The odds were against the small band of Shaker Believers who migrated from New York City to a swampy patch of land near what is now the Albany International Airport, early in 1776. The group—less than a dozen people—was led by a charismatic woman from an illiterate family in Manchester, England. Known to her followers as “Mother Ann” Lee, the leader of this radical new Christian sect preached that Christ’s love is expressed through both a male and female spirit. Believers confessed their sins as a first step toward purity, and then practiced the basic tenets of the religion through their actions: celibacy (seeking perfection of the mind and body), cooperative living, pacifism, and egalitarianism. Central to the gospel was the sacrifice of the self to the group, and a sense that each action—no matter how small—was a form of worship. Although they did not set out to be social “do-gooders,” the Shakers did strive to create Heaven on Earth with love, kindness, and diligence as guiding principles.

Many still scoff at the Shaker demand for celibacy, maintaining that the principle was the primary cause of the eventual decline of Shaker communities. This charge may be partially true, but records show that between 1815 and 1915 the Watervliet Shaker community took in more than 1,100 children, which is quite remarkable considering that the Believers themselves never numbered more than a thousand people over the same period. Naturally, the promise of all these young people breathed life into the community. An examination of Watervliet journals reveals the arrival of desperate widower farmers with large families, abandoned single mothers, and lonely orphaned children—all seeking security within the Shaker world. The anecdotes that follow, as well as references to census and other records, lay bare poignant dramas.

Early Believers Initially, the Shakers sought adult converts, not children. Sometimes, one member of a family would convert, abandoning the rest of his relations. In 1803, Issachar Bates left his wife and nine children to join the Society at New Lebanon. Bates became a deeply devoted Believer. Soon after Issachar’s conversion, his wife Lovina and seven of his children followed his lead, and over many decades the

Ann Sayers is a longtime Shaker Heritage volunteer, tour guide, and the author of Their Name is Wicks, an account of the Wicks family who arrived at Watervliet in 1824.

We are grateful to the New York State Archives for permission to reprint this article from the Winter 2021 issue of the New York Archives Magazine, (Vol. 20, No. 3)
From the Director

All nature calls for busy hands for this is Heaven’s decree / The beasts, the birds, the insects stand a monitor for me / The little busy artful bee works every shining hour / And her industry I can see in every opening flower.

“Industry” Alonzo Holister, Mt. Lebanon 1849

With autumn leaves crunching underfoot and the nights turning a little chilly, we are also working busily to tuck in the Shaker Site for the winter. The apples were harvested from the Shaker Orchard in September, volunteers have cleared the building foundations of weedy growth and reopened walking trails, the Garden Buds are mulching the herb garden beds with fallen pine needles, and with generous donor support, we repainted the 1915 Barn in October just before the temperatures dipped low enough to turn the morning dew into the first frosts.

October also harkened the return of the Holiday Market. As I peruse the aisles of beautiful gifts handcrafted by our local vendors, I feel tempted to skip right over pumpkin spice and straight into balsam fir season. In that spirit, we’re already excitedly looking ahead and planning for 2022. The 1848 Meeting House was constructed to amplify and lift up the human voice, and we can’t wait to return it to its rightful place in the community as a center for song, dance, exhibits, programs, and hands-on workshops.

While we will be closed through the winter months once again this season, we will still be hard at work on programs and projects. We hope that you’ll continue to follow us on social media for updates on programs, events, and exciting news from the Shaker Site!

Johanna Batman

Cornucopia /ˈkɔrn(ə)ˌkɒpə/ noun: The wonderful variety of goods from both new and long-time vendors at the SHS Holiday Market.

Thank you to all of the volunteers who make it possible for us to run the event Tuesday through Sunday, 11 am to 5 pm, closing December 19!
Facilities Update

**Heritage Barn Gets a Fresh Coat**

This summer we gratefully received a generous pledge and match challenge from an anonymous donor to fund a fresh coat of paint for the 1915 Hay and Dairy Barns. One of the two 20th-century Shaker structures on the property, the barn complex was built after the existing barns were destroyed by arson in 1914. The barn features many agricultural innovations of the early 20th century, and was used by the Shakers for only a decade before the Church Family closed. After purchasing the property in 1925, Albany County continued to use the barn as part of the Ann Lee Home operation. Today, the barn is the primary facility rental space for Shaker Heritage, welcoming wedding couples, corporate events, and nonprofit fundraisers to our site.

