

Study Report
Harvard Shaker Herb House

Located on Shaker Road;
Harvard, MA



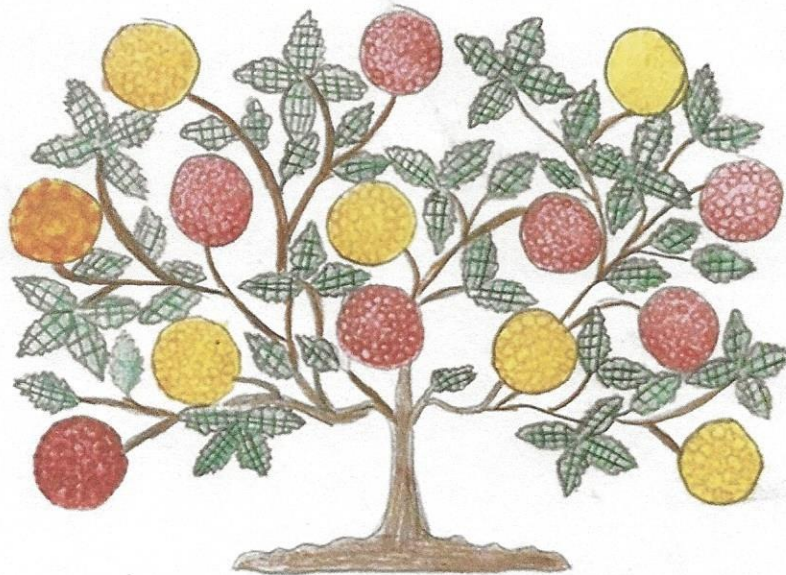
Prepared by the Harvard Historical Commission
Herb House Study Team
Prepare: January 2021

The Harvard Herb House Study Team was composed of the following members:

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With technical and historical contributions made by Robert Adam

The study team wishes to also recognize David Vannicola, a longtime member of the Harvard Historical Commission. David had planned to be a member of the study team, but unfortunately passed away before the start of the project.



Contents

<i>Section</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Page</i>
1.	Introduction, Building History and Its Importance	1-2
2.	Exterior Envelope Conditions, Required Repairs and Estimated Cost	3-5
3.	Interior Conditions, Required Repairs and Estimated Cost	6-7
4.	Options for Building Reuse	8-9
	Appendix 1: Building drawings (In hardcopy only)	
	Appendix 2: Relevance of Shaker Buildings and Culture to Harvard and America	
	A. Essay by Sadie Keiran	
	B. Essay by Olivia Lindo	

Section 1

Introduction, Building History and Its Importance



The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, much more commonly known as the Shakers, were an incredibly important group to the Town of Harvard. The Shakers helped develop the town with modern, forward ways of thinking, leaving behind many insights into Harvard's rich history.

One such insight is a small stone building hidden within Harvard's Shaker Village. Built in 1848, the Shaker Herb Drying House supported one of the Shakers' most profitable industries: herbs, (Herb Dry House). This building was used by the Shakers as an herb drying house, where herbs were left and stored and is the only stone building left in the Harvard Shaker Village. This only standing herb house is a small structure built of stone with a slate roof, which was built for \$400 at the time, around \$13,500 in today's USD. The building has a unique interior, with two brick barrel vaulted ceilings. The original floor of the upper level was built with wooden slats to permit heat to rise and dry plants. Although the lower level of the structure has likely undergone significant changes, the existing double doors there were certainly used to bring in firewood to dry the herbs. A long trellis structure that once stood on the north side of the building has long since been removed.

There are two main type of herbs, culinary and medicinal. The Shakers were famous for their medicinal herbs, growing some of their herbs and collecting others from the wild. According to the journal of Harvard Shaker Elisha Myrick, these included sage, thyme, hollyhock, sweet balm seeds, horehound, oak, poppy seed, lavender, dock seed and root, marshmallow, pennyroyal, peppergrass, sarsaparilla, hyssop, wintergreen, spearmint, goldenrod, wormwood, and summer savory, (Buchanan). The Shakers dried many of the herbs they used and sold, and most were dried in this house, although sometimes they had so many plants that some of them had to be dried in other buildings

The herb house itself is situated on a hill, with the south side exposed to allow as much sunlight into the building as possible. After the departure of the Shakers, the building was repurposed to become a living space, and was occupied until the mid 1970s. In 1997 the property was acquired by the Town of Harvard. Since the Town acquisition of the building, it has remained abandoned and unmanaged, except for a project in the late 2000s which replaced the slate roof and repaired the soffit and fascia.

The herb house was integral for Shakers living in the Town of Harvard, and is integral to the history of the town. This building, and by extent, Harvard's history, should not whither and go uncared for.

