Not only were the Shakers often admired for their economy and keen business acumen, they were also well-known for their tradition of charity. The word “charity” derives from a Greek root that can also be translated as “love,” and charitable acts undertaken by Shaker communities were understood by Believers as acts of reciprocal love. The communal lifestyle and pacifist ethos of the Shakers reinforced this tradition of giving. Joining the Shakers meant subsuming one’s identity and surrendering all worldly possessions into a greater whole. As the Sabbathday Lake Shakers state: *Those who give up all material things for the sake of the Gospel learn by that same Gospel that they may learn to live without assurance of the morrow in joyous confidence that they will lack nothing.* Giving was an act of love and also an expression of faith that, if they gave away what they held today, their God would provide what was needed tomorrow.

The Shakers lived separately but were far from isolated and kept well-informed about events of “The World.” One of the farthest-flung charitable acts is noted in the journals of Elder Jessie Wells who wrote on December 6th, 1832: *Stephen [Wells] went to Albany with a donation for the inhabitants of Cape de Verde Islands.* The nature of the donation is not known, nor what spurred the Watervliet Shakers to aid a Portuguese colony nearly 3,500 miles away off the coast of modern-day Senegal. However, after visiting the Islands in 1832, American Diplomat Edmund Roberts had noted great suffering caused by a two-year drought. Perhaps word of this trouble had reached far-off Albany?

They also responded to a more well-known issue as noted in the Journals on March 18, 1847: *Charity seems to call aloud upon all to do something for the relief of the Irish who, according to report, are dieing [sic] off by the thousands for want of the necessaries of life.* The potato crop (the staff of life among the poor people of Ireland) entirely failed last season and a famine seems to prevail. The brethren and sisters are engaged in accumulating something, not only our family but the whole Society... The Society and Lebanon have forwarded nearly $700 worth of clothing and provisions.

Closer to home, the Shakers often helped others in times of disaster. Watervliet journals record on August 30, 1836: *There had been a fire in Hudson a few weeks ago which destroyed about 1/3 of the city and the ministry thought it best to make a donation which we freely did and some of the deacons have gone to Hudson with it.* The trip by horse and wagon was easily a two-day journey, a considerable investment of time and energy in addition to the gift itself. Their generosity was matched by other Shakers, as noted on August 31st: *Deacons reported that Hudson appeared to feel very thankful. It was thought there was about $1200 from Lebanon, Hancock & Watervliet [equivalent to over $30,000 in today’s dollars].*

Fire surfaces again in the journals on May 10th, 1862: *Great fire in Troy. 1000 ft. of bridge, buildings, Union Depot, Orphan Asylum, Warrens Female Charity School, Union House Hotel, Washington & Fulton House Hotels, Troy City Bank, 4-5 churches destroyed.* The Watervliet journals recorded on May 27th that *The 4 Shaker families sent four wagonloads for the suffering in Troy.*

While citywide fires are less of a concern today in the Capital District, flooding remains a frequent worry. However, no flood has yet broken the record of the “freshet” in February, 1857. A “break-up event,” this

View of Troy after the 1862 Fire.
From the Director

As Covid-19 continues to roll unchecked through many parts of our country, we grasp for analogies to tally the numbers. Over 180,000 lives. It’s roughly seven times more people than ever lived in a Shaker community. It’s as if all the residents of the city of Syracuse suddenly vanished. It’s larger than the combined number of people living in the six smallest counties, Hamilton, Schuyler, Yates, Lewis, Schoharie, and Seneca. It’s a staggering figure that keeps growing.

In the midst of this pain, struggle, and loss, “arts and culture” may seem a little superfluous. Yet, as humans we are all constantly striving to create and define a sense of purpose in our lives. While they did not believe in “art for art’s sake,” the Shakers found their own beauty in the form of orderly constructed communities. Through joyful song and dance, they celebrated their shared sense of purpose that they each had an important contribution to make to the project of building heaven on earth.

The best museums among us offer important opportunities to achieve a sense of community belonging and challenge us to achieve through creative expression. While many of us feel small and powerless in the face of the pandemic, the Shakers’ grand vision of Utopia was always a struggle towards perfection on a microscopic scale. It was the accumulation of a million small acts of dedication, and the application of individual creativity and innovation to make work easier, and life better for everyone.