Thanks to High Voltage Electric Service Inc., the David and Candace Weir Foundation, the Shaker Heritage Board of Trustees, our community of members and donors, and a generous anonymous donor, we quickly raised $28,000 of the $30,000 needed for the painting project and began work on October 10th. When the work is complete, loose boards will be repaired, broken windows re-glazed, and the entire structure will be cleaned and repainted a creamy white to match the historically-accurate color on the Manure Shed.

A high-quality paint job is important for many reasons. From a preservation standpoint, it will offer an improved layer of protection from weathering and insect damage. Equally important, the barn is the first building most visitors encounter as they enter the property and the only building visible to motorists on Heritage Lane. We are excited to complete this beautiful upgrade to the property, and we are humbled by the endless generosity of our community that made it possible. Thank you!

**Shaker Your Plate**

We were fortunate that the day dawned sunny and warm for the return of our annual Shaker Your Plate Fundraiser on Saturday October 2nd. This year we welcomed fall with a celebration of our new cookbook, *Heritage Cooking*. Featuring recipes submitted by over fifty local contributors, this book illustrates the creativity and diversity of our community, and the ways that food can both create and strengthen communities.

Local food journalist Deanna Fox and author Amy Halloran led a discussion of American food and heritage in the 1915 Heritage Barn while guests

*Continued, p. 6*
members of this large family contributed greatly to the economy, culture, and expansion of Shaker communities. Other large families in the early 1800s who migrated to Watervliet included the Wells, the Buckinghams, the extended Prentiss family, the Vedders, the Harwoods, and the Youngs. In most cases, the “lead” convert in these early families was seeking spiritual salvation, like Issachar. However, as the years passed and the population of New York State expanded, a tumultuous period of rapid social and economic change left families in stress, with too many mouths to feed. For some, the secure, structured life of a Shaker community represented an appealing alternative to poverty and chaos.

**Stricter Guidelines**

With so many people seeking refuge, the Shakers began to tighten up their policies. Some individuals were accepted “on trial,” for a period of days or weeks. Others were turned away. In order to impose some structure on the matter of needy children, the Shakers began using indentures, employing standard templates that were widely used by businesses and institutions throughout New York State. An indenture was a contract which clearly stated that the parent(s) would surrender their child to the individual Shaker named, who would in turn provide for the minor until he or she reached maturity (18 for girls, 21 one for boys). Boys were to be introduced to “the art and mystery of agriculture,” and girls to the “art and mystery of the domestic arts,” or educated to be “a seamstress.”

The indenture documents are revealing in personal ways. When Sarah Ann Hayes surrendered her then four-year-old daughter, Arabella Maria, in the summer of 1839, the young mother seems to have signed her own name (many parents made their mark with an ”X”), and the paper bears an addendum: “I, Calvin Pepper, a Justice of the Peace for the City of Albany ... in the State of New York ... do certify that Abner Hayse [sic] the father of the infant named ... has abandoned and neglected to provide for his family.” Similar wording, witnessed by different justices, appears on other Shaker indentures. Francis Henry Hallenbeck was bound over to the Shakers in July 1870 by his aunt, Sarah M. Allen, when he was thirteen and a half. The indenture was witnessed in the presence of a “Police Justice” of Albany. Why the police were involved, or what later happened to Francis is not known. The youngster may have run away, as children sometimes did, causing a nuisance to the Shakers, who had to go after the child to bring him or her back. Sometimes the children returned, contrite; other children stayed away and settled with relatives. The Shakers often helped these children get resituated by providing train or boat fare and a chaperone.

**Family Dramas**

In some cases, bitter custody battles erupted over the fate of dependent children. The biggest public uproar led to the one and only legislative divorce ever granted to a New York woman, Eunice Chapman, in 1818. She engaged in a prolonged campaign against the Watervliet Shakers to regain her children. The Chapman drama stirred up anti-Shaker sentiments, and no doubt contributed to the Shakers’ employment of the more formal system of indentures.