Section 2

Exterior Envelope Conditions, Required Repairs and Estimated Cost

The study team performed its first survey on September 7th, 2020 and found the area around the building was extensively overgrown. For future preservation of the Herb House regular grounds keeping must be scheduled through the Town DPW, contracted landscapers or scheduled volunteers.

The roof of the Herb House as well as the fascia and soffit appear to be in relatively good condition. The roof, fascia and soffit were restored about 15 years ago by the North Benet Street School. The rest of the building envelope is in serious need of attention. At the end of this section is the cost estimate for each item of work identified in this section.

Examination of the stone walls reveals considerable loss of mortar. To stabilize the wall and ensure they remain water tight, it is recommended all exterior walls be repointed. Exterior doors and frames vary in condition. (See door schedule below and appendix 1 to identify each door location.) Door 1 and 2 are likely original to the structure. Door 1 needs to be cleaned and painted. Door 2 frame show signs of rot and will need to be replaced. If funding is acquired quickly enough, door 2 may be saved and restored. Door 3 and 4 are both in good condition, but Door 4 frame is rotten and will require replacement. Door 5 is not original to the building. The frame and door are both rotten and will need to be replaced. All exterior door hardware appears sound and should be restored.



(Missing mortar)



(Rotten sills and trim)



(Rotten doors and frames)

Exterior Door Schedule:

Door no.	Door Condition	Frame Condition	Hardware	Notes
1	Sound	Sound	complete	Strip and paint
2	Original, but deteriorating	Rotten	Complete	Replace frame and restore if possible
3	Good	Good	Complete	paint
4	Good	Rotten	Complete	Replace frame and paint the door
5	Rotten	Rotten	Complete	Replace the frame and door

Note: for the purpose of estimating, it is assumed all doors with rotten frames will need both the door and frame replaced by the time a contract is let.

In general, the windows are in better shape than the doors. Most windows are sound, but almost all will require repair and or replacement of the exterior trim and sills. Windows D, E and G have broken panes of glass. All lower level windows need upgrades to their hardware to secure the building.

In preparation for work to follow in the interior of the building, cost of testing for lead paint is carried in this section. The exterior patio stones are no longer level and create a tripping hazard. It is recommended these stones be reset in a fresh bed of compacted stone dust.

Window Schedule:

Window	Window condition	Exterior woodwork	Hardware	Notes
A	Sound	Repair and Paint	Restore	Upper Level
B	Sound	Repair and Paint	Restore and upgrade	Lower Level
C	Sound	Repair and Paint	Restore and upgrade	Lower Level
D	Sound	Repair and Paint	Restore and upgrade	Lower Level
E	Sound	Repair and Paint	Restore	Upper Level
F	Sound	Repair and Paint	Restore	Upper Level
G	Sound	Repair and Paint	Restore	Upper Level

Section 2: Rouge Order Cost Estimate

line	Item	Labor	Materials	Total	
1	Repointing stone	\$7,000	\$250	\$7,250.	
2	Door replacement	\$4,000	\$9,000	\$13,000	
3	Door repair (in line above)	Cost above includes	Replacement of all doors		
4	Reset stone patio	\$4,000	\$1,000	\$5,000	
5	Window repair	\$6,400	\$1,000	\$7,400	
6	Painting of doors window and trim	\$6,000	\$300	\$6,300	
7	Lead paint testing	Lump Sum		\$1,000	
	Subtotal			\$39,950	
	Overhead 10%			\$4,000	
	Profit 10%			\$4,400	
	Total			\$48,350	

Section 3

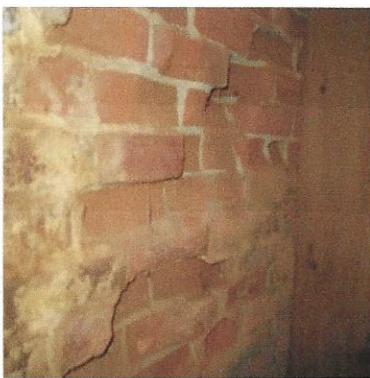
Interior Conditions, Required Repairs and Estimated Cost

The interior of the herb house is showing the signs of neglect. On the upper level the paint is peeling on the walls and ceiling. This is likely lead based paint and will require remediation. There is a bathroom on the upper level that is not original to the structure and should be removed, piping cut and capped and the floor repaired. At the main entrance there are two holes in the floor that requires repairs. There are several areas of brick work that are deteriorating and require restoration. The door on this level appears to be solid and only require adjustment and painting.

The lower level is in somewhat better shape but will still requires work. Brickwork around the fireplace is deteriorating and requires restoration. Interior doors on the lower level are also in acceptable shape, but will require painting and adjustment. In the service closet, the existing sink and piping could be removed and pipes capped. Excess materials now stored there should also be removed. In the other lower level closet, cleaning and removal of excess materials is required.

