Located among buildings no longer standing, the Trustees’ Office (red arrow) is shown on Brother David Austin Buckingham’s 1838 map between the gates (blue arrows) that separated the Church Family from the World. (New York State Museum Collection)

1859 12 June (Sun) "The afternoon worship the Ministry & visitors (from Groveland) had with the whole church (family). We have a good meeting as far as anything that I know, while I am selling in the Office & writing."

*Church Family Journal entry (Collection of New York State Library)*

This Church Family journal entry, most likely written by Sister Phebe Ann Buckingham, highlights the importance of the Shaker store. Instead of joining others at the afternoon worship session, she is carrying out her role as an Office Sister, conducting sales with the World visitors who had likely come to watch the services.

From their earliest days Shakers carried on business with the World, buying supplies they did not produce themselves and supporting their communities by selling surplus agricultural products and, later, products manufactured to meet the needs of World consumers. Many of these products were sold via middlemen -- hardware and dry goods merchants and apothecaries who took on Shaker seeds, brooms, whips and brushes, and herbal medicines to sell to the public. Some products, such as thousands of bonnets made by the Sisters, were ordered by department stores of the day in Albany, New York City, and Boston. Shaker brethren and sisters also sold goods at public markets. Basket maker and historian Nathan Taylor notes that the Shakers were great marketers of their products and the first to sell items at the first world-wide tourist attraction of Niagara Falls. Sister Phebe notes that baskets and fans were shipped from the Church Family to Niagara Falls in 1851 (“to Callahans”) and 1853.

A good number of items were also sold directly to the public by Shakers in their own stores. In many cases, the store was located in the Trustees’ Office, at times the store was a separate building. For the Watervliet Church Family, the store was housed in the Trustees’ Office, the building that served as the link between the Shaker community and the World. On the 1838 map drawn by brother David Austin Buckingham (Phebe’s brother) we can see that the building sat between two gates that
From the Director

With the holiday season upon us, the Shakers can teach us a thing or two about how to properly celebrate. While I typically like to begin my holiday with a festive glass of spiked eggnog (yes, very self-indulgent), the Shakers naturally began the festivities on Christmas Day with a meeting before moving on to the feasting.

1878 25 Dec “Had laboring meeting and teach young comers to labor. Raisin cake, oysters, lemons and apples, popcorn.”

The Shakers often used the word “labor” to describe worship. A “laboring meeting” or “laboring for a gift” suggested an effort to overcome spiritual obstacles. I’m not a religious person myself, and I’ve largely discarded the futile commitment of New Year’s resolutions. Still, I find great beauty in the concept of beginning every celebration with a moment of self-reflection. Not only to appreciate all we have to be thankful for, but also to labor over what we can do to be better neighbors, friends, and citizens in the world.

As we approach the longest night of the year, and usher in a new one, I look forward to working together with all of you to find ways to make our world a little better and brighter in 2023. Thank you for being a part of our community, and best wishes for the holiday season.

-Johanna Batman
News & Events

Ann Lee Home Demolition Updates

Plans for the demolition of the Ann Lee Home continue to progress. Abatement work is tentatively scheduled to begin next week. Demolition of the first wing of the structure may begin as early as December 12th, with work scheduled to continue in phases through the winter. The demolition and cleanup will wrap up in late March or early April, barring any unforeseen challenges.

First Phase of Stabilization Work Complete

The long-awaited first phase of building rehabilitation at the Church Family Site was completed in November. Three buildings have new water-tight roofs, and an original slate roof was repaired. The Brethren’s Workshop enjoyed perhaps the most dramatic facelift: the deteriorated 1920’s era porch and dormers were removed, and a new metal roof installed. This work marks a significant step towards restoring the original Shaker-era appearance of the buildings. Critical repairs also will help to stabilize the buildings and allow time to plan for the next phases of rehabilitation at the site. Our deep gratitude to New York State and Albany County for funding this work, the County legislature and executive’s office for their support, and special thanks to Thomas Stover at the Department of General Services for coordinating and shepherding this project to completion.

NYSCA Renews support for Shaker Heritage Society in 2023

We are so honored and excited to share that the New York State Council on the Arts has renewed its organizational support for SHS. We are the grateful recipients of $30,000 in general operating funds to support staff salaries, expanded marketing and program initiatives in the coming year. Thank you to NYSCA for their continued support of our mission.

Year-End Appeal

As a friend and supporter, we hope you will consider making a year-end contribution to strengthen our organization at a critical moment. The former Ann Lee Home on site will be demolished soon. Although this creates uncertainty, it also offers a rare chance to engage new partners. Building a collaborative approach to interpreting Shaker history and advancing Shaker values will take complex planning, long-term investment, and patience. But it is the work that will create a sustainable destination that can be enjoyed for generations to come. Please join us in embracing the exciting opportunities ahead. You can make your year-end gift on our online donation form or by sending the form on page 8. Thank you!

https://home.shakerheritage.org/donate-today/
News & Events, continued

**Planting Utopia**

Poughkeepsie-based artist Julia Whitney Barnes photographed and collected specimens from over 150 plants growing in the Shaker Heritage herb garden. The garden (which reflects the Shakers' important herbal medicine industry) and historic Shaker ‘gift’ or ‘spirit’ drawings are the inspiration and source imagery for a site-specific installation at the Shaker Heritage 1856 Drying House and a companion exhibit of prints on view at the Albany Airport.