Perhaps the most unusual custody case involved a Black man named Prime Lane, who in the spring of 1802 moved his family onto Watervliet Shaker
property. Prime did not join the Society, but he was provided various “favors and gratuities” from the community, including the education of his daughters. In 1810, Prime Lane departed the Shakers with his wife and two youngest daughters. The older girls, Betty and Phebe, chose to stay. This so piqued Prime that he hired a lawyer and sued the Shakers for custody, claiming that his children, as well as his own wife Hannah, whose freedom he had purchased, were in fact his slaves. Warrants were issued against the Shakers for harboring the girls illegally. In the lower court, the case went against the Shakers, but the Supreme Court of New York State ruled for the Watervliet Society. Young Betty and Phebe remained faithful Believers. Betty only lived into her fifties, her sister Phebe lived from 1787 to 1881, a very long life for the time. Both Lane sisters are buried in the Watervliet Shaker Cemetery where their graves can still be seen today.

A very different family drama involved the Ingham family. John and Harriet Ingham brought their large family from Jefferson County (Watertown) to the Shakers in the summer of 1844, and the following summer they “bound over” their five children, who ranged in age from 15-year-old Elizabeth to 6 year-old Samuel. Both parents signed the indentures, however today only one daughter’s indenture (Adelaide’s) remains in the Shaker collection at the New York State Library. According to the 1850 census, all five of the Ingham children were living in the Church Family. John Jr. grew into a troublemaker, “inspired by the Evil One,” and returned to his parents, and the other son, Samuel, also left at some time, probably in the early 1850s. Meanwhile, the girls, Elizabeth and Frances, continued to live in the Church Family.

In the summer of 1851, “Frances decided to leave, after a visit from her mother. She was taken to [Schenectady] to get a ride on the RR to Watertown.” The following year, the eldest daughter, Elizabeth, fell in love with Willoughby Green. When Willoughby departed from the community in July 1852, he was followed shortly thereafter by Elizabeth. Like Elizabeth, Willoughby had grown up Shaker, arriving as a child from Watertown with his mother and his sisters, Susan and Ruth Ann Green. The Greens all remained in the Society, so Elizabeth and Willoughby had in common both a hometown and an abiding connection to the Society. Willoughby was 33 when he and Elizabeth married in 1852. Touchingly, the couple returned many times over the following years, bringing their children to visit their Shaker friends and family members. Adelaide, who died in 1927, at age 94, lived the longest of all the Green and Ingham Shakers. She was one of the last remaining Watervliet Shaker Sisters.

Sarah Ann Hayes’ daughter Arabella had also found love in the community. She came of age in the Church Family and then eloped in January 1853 with Loren Wicks, who had also been brought to the Shakers as a child in his large family of twelve. When they married, Arabella was not quite 18 and Loren was 38. Loren had been the master carpenter during the construction of the 1848 Shaker Meeting House, which still stands today as the home of the Shaker Heritage Society Museum. Both of these young people had spent their formative years being educated and otherwise nourished by the Shakers, and they were capable, active contributors to the Society. The departures of such promising members represented a staggering loss of economic energy for the community at Watervliet.
Early Deaths Tragically, but not unexpectedly, another way the Society lost children was death. The very first young person buried in the cemetery was Amos Hammond Jr., who was a teenager when he died in 1797. Amos fell into a deep part of the mill pond and another Brother, David Cole, jumped in to save him, but both drowned. Other children who died were only a few months old. In the spring of 1833, young Adelaide Amblaide came to Watervliet with her infant son, who passed away a few months later, on Dec. 15, 1833. Little Albert was buried in the cemetery and the grieving young mother stayed on for a while, but eventually drifted away in 1836. Sad deaths from tuberculosis abound in the records, and scarlet fever was a killer of some. There are gruesome descriptions of a little girl whose clothes got caught in the laundry machine, and of a boy who fell from the hayloft and broke his neck.

The stories presented here are but a small sampling of the hundreds of children whose families found refuge among the Watervliet Shakers between 1815 and 1915. Shaker life was not for everyone. However, for many children who were poor and vulnerable, the Shakers held out a beacon of hope and offered a refuge from the perils of the secular, industrializing world.

In the early 20th century, the South Family Shakers were still taking in orphaned children and accepting others as boarders. Sisters, like Eldress Anna Case, were assigned to take care of a group of children. Among the girls posing with her here are the three orphaned Brooks sisters in plaid dresses. From the center to the right are Eleanor, Susan, and Marian.