In the lower level service closet there is an existing breaker box. It is recommended that the existing box be removed and a new electrical service be provided. This is necessary to secure the building and make it safe. A new 200 amp service is proposed with limited electric lighting and electric outlets throughout the building. To enhance security of the building, limited exterior lighting and a limited interior alarm system is proposed. The proposed alarm system would include smoke detector and security sensors remotely monitored at the police station.

There is evidence of rodent infestation in the building which requires necessary treatment.



(Failing bricks)



(Holes in floor)



(Peeling paint)

Section 2; Rough Order Cost Estimate

line	Item	Labor	Materials	Total	
1	Lead Paint Removal	Lump Sum		\$20,000	
2	Interior Painting	\$6,000	\$900	\$6,900	
3	Bathroom demo	\$3,000		\$3,000	
4	Carpentry	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$6,000	
5	Brickwork restoration	\$5,000	\$500	\$5,500	
6	Power from road to building	Lump Sum		\$1,000	
7	200 amp service, lighting and power	\$5,400	\$3,600	\$9,000	
8	Alarm system	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$5,000	
	Subtotal			\$56,000	
	Overhead 10%			\$5,600	
	Profit 10%			\$6,200	
	Total			\$68,000	

Section 4

Options for the Building's Reuse

Option 1: Create a show piece by returning the building to its original design:

By returning the building to its original condition as an herb drying house the Town of Harvard has an opportunity to preserve history and recreate a rare historical artifact.

- Pros**
1. Preserve the building for future historical study
 2. Highlight the Harvard Shaker history by preserving their most profitable industry
 3. Recognition for Harvard as a town that preserves its history
 4. Provide an unique Shaker experience when operational.

- Cons**
1. Limited uses of the building
 2. Would be costly to return the building to its original condition
 3. Would be time consuming to research, and costly to remove the many layers of changes already made to the building

Option 2: Create a Shaker learning center/Museum:

Renovating the upper space as a small museum and the lower space as classroom space; preserving Harvard Shaker history and passing on a bit of Shaker culture.

- Pros**
1. Create a great learning opportunity between the schools and the historical society
 2. It could be opened periodically for Town residents to visit and learn more about the town's history
 3. Could provide a permanent home for Harvard Shaker artifacts in a place built by the Shakers

- Cons**
1. Although greater use than option 1, it still is limited in its use.
 2. Handicap access to all levels could be a challenge
 3. If toilets were required, they would be expensive and technically challenging

Option 3: Campsite for Boy/Girl Scouts/Other Groups

- Pros:**
1. Groups could camp overnight and learn about the cultural/historical significance of the Shakers
 2. It could be also opened up to be a field trip location for schools
 3. Cost beyond normal restoration should be low

- Cons:**
1. Heating/plumbing would need to be installed including toilets
 2. The stairs could be a safety hazard for younger children
 3. Shaker village residents may not support this option