All of us at Shaker Heritage wish to continue to share with you a little of the simple joy and beauty of the Watervliet Shaker community, and hopefully in some small way, make each day a little better, together.

Johanna Batman

Facilities & Programs Update

Welcome to New Board Officers On June 25th we hosted our first-ever virtual Annual Meeting and voted in a new slate of executive leadership on the Board of Trustees: Owner of LDV Design and local preservation advocate Lynn Dunning-Vaughn has stepped into the role of board President; we also welcome Guilderland Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Danielle Walsh as our new Vice-President, and TrustCo Business Development Officer Michael Bates as our new Treasurer. It’s a dynamic and energized team and we are excited to work together to strengthen Shaker Heritage!

Spring Appeal With your help, we reached our goal of $10,000 in donations to our annual Spring Appeal! The continued support of our community through these difficult times is truly an amazing gift and a lifeline for our small but mighty organization. Thank you for your support of historic preservation and education at America’s First Shaker Settlement.

Shaker Your Plate Our annual fundraiser is moving online this year. Stay tuned for information in the next few weeks!

Continued
Help Our Garden Grow!
A peaceful respite, a living classroom, a home for pollinators, for 30 years the Shaker Herb Garden the garden has been a source of joy in many forms. Maintained entirely by volunteers, the garden requires hundreds of hours of labor each year. This fall, you can aid our gardeners by supporting the cost of a new fence. We are already halfway there thanks to $2000 from a generous donor. A new fence will provide more effective protection from the non-human visitors and help the garden thrive for another 30 years. Levels and premiums are:

- Fence post - $25 (a seed packet)
- Fence panel - $250 (seed packet, Shaker calendar)
- Garden Gate - $500 (seed packet, Shaker calendar, & a private garden tour for group up to 6)

Bender Family Foundation Support
In recognition of the difficult times for nonprofit organizations, the Bender Family Foundation graciously gave applicants the option this year of applying for general operating support. We are proud to be the recipients of a $10,000 grant through the Foundation to support expanded online resources, programs, and retail opportunities for our organization. Our sincere thanks to the Benders and the Community Foundation for their steadfast support.

A Second Award from the National Endowment for the Humanities
Shaker Heritage is grateful to once again receive a Preservation Assistance Grant for Small Institutions this fall. Complementing a 2019 NEH-funded Environmental Assessment Report on our collections and archives, the grant will support an evaluation of the building envelope and HVAC system in the Meeting House, and fund the purchase of data-loggers that will allow us to monitor humidity and temperature throughout the building, year-round. This is an important step towards improving conditions for our collections, archives, and the Meeting House itself.

Shaker Heritage Awarded CARES funding through Humanities New York
HNY has granted Shaker Heritage $5000 to support our general operating expenses this fall as we navigate the pandemic and work to develop new digital programs, website content, expand our online shop and build a digital vendor marketplace to complement our craft fairs.

A Long-Term Lease for Shaker Heritage
On August 10th, the Albany County Legislature voted 38-1 to approve “Local Law D,” authorizing the County Executive’s office to negotiate a new lease with Shaker Heritage Society. One more vote is required to approve the final version of the lease this fall, but this is a major step forward towards securing a new, long-term lease with expanded responsibilities for all Shaker structures and the historic orchard on Heritage Lane. Thank you to everyone in the community who is helping to spread the word and advocate on our behalf. We extend our thanks to members of the Audit and Finance Committee and entire Albany County Legislature for their overwhelming support. Our special thanks as well to Representative Nathan Bruschi for his guidance and advocacy for Shaker Heritage through this process. Onward!

Cheese Basket Workshop with Sandy Salada
Sept. 26, 10:30am-3:30pm
$40 / $35 SHS members
Originally used for curing cheese, this multi-directional weave basket makes a wonderful contained for bread, muffins or rolls, and looks great hanging on a wall when not in use. The finished basket measures approximately 10” round x 3” deep. No prior weaving experience is needed, suitable for ages 13 and up. The set up will provide social distancing in the spacious Meeting Room, with 8 participants at separate tables.