The installation at the airport includes pieces in the walkway from the new parking garage to the ticket counters, and along the walls of Terminal A. The exhibit at Shaker Heritage Society was funded by a grant from the NYS Council on the Arts and will continue through Summer, 2023.

**Virtual Watervliet Launch Now Live**

We are excited to announce the relaunch of the Virtual Watervliet website. This educational resource was previously available from 2013 until late 2020. The rebuilt and updated portal provides a powerful tool for interpreting the history of the Church Family settlement and the lives of the Shakers that lived here. Highlights of the site include Shaker biographies, architectural history, a timeline, and multiple virtual tours of the site. The final phase of the redevelopment is now underway, and will feature a 3D virtual tour through the Church Family in its 1838 configuration. Visit virtual.shakerheritage.org to start your journey!

This project is made possible by the generous support of the Nickles Family, the Hudson River Valley Greenway, and The Michele L. Vennard Hospitality Grant Program of the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau Fund of the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region.

**Game Design at Shaker Heritage**

Shaker Heritage Society is teaming up with the Game Design and Implementation class at the Capital Region BOCES in 2023. Game Design and Implementation is a two-year program for students interested in the creative worlds of video game design, 3-D modeling, and computer programming. Over the course of several semesters, students will design and create smartphone-compatible tools and activities for visitors to use as they explore the Church Family Site. We look forward to sharing updates on their work!

**The Serious Side of Food: A Reading and Discussion Program**

3rd Wednesday of the Month at 6 pm, starting January 18th - ends June 21st.

Join facilitator Lavada Nahon and staff from Shaker Heritage Society for a monthly book club all about food. Together, we will explore the history, politics, economics, and social nuances of food in America. What do we eat...
News & Events, continued

and why? Who controls the production of food and at what cost? What do we mean when we talk about eating “responsibly?” Is our modern ideal of clean living just a mirror of 19th century trends?

Books:
- The Road to Wellville, T. Coraghessan Boyle
- In Defense of Food, Michael Pollan
- The Jungle, Upton Sinclair
- Food Politics, Marion Nestle
- Diet for a Small Planet, Frances Moore Lappé
- The Third Plate, Dan Barber

Join the conversation!

Registration is free but limited to 20 people. Please plan on attending all sessions. A limited number of copies of each book will be available on loan to registered participants.

This program is made possible with funding from Humanities New York.

Valentine Hearts Workshop

January 28th, 2 sessions - 10 am to 11:30 am & 12:30 pm to 2 pm.

It’s back by popular demand! Make three dimensional hearts this Valentine season. Local weaver Sandy Salada will teach you how to make three 4”x3” Valentine Hearts woven in red maple strips - use them to festively decorate your home or gift them to loved ones!

Each participant will make 3 hearts. No experience needed, suitable for ages 14 and up.

Save the Dates:
Mother Ann Lee’s Birthday Bash - February 25th, 2023
Shaker Box Workshop - April 28th & 29th, 2023

About the facilitator: A culinary historian, interpreter and editor, Lavada Nahon is currently the Interpreter of African American History for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Nahon's scholarship encompasses Dutch, British, French and African culinary traditions in the Mid Atlantic spanning the 17th-19th centuries. Her work is focused in particular on the lives and work of enslaved cooks in the homes of the elite class.

Renowned Shaker Box Maker Eric Pintar, will teach this two day workshop on the construction of Shaker Boxes.
Minding the Store, continued

separated the Shaker Church Family complex from the World. Today, only the suggestion of the northern gate remains. In addition to the store, the Trustees’ Office contained meeting rooms, a dining room where guests were frequently served, and bedrooms for the Trustees and the occasional visitor. Sister Phebe and other journal keepers often mention shoppers, and they occasionally drop names:

1857 2 Dec Theodore Humphrey & some friends came, had lunch & bought $2 worth in the store, "which is something in these days."

1858 Oct 18 "A gentleman & 2 or 3 ladies came here to look about, went into the store bought $6 worth of things."

1859 Jan 14 Mrs. Treadwell comes from Albany & buys 1½ gal, of applesauce & some other things....

1864 28 July Some of the Van Rensselaers came out, bought a few things in the store.

1866 5 May "Five young men students from Troy came for a ramble. Bought $12 of things in the store. Had some dinner."