Option 4: Herb/vegetable store or other commercial uses

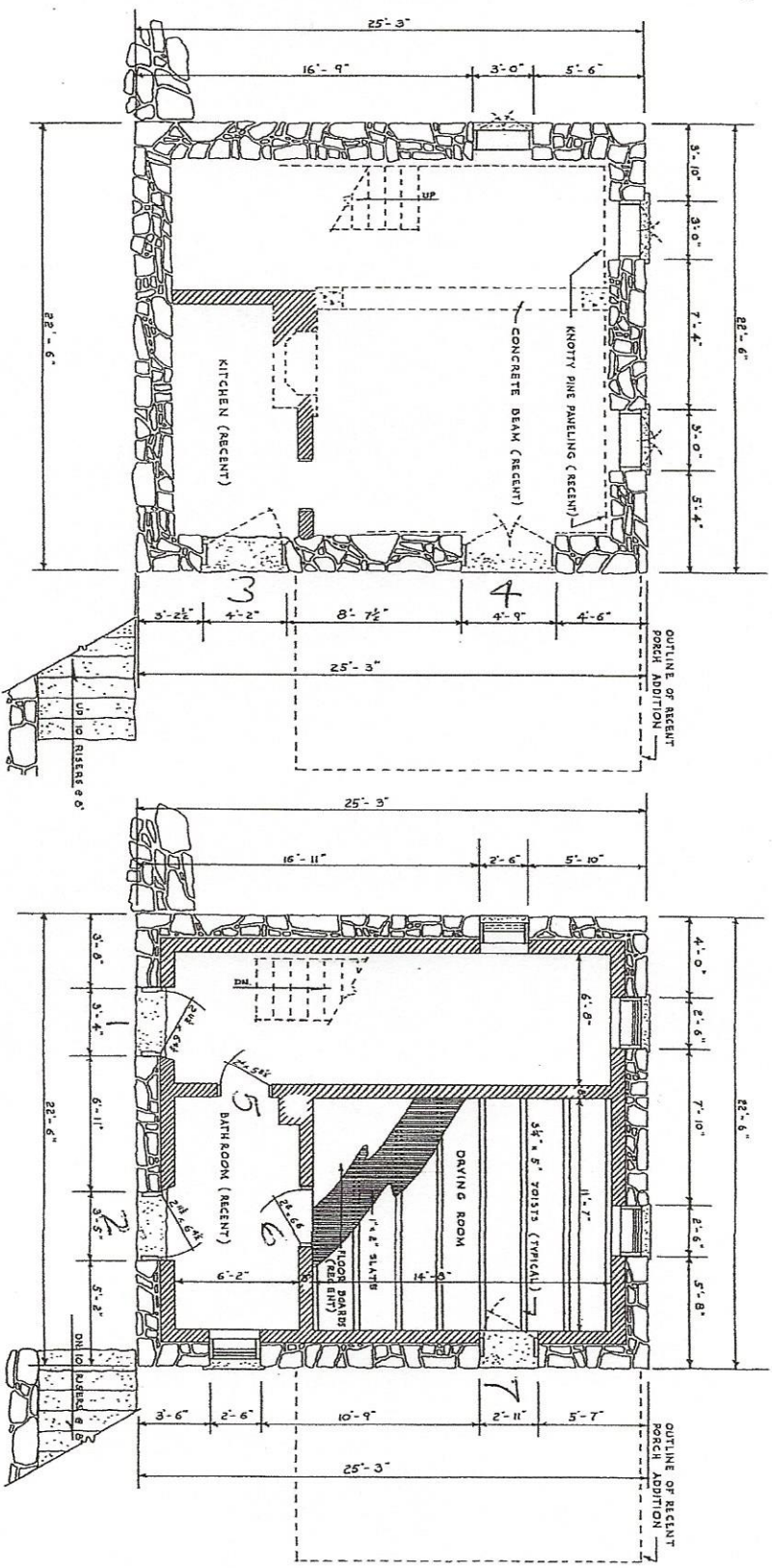
- Pros:**
1. This would bring in additional business for Harvard
 2. People would be inclined to shop here, as it is an *actual* herb house/historical structure
 3. It could reinforce Harvard rural character by providing an outlet for local produce
 4. Might be operated by a local orchard or farm with future revenue used for building maintenance

- Cons:**
1. The upper level may have to be modified so there is enough space for people to shop
 2. It might have significant cost to bring the building up to present code for this use
 3. Parking would be an issue, as there could be a number of people at the building at the same time



Appendix 1: Building drawings

In hardcopy only



LOWER LEVEL

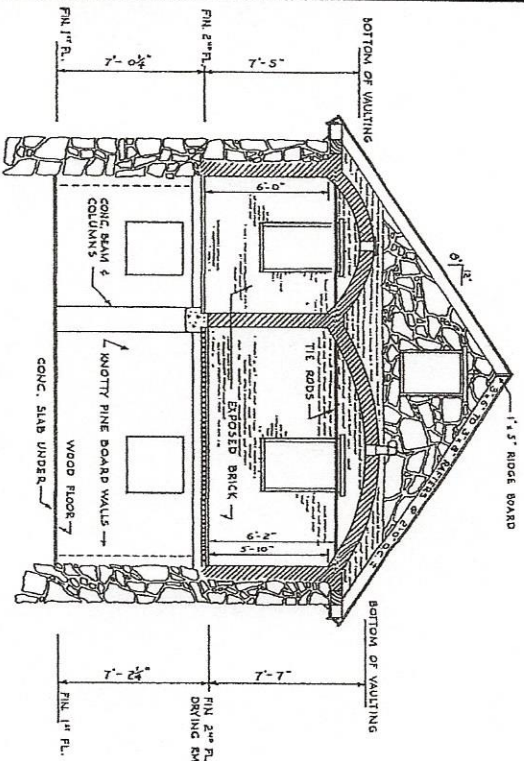
UPPER LEVEL

ALL WORK CONSIDERED TO BE OF RECENT ORIGIN IN LOWER LEVEL:
 PURRED WALLS OF KNOTTY PINE PANELING, FIREPLACE, STAIRWAY, ALL CASSEMENT WINDOWS,
 CONCRETE CEILING GIRDER, ALTERATIONS TO NORTH ELEVATION DOOR OPENINGS, WOOD FLOOR
 AND CONCRETE SLAB UNDER, SCREENED PORCH ADDITION AND KITCHEN.

