$1,000.00  
First Southern National Bank—\$500.00  
Logan Aluminum—\$500.00  
Bowling Green League of Bicyclists—in-kind support  
Liberty Imaging—in-kind support

## Special Contributions

Henry Heuser—in Honor of Edith Bingham  
  
Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Allen—in Memory of Elaine Disch  
Nancy Hillenburg—in Memory of Elaine Disch  
  
Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Allen—in Memory of Jane Bavely  
  
Mark and Jean Reynolds—in Memory of Carroll Browning  
  
Edith Bingham—in Memory of Gingie Hines  
Emily Perkins Sharp—in Memory of Gingie Hines  
Currie and Judy Milliken—in Memory of Gingie Hines  
Kenneth Hatcher—in Memory of Gingie Hines  
John C. Perkins—in Memory of Gingie Hines

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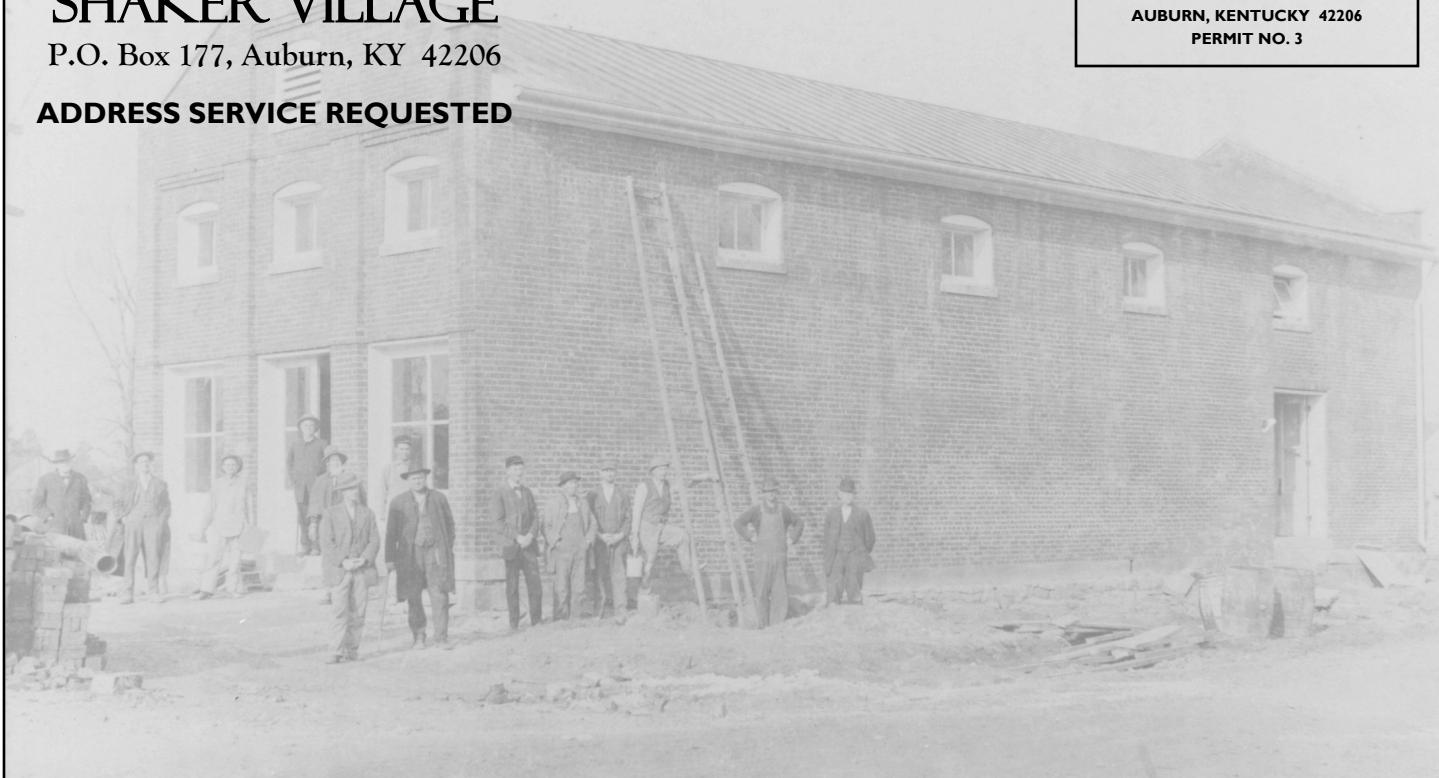
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**SAVE THE DATES!**

**Shaker Breakfast—Saturday, November 2**

**SUSV Holiday Market—Friday and Saturday, December 6-7**

**Check the website for Farm to Table events soon!**

## **SOUTH UNION SHAKER VILLAGE**

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