Join In Apple Harvest Time!
We’re very happy to announce that Nine Pin Cider will return to the Shaker Orchard this fall. Sometime in the last two weeks of September, we will have an apple harvest day and would be glad to have your help. If you’d like to be notified of when the harvest day will be, please send a note to volunteer@shakerheritage.org.
flood was precipitated by ice jams at the sandbars south of the city, which broke and released 21.7 feet of floodwaters over the docks and main thoroughfares of Albany. Church Family Journals on February 10th note: Bad flooding of both Mohawk and Hudson Rivers with ice jams. Broadway in Albany is completely flooded. Two weeks later, on February 24th: A team and wagon from each family go to Albany with food ‘as a charitable donation to the afflicted inhabitants of the city’ who are still suffering from the flood.

Charity among the Shakers often extended to members of their own communities. In 1868, a calamity struck the South Family on September 24th: Our beautiful drying kiln caught fire. . .and was completely consumed with the woodhouse attached to it. Brethren from the other families came to help us save our other buildings. The other three families gave them a combined total of 40 barrels of apples, and the West Family allowed them to use their kiln to dry the apples.

Suspicion and distrust of Shaker communities continued throughout their history, and arson was a frequent worry. Hancock’s famous 1826 Round Stone Barn was destroyed by fire in the winter of 1864. Shaker communities rallied to support the rebuilding effort. An April 20, 1865 journal records: [New Lebanon Church Family] donate $500 to Hancock CF for the loss of their stone barn; Lebanon to give $1000; Watervliet $700; Maine societies $100; Canterbury & Enfield Ct $1000, Harvard $500, Canterbury & Enfield NH with what little the people in Maine will turn out $1000. This we hope will enable them to get along without borrowing more money from the world, Which is a violation of Shaker principles & no Believer Ever ought to allow themselves to run in debt to the world.

Although Shakers lived communally and were led by the central Ministry in Lebanon, the economies and finances of each settlement were maintained separately. However, when Shaker settlements faced financial difficulties, the Ministry would intervene to organize donations. The Ministry’s journals devote an extensive passage to troubles faced by Shirley, MA after an 1857 flood: 15 Jan The donation [for Shirley] is in consequence of their reservoir above the factory breaking away last July & doing much damage, the Believers’ loss was estimated to be near $5000 and it was proposed to make them a donation as follows: for those societies which had lent them money to deduct a suitable sum & for those who had Not [to donate] something. The Society at Lebanon to make out $700, Watervliet $500, Groveland $300, Hancock, Tyringham & Enfield Ct. $1000, Harvard $500, Canterbury & Enfield NH with what little the people in Maine will turn out $1000. This we hope will enable them to get along without borrowing more money from the world, Which is a violation of Shaker principles & no Believer Ever ought to allow themselves to run in debt to the world.

The survival of the New Gloucester Shaker community, now Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, was ensured by donations from other Shaker communities in the 1860s. The Meeting House is shown here in 1885. (Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village and Maine Memory Network)
The Maine community experienced an extended stretch of troubles which threatened their future: 1860 14 Oct [New Lebanon] Meet with all the elders & deacons to discuss what to do about the debt of the Maine Shakers--$16,000--whether to break it up (both Gloucester & Poland) & sell its possessions to pay its debts, or to raise some money from all the societies to loan them to keep going & work their way out of debt.” Fortunately for the Maine Shakers, the Ministry called on other Shakers to provide: Decide on the latter & prepare a letter to go out to raise $4000 as a donation to give them Jan. 1,1861, or before.

Aside from responding to traumatic events, the Shakers of Watervliet were well-known locally for caring for the poor and indigent, and for providing shelter, food, and education, particularly to widowed women and orphaned or abandoned children in their care. Many journal entries attest to their generosity:

~ 1843 3 Apr: “Justice [Harwood] took a donation to the orphan asylum.”
~ 1874 19 Feb: “Sent donation to the soup house in Albany in common with other [Shaker] families.”
~ 1915 13 Oct: “The Catholics call on their usual rounds, our folks always donate something.”

Indeed, many knew that they could approach the Shakers for assistance. David Austin Buckingham received a letter of January 8, 1858 from Mrs. Mary Pruyn, a well-known figure in Albany who founded two Industrial Schools and a “House of Shelter” in the city before travelling to Yokohama, Japan in 1871 as a missionary. She wrote:

There is a school here in Albany under the charge of a society of ladies, which is designed for the poor children who are too degraded & filthy to be admitted to the public schools. We take these children from the street, keep them all day, and give them their dinner. We have at present an average attendance of 110. It has been suggested that as your Society are proverbially charitable and kind, you might be disposed to give us a donation of provisions, and it is to ask this generosity that I take the liberty to write. If you are willing to give us anything you may either bring it to my house, No Q 109 North Pearl St., or to the school, No 48 Philip Stn & be assured your charity will be worthily bestowed and highly appreciated. Yours, etc. Mary Pruyn.

In response to her request, the Church and West Families sent 3 1/2 barrels potatoes; 2 bushels apples, 2 barrels onions; 1 barrel each of beets, parsnips, carrots, and turnips; two dozen No 4 brooms and 1 dozen brushes. We can only imagine that the children were well-fed and their school rooms were quite tidy the following week!

The charity work continued in the 20th century even as the Shakers worked to sustain their dwindling community. In January of 1919, Sister Anna Goepper wrote: “Everybody that can is busy knitting, crocheting and sewing. Folks doing a lot of Red Cross work. Made 30 outing shirts and 4 large heavy square shawls knit & crocheted to be sent to the Belgians. Our family have done a great amount of Red Cross work which of course is free, also Eld. Anna has given & donated a vast amount in clothes, woolen goods and money.” By February, Anna reported “[our] folks (Eld. Caroline [Tate], Lucy [Bowers], Mary [Dahm], Susan, Eld. Anna & girls) have made for Red Cross lately 25 baby slips, 200 laundry bags, 4 large heavy woolen shawls, 15 baby hoods, 6 pr baby booties - for Belgian refugees.”

For over 150 years, the Watervliet Shakers took in hundreds of people who arrived seeking shelter, if not also a spiritual home. They fed, clothed, and trained adults and children, and put enormous effort into building and sustaining their own population. Their acts of charity, small and large, illustrate that they also demonstrated compassion and a generous sense of communal responsibility to those far beyond their own settlements.

New Videos on Facebook* Offer Mini History Lessons

Fridays (usually) bring a new, short video to the SHS Facebook page. *You do not have to be “on” Facebook to watch them.

Shaker Summer Celebration on Facebook Live! Staff and volunteers spent a lovely summer morning filming our first Facebook Live Event. We toured the grounds, talked about the history of the Ann Lee Pond, heard from Bob Reilly about what makes a Kerry Cow special, watched Lori Secreti-Carter demonstrate how one weaves on a loom; heard from Becky Langer about the amazing abundance of the Shaker Herb Garden, and enjoyed Steve Iachetta’s fiddle music in the Meeting Room. Thank you to everyone who participated and all who watched the live event online. If you did not catch the event, you can watch the entire program or select video segments by visiting “Videos” on our Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/ShakerHeritageSociety. While you are there, you can view all of the other informative and fun videos that debut almost every Friday.

Shaker Saturdays We were excited to partner with Historic Albany Foundation this summer on “Shaker Saturdays.” What was to have been a tour of the herb garden for HAF members turned into a visit by Kimberly Parker, HAF Membership, Programming & Outreach Coordinator. Kimberly spent several hours meeting with and filming Shaker Heritage staff. She produced six short videos exploring the history of this site, and some of the amazing accomplishments and innovations unique to the Shakers. You can check out the videos on the HAF Facebook page-- https://www.facebook.com/historicalbanyfoundation.

Finished up canning for this year, thank the Lord.

Sister Anna Goepper, South Family, October 4, 1919.

In addition to preserving food for their own use, the Shakers processed huge quantities of vegetables and fruit for sale to The World. In fact, the late Betty Shaver first visited the Church Family in the 1920s when she accompanied her father, Charles Denison, who was buying canned tomatoes for his grocery store. Little did she know that she would one day return to become a founding member of Shaker Heritage and undertake the research and transcriptions that form the core of our knowledge about the Watervliet community.

Feeling a little overwhelmed with the bounty of your garden at the end of the summer? Consider the quantities that the Shakers dealt with.