ALL WORK CONSIDERED TO BE OF RECENT ORIGIN IN UPPER LEVEL:
 ALTERATIONS TO SOUTH ELEVATION WINDOW OPENING & NORTH ELEVATION DOOR
 OPENING, STAIRWAY, BATH ROOM, 1" x 2" FLOOR SLATS IN DINING ROOM (IN IMITATION
 OF ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION), 3/4" FLOOR BOARDS, SEVERAL REPLACED FLOOR JOISTS

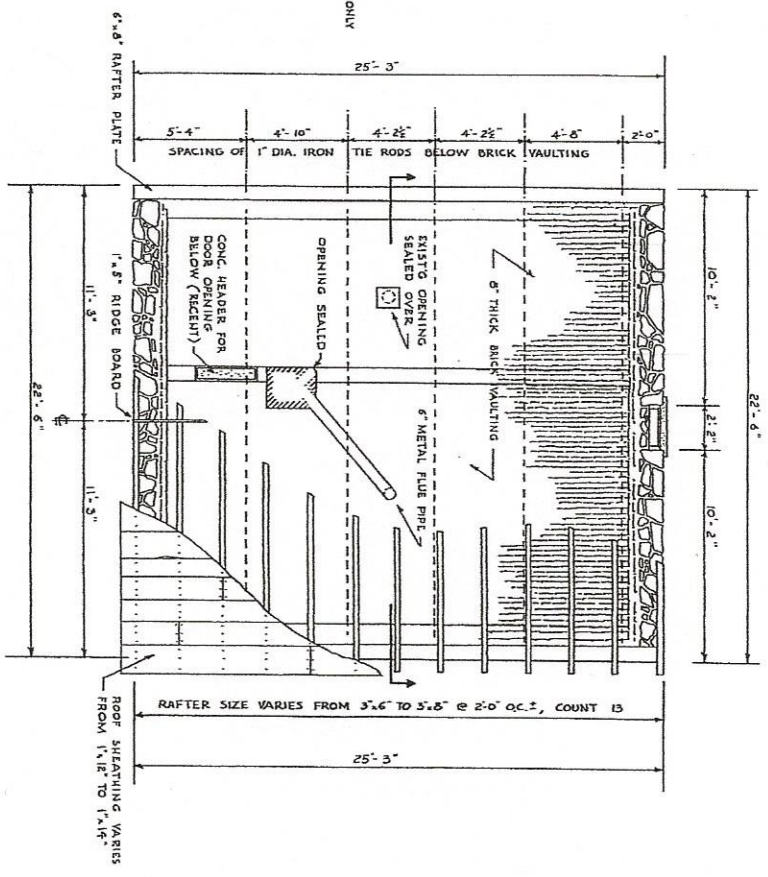


DRAWN BY: GERALD E. COMMIER 1972 SHAKE RTON FOUNDATION INC. UNDER DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR	NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE CHURCH FAMILY HERB DRYING HOUSE WEST SIDE OF SHAKER RD. (HARVARD SHAKER COMMUNITY) WORCESTER MASSACHUSETTS	SURVEY NO. MASS 1091	HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY SHEET 1 OF 4 SHEETS	UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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NOTE:
 FLOOR ELEVATIONS ON DRAWINGS INCLUDE 3/4" FLOORING OVER DRYING ROOM SLATS AND 3/4" FLOORING OVER 1" BOARD ON REMAINING SECOND FLOOR. (ALL 3/4" FLOORING ON SECOND FLOOR IS SUSPECTED TO BE OF RECENT ORIGIN).

SECTION



ATTIC SPACE



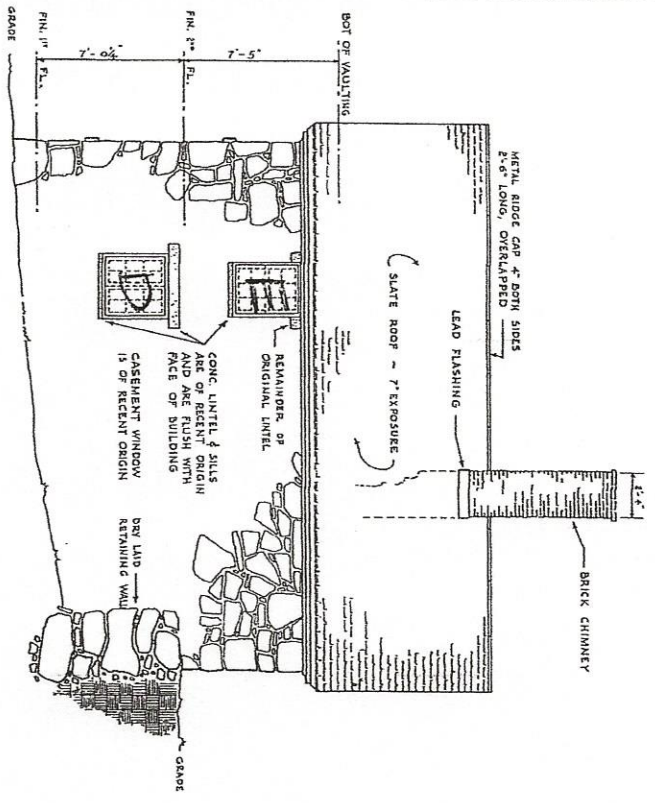
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 SHAKERTON FOUNDATION INC.
 UNDER DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
 CHURCH FAMILY HERB DRYING HOUSE
 WEST SIDE OF SHAKER RD. (HARWARD SHAKER COMMUNITY)
 WORCESTER MASSACHUSETTS