Other articles on the Shakers can be found in past editions of the New York Archives Magazine. Subscription information is at nysarchivestrust.org/new-york-archives-magazine.

For more on Eunice Chapman and the Shakers: “Divorce Decreed” by Ilyon Woo, Spring 2011

For more on the Shakers:
“Shaker Deferments”, Jackson McPeters, Winter 2005
“Conscientious Objection,” Jeremy W. Naidus, Spring 2012
“Quiet Revolutionaries,” Lisa Seymour, Summer 2015

Shaker Your Plate, continued

sampled dishes inspired by the cookbook. We also enjoyed a sneak preview of the latest batch of Nine Pin’s Shaker Shaker Cider, made with apples from the historic Shaker Heritage Orchard--stay tuned for an announcement on the debut of Shaker Shaker Cider in the Nine Pin Tasting Room!

It was a wonderful start to the fall season, and we can’t wait to see you at the event next year! In the meantime, the cookbook is on sale in our Museum Shop and Online Store. Special thanks to our sponsors, Albany International Airport, First Fidelity Brokerage, the Golub Foundation, Hillards’ Greenhouse and Produce, and the Stewarts Foundation.

Harvest Craft Fair The annual tradition continued this September as we welcomed nearly 1700 visitors to the site for pony rides, petting zoo, face painting, live music, and tasty food, not to mention over 65 local vendors selling a variety of beautiful handmade products. We feel proud and fortunate to be able to support our local artisan community, and grateful to our volunteers and visitors who generously contribute to this important fundraiser for the site!
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. 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.

☐ Membership (Individual, $35 | Household, $50 | Supporting, $100 | Sustaining, $250 +  ☐ Donation

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Shaker Heritage Society is grateful for the General Operating Support we receive from the Architecture + Design Program of the New York State Council on the Arts. Thank you also to Humanities New York, and the Bender Family Foundation for their support.

The SHS Museum Shop is Online

While the Museum is open, you can also support SHS via our online store. View the catalogue on our Facebook page or our website -- click on “shop.” Museum Shop manager Jackie Davis is focusing on eco-friendly, reusable, and regionally-sourced goods in addition to traditional Shaker items. We carry items from some of our craft fair vendors, and new products are being added monthly. Find affordable gifts, practical housewares, and even face masks for children and adults all while supporting SHS. We offer pickup, delivery and mailing options.

Shaker Heritage Community Cookbook

The Shaker Heritage Community Cookbook is available for purchase online and in our Museum Shop. With nearly 80 recipes, we’ve got you covered from soup to nuts, literally! You can also find copies for sale with our partners at the Vischer Ferry General Store.

Our deepest thanks to everyone who contributed their delicious recipes and delightful family histories, and special thanks also to our sponsors at the Golub Foundation at Price Chopper, Stewarts’ Foundation, Albany County Airport Authority, and Hillard’s Greenhouse and Produce.
Volunteer Corner

Join the Shaker Heritage Apple Corps!! The Shaker apple orchard on Heritage Lane is the only existing remnant of the once extensive Shaker agricultural lands. There are approximately 60 trees on 4 acres of land, many of them heritage varieties such as Roxbury Russett, Snow Fameuse, Gravenstein, and Sheepnose. In addition to harvesting apples this fall, volunteers and staff rescued apple trees from vigorous vines and installed protective fences around new trees.

We are hoping to gather a group of volunteers who, like the Herb Garden Buds, will help us keep an eye on the historic orchard and assist with maintenance. We will be planning a pruning project in the future, including training, and need help with tasks such as constant vigilance from invasive bittersweet that seems to engulf trees overnight.

As mentioned in previous newsletters, we are also gathering a group of volunteers who will serve as stewards of the Shaker Cemetery. While our Hands To Work Days always include a team cleaning headstones, the Graveyard Shift folks would work on headstone cleaning and maintenance projects as weather permits during the spring through winter. They will also train and supervise new volunteers to clean headstones on Hands to Work Days. SHS provides all materials and tools needed. Contact Miriam Cantor-Stone at volunteer@shakerheritage.org if you are interested.