16 June "A young man came from NY to get some fancy fans if we manufactured any. He bought $9.50 in the store which is something in these days of scarcity"

10 July Quite a company from Home lawn came and bought 5 chairs and baskets - $48.00 worth of things from the store.

1867 24 July "Five different companies of the world were here today, bought considerable in the store - baskets and a chair. Lydia's head feels best when she can get some money." [This is Sister Lydia Annis.]

1868 30 Sept One of Judge Parker’s daughters that married Pruyn** came with 2 ladies from England. They seemed much pleased with their visit, bought a few things to take with them.

1871 28 July Senator Pruyn, wife, family and five from Washington came for a ride, look around, bought a few things in the store.

Unfortunately, we have no images of any Watervliet Family stores, but we can get an idea of the range of items sold by looking at images of other Shaker stores. The Church Family sisters definitely made the fancy fans noted above – Sister Phebe made 4 dozen of them in the first three months of 1859 – along with mops, knitted items, brushes, straw mats, feather dusters, and baskets, among other items. Beginning in 1837, Sister Phebe recorded that she was “trying to make a few baskets to sell.” Two years later she had made 36 baskets by March 22nd, and in 1841 she notes making 42 "draw" baskets in a month.

So begins one chapter of one of the Sisters’ industries, as the production of draw baskets continues for at least 30 years in the Church Family. Just what is a “draw” basket? Curator Sarah Margolis-Pineo found the answer for us: a drawer basket. Basket maker, historian, and author Nathan Taylor, who worked for decades to research and analyze Shaker baskets, explains that drawer baskets were made of straw or strips of poplar woven with cotton thread to produce a fabric that was cut and pieced to make a product that worked like a basket. We will explore poplar work in a subsequent article, but the draw[er] and other baskets reflect how the Sisters worked collaboratively to stock their shelves with items that met the evolving tastes of their customers.

Sisters Lydia Annis, Samantha Bowie, Elizabeth Seely, Eliza Wells, and others joined in the work over the years. In July of 1857 Phebe Ann and Lydia “went to wash house to work on some draw baskets, butting & pasting & putting some together.” In August, Sister Phebe “worked in the ironing room cutting out baskets [and Lydia began] "braiding small baskets to put on the draw baskets." Sister Samantha is “running white wax into molds to put in baskets" in 1868.

continued
Draw, or drawer baskets were one type of fancy work baskets produced for sale to the World. They were often outfitted with additional baskets to hold supplies and tools such as pincushions and needle cases. (From Shaker Baskets by Martha Wetherbee and Nathan Taylor, 1988. Used with permission.)

In 1871, "Lydia begins furnishing the baskets the Mary's and Nelson's have made. Eliza Wells makes the open work and thimble baskets for trimming and the emery balls and Lucy runs the wax." The baskets themselves had become more complex, incorporating special storage components and tools.

This same approach continued through the early 20th century as the residents of the South Family pooled their efforts to make goods for the World. Byron Coburn sold his honey, Sister Lucy Bowers mentioned selling candy to boys from the “Pre” as the Preventorium was known—the Trustees Office was now the site of a facility for children who had been exposed to tuberculosis. All of the women and girls knitted and crocheted items for sale, no matter their position in the community. In July, 1922 Anna Goepper notes “Eld[ress] Anna [is] busy on store work all the time. She knits such lovely sweaters, a beautiful needleworker of all kinds.” A contest between two girls to see if they could each complete 50 crocheted roses in one day backfired. They both reached their goal – but it only convinced the Sisters that they could be as productive every day!

Almost 50 years after the close of the Watervliet Shaker community, following the death of Eldress Anna Case in 1938, a new commercial venture took root at the former Church Family site. Around 1983, Shaker Heritage Society was running a "Sheep to Shawl" program which introduced students to several phases of textile production. Libby Lee and other volunteers decided it would be good to have items for sale to the students and bought a small assortment of goods. Marian Kunz, whose mother, Julia Relyea, and aunts had boarded with the North Family Shakers, began developing what would become a Christmas Shop. Today the Shaker Heritage Museum Shop, craft shows, and our Holiday Market continue the tradition of selling high-quality, hand-made items. You may not find feather dusters made from peacock feathers or draw baskets, but Museum Shop and Craft Fair Manager Jackie Davis has plenty of other items on the shelves. And, with the help of an amazing group of volunteers, SHS staff are still minding the store.

* All prices are those noted in the journals
** This was Anna F. Parker, daughter of Judge Amasa J. Parker, who married John Van Schaich Lansing Pruyn. They lived at 13 Elk Street in Albany, and their daughter, Huybertie Pruyn Hamlin, mentions visits to and from the Shakers in her book, An Albany Childhood. Pruyn served in the NYS Senate from 1861-63; and in the US House of Representatives from 1867-69.
At Shaker Heritage Society, our work has always been about keeping the spirit of the Shakers alive and preserving our history. 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 send this form to: Shaker Heritage Society, 25 Meeting House Rd, Albany NY 12211.