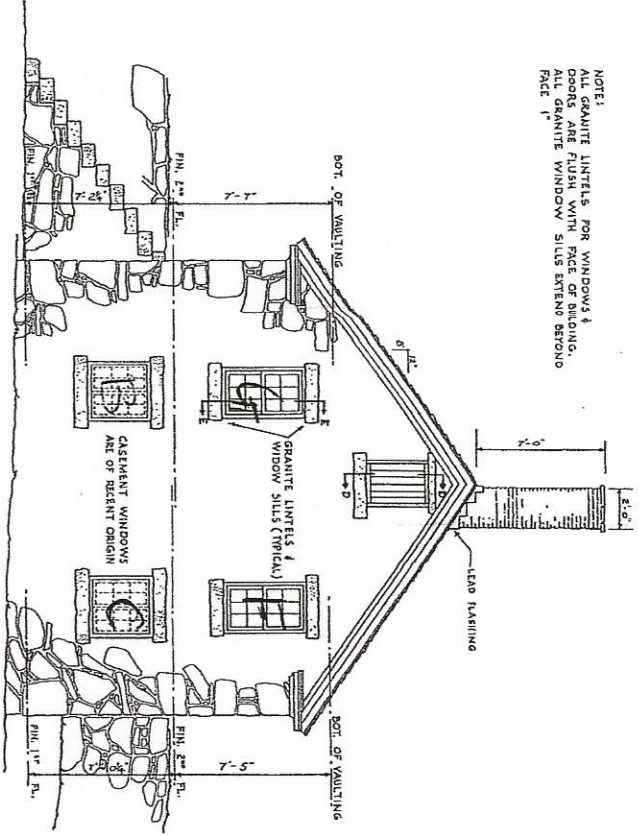
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 MASS 1091

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 2 OF 4 SHEETS

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

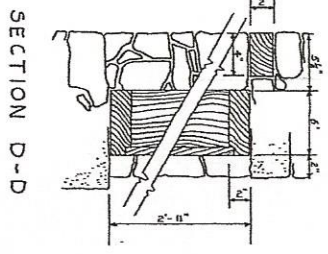


SOUTH ELEVATION

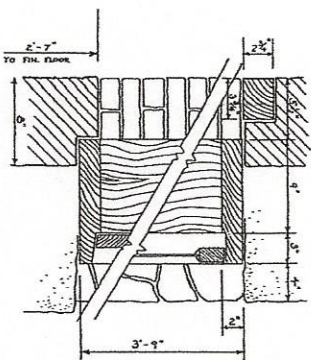


WEST ELEVATION

NOTE:
 GRANITE LINTELS FOR WINDOWS &
 DOORS ARE FLUSH WITH FACE OF BUILDING.
 ALL GRANITE WINDOW SILLS EXTEND BEYOND
 FACE 1"



SECTION D-D



SECTION E-E



SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

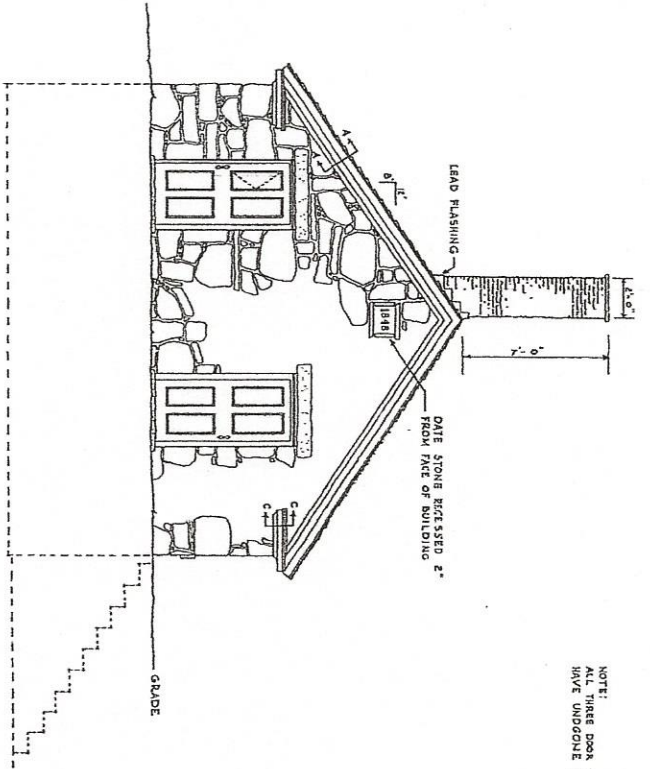


SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

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 SHAKERTON FOUNDATION INC.
 100 STATE ST. 9TH FLOOR
 BOSTON, MASS. 02109
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