1918 17 Sept. Mary, Grace and girls labeling all day-- 100 doz. tomatoes/ 75 doz. beans.
7 Oct 3 truckloads of tomatoes to NYC.
8 Oct Two truckloads of tomatoes to NYC. Chas Smith of Schdy takes 100 cases canned tomatoes, Mr. Walker takes 500 cases.
1921 14 July All hands to ChF [Church Family] to string beans. After they came home at 4 p.m.. Eld. Caroline & Lucy canned a crate of raspberries.
At Shaker Heritage Society, our work has always been about keeping the spirit of the Shakers alive and preserving our history. COVID19 has placed Shaker Heritage in a precarious position. Like Mother Ann, we will not be deterred. However, as we work to move programs, craft fairs, and the museum shop into virtual spaces, our revenue is falling. So, we turn to you with a simple ask: please support the Shaker Heritage Society today. History shows us where we’ve been, how we’ve progressed, how we can help to shape the future. Your contribution to Shaker Heritage today will make sure we’re here tomorrow to keep the Shaker culture and site an integral part of the Capital Region’s history.

SHS Members enjoy free or reduced admission to SHS programs and events; a 10% discount on regular gift shop merchandise and a 5% discount on facility rentals. Visit www.shakerheritage.org and click “Donate” at the bottom of the homepage, or fill out this form and mail to: Shaker Heritage Society, 25 Meeting House Rd, Albany NY 12211.

Special Help Our Garden Grow Fundraiser Levels:
___$25 Fence post - ___$250 Fence panel - ___$500 Garden Gate

Hands To Work

Volunteering is a great opportunity to step out of one’s comfort zone, participate in meaningful causes, and learn more about one’s community. Volunteering connects people with similar values who may not have had the chance to interact otherwise. It gives people a sense of belonging and purpose.

Shaker Heritage Society volunteers have played many roles over the years, from dressing up in Shaker clothing to teach fourth graders local history to serving slices of pie at our Craft Fairs. Some volunteers have been weekly regulars, others help out once or twice a year, and others may participate in a program just once but find it a memorable experience. Look for a new website section this fall on volunteering at SHS!

Canning, continued

1922 15 Aug. Men pick 1000 ears of corn, all hands husk & can, 18 jars the old way, 57 with salt & sugar.
22 Aug. All hands to the pears & plums. Put up 90 qts., cook 19 jars in kettle, cold pack rest.
23 Aug. Girls pick 3 bu. elderberries. Hugo has been going to market in evening with their corn & tomatoes.
6 Sept. All hands to the Ch to can tomatoes. Finish at noon. Caroline cans 25 qts. of peaches in p.m.
12 Sept. Caroline & Mary make pickles and crab (apple) jelly.
13 Sept. put up pickles, Mary & Lucy pick grapes.
14 Sept. put up grape jelly.
15 Sept. in canning room all day.
**Harvest Craft Fair**
**Saturday & Sunday, Sept. 12th & 13th**
**10:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

It’s back!! Bring your family for a safe and fun weekend featuring pony rides, musicians, food, tours, and over 60 vendors at our beautiful site. To make this event as safe as possible, we’ve made a few changes this year:

* ALL BOOTHS will be OUTDOORS in the fresh air and (hopefully) sunshine. Vendors will be at least 6 feet apart, and we ask you to maintain your social distance, too!
* MASKS are REQUIRED. For the safety of our staff, volunteers, and vendors, please make sure your mask covers both your mouth and your nose! If a mask is not feasible in the heat, please wear a face shield to help protect others.

Tickets are available ONLINE through our website or Facebook page. In recognition of the economic hardship faced by many members of our community, admission fees are PAY-WHAT-YOU-WILL. You can set your own ticket price when you check out. *Daily event schedule online.

**2020 Shaker Holiday Market**
**October 7 – December 19**

Our traditional Holiday Fair promotes the holiday spirit with regional artisans featuring handmade pottery and jewelry, foods and treats, and much more! Choose unique gifts for your loved ones while helping support local business this holiday season. Admission is free.

*NEW DAYS AND HOURS*

- **From October 7th to November 15th**
  - 11 am to 5 pm on Wednesdays through Saturdays
  - 12 pm – 5 pm on Sundays
  - Closed Mondays & Tuesdays

- **From November 17th to December 19th**
  - 10 am to 5 pm on Tuesdays through Saturdays
  - 12 pm – 5 pm on Sundays
  - Closed Mondays

**The SHS Museum Shop is Now Online**

You can view our catalogue on our Facebook page or on our website. Visit www.shakerheritage.org and click on “shop.” You will find affordable gifts, practical housewares, and even face masks for children and adults all while supporting Shaker Heritage. We offer pickup, delivery and mailing options.