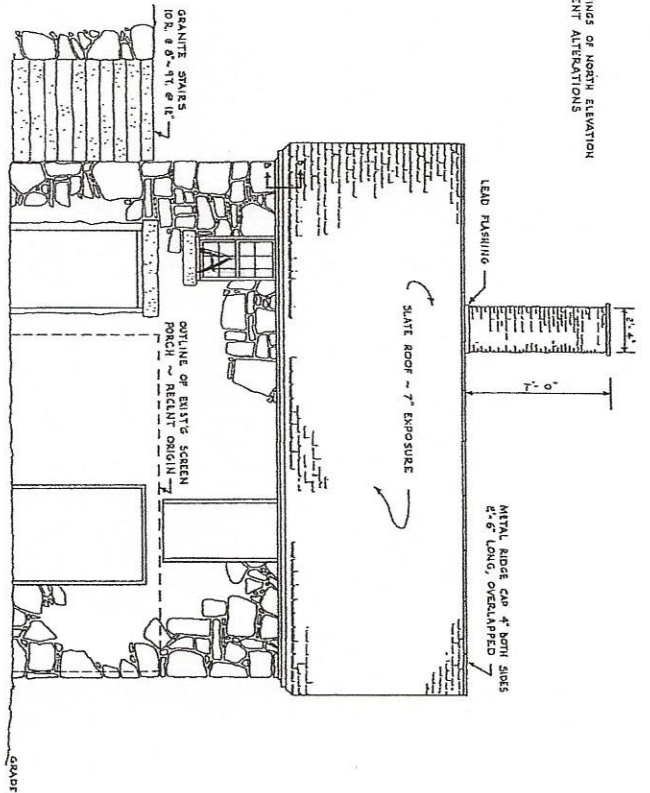
NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
 CHURCH FAMILY HERB DRYING HOUSE
 WEST SIDE OF SHAKER RD. (HARVARD SHAKER COMMUNITY)
 WORCESTER MASSACHUSETTS

SURVEY NO. MASS 1091
 HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 3 OF 4 SHEETS
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



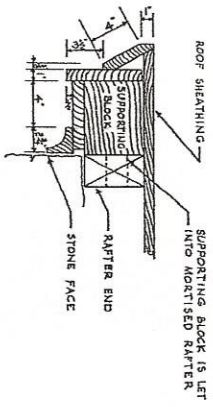
NOTE:
ALL THREE DOOR OPENINGS OF NORTH ELEVATION
HAVE UNDERGONE RECENT ALTERATIONS

EAST ELEVATION

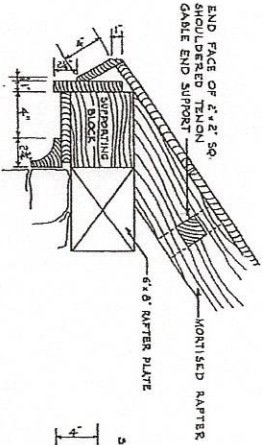


MITH. RIDGE CAP 4" HIGH SIDES
2"-6" LONG, OVERLAPPED

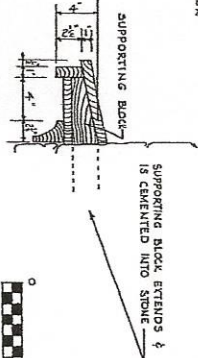
NORTH ELEVATION



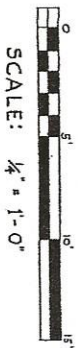
SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B



SECTION C-C



SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0"

DRAWN BY: GERALD E. COMMER, 1972

SHAKERSTON FOUNDATION INC.
UNDER DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC
ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

WEST SIDE OF SHAKER RD. (HARVARD SHAKER COMMUNITY)

CHURCH FAMILY HERB DRYING HOUSE
NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
WORCESTER MASSACHUSETTS

WORCESTER MASSACHUSETTS

SURVEY NO.
MASS
1091

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 4 OF 4 SHEETS

UNIT OF SHEET
DATE DRAWN

Appendix 2: Relevance of Shaker Buildings and Culture to Harvard and America

- A. Essay by Sadie Keiran
- B. Essay by Olivia Lindo

Relevance of Shaker Buildings and Culture to Harvard and America

By: Sadie Keiran

Although the Shakers lived in their own communities, their ties to the rest of American society impacted culture, religion, agriculture, and other aspects of life throughout the 19th-century. Outsiders saw them as different or strange due to their worship practices, yet they did not realize how prominent Shaker culture was in their own lives. The ideology of simplicity in architecture and clothing was at the forefront of the religion's values, and this was later instilled in others outside of the Shaker community.

Looking at their architecture, one may see how each product has a function; there is no excess or detailing; buildings and furniture all have a specific purpose. The style of architecture used by Shakers was later adapted by other Americans, as a grassroots design. Those who were immigrating to America or regionally in search for a better life may not have the means to buy or build a fanciful house, so they built what they needed to survive or tend to their land. Along with being cheaper, it also was easier and more efficient to build for settlers, giving them more time to work than manufacture goods for their homes.

With religion, the Shakers instilled in their teachings the importance of nature. Mother Ann highlighted their goal of trying to build a Heaven on Earth; a perfect place for them to live, pray, and work. This provided other religions, specifically the other Protestant sects this idea of caring for the land, and adopting the importance of nature in their teachings. Songs were a huge part of worship and also was an enjoyable pastime for the religious group. They had original songs as they did not sing the psalms or hymns that other Christian sects did. These songs were easily spread, and became well-known folk songs interregionally. The most well-known, "Tis a Gift to be Simple" not only spread the Shaker music style, but their focus on functionality.

Along with these values, the Shakers upheld moral views that were ahead of their time that led to a wider adoption of egalitarianism. The group believed that every person, no matter their race, gender, ethnicity, or religion was equal under the eyes of God. They instilled this idea in their teachings and way of life; by providing equal treatment to all, along with the tourists that frequented their communities.

Looking specifically at the town of Harvard, the Shaker community had a large impact on lifestyle in the area, and still remains relevant to this day. Many of the buildings that were constructed by the Harvard Shakers still remain, and have since been converted into housing. Although the religion has since died off, their architecture still remains in use by many residents in the town. Even though the Shakers are widely forgotten, the Harvard school system still keeps their ideology alive, by having frequent field trips to many landmarks of the Shaker community, like the cemetery and housing facilities. Along with this, Shaker buildings have since been transplanted into the Fruitlands Museum in the town so that residents and tourists can experience the architectural and cultural significance of the religion. One building has been adapted into a museum, which offers further education outside of the schools for people to learn about Shaker life.

The Shakers have offered American culture numerous important values that have since transcended throughout modern history. The culture has an even greater impact on Harvard, bringing historical significance of the town to the spearhead of its education, economy, architecture, and agriculture. Although the Shaker religion is predominantly unheard of in this country, the implications of the lifestyle of Shakers has led to the further development of a better, more progressive society.

Relevance of Shaker Buildings and Culture to Harvard and America

By: Olivia Lindo

As a prominent religion in early America, the Shakers and their way of life became commonplace in the United States after their arrival from England. This standing in American history gave the Shakers a great deal of impact on American culture and design, which can still be recognized today. Specifically, the Shakers helped to create functional design found throughout the United States, while also instilling cultural morals and ideologies that would become embraced by a Modern America.

To begin, the Shakers, who focused more on ideology than presentation, introduced the idea of simple, functional design elements to US design and architecture. The Shaker lifestyle concentrated predominantly on faith, meaning that worship to Christ came before all else, with the goal being restoration to heaven after death. This meant that there was little interest in materialistic objects, and anything necessary was created with solely functionality in mind. Each piece of furniture and architecture was crafted in a calculated and often geometric nature. The result is a simplistic, sleek design that is incredibly functional while also creating a clean, pleasing aesthetic. This style of design has stayed popular throughout the decades. "Shaker style" furniture is still in high demand today. It is popular for its sturdy, functional design and a look that goes well with a variety of home styles due to its simplicity.

As for culture, the Shakers are often overlooked, despite their large contribution to modern ideology. The Shakers were a pacifistic people who firmly believed in equality of the sexes and races. The separation of the sexes and focus on celibacy of Shaker culture is often seen as an unequal practice through a modern lens, though this forgets the Shakers practice of having

equal positions of power for men and women, as well as the belief that both men and women must work together, and with equal workload, for the community to function smoothly and efficiently.

The idea of a large, thriving historical culture and their impact on the whole of American culture can feel impersonal. It can be easily perceived that these impacts, as wide sweeping as they are, are spread thin over even just the areas of New England they inhabited. This, however, is not true, as the Harvard Shaker Village has had an immense impact on the town of Harvard.

The Harvard Shaker Village has been an attraction of the town since its inception, attracting people to join the village then, and encouraging people to experience Harvard and its history now. Similarly, the Village has become a great teaching tool for the local school system. Hildreth Elementary School students often travel to the village during early American history units to get a close look at the tangible impacts the Shakers made.

The Village has also become a welcoming place for townsfolk and their families to live. Many of the intact Shaker buildings have been converted into homes that are still occupied. These buildings have created a great living environment for current residents; while also keeping the original Shaker building intact, they are a learning resource about Shaker architecture and its functionality.

The Shakers, though often forgotten in modern society, have been an integral part of American culture. Their design was incredibly useful and has held up well into the 21st century, and the same can be said for their progressive views of peace and equality. This foundation can be seen in some way in all American life, but it has held even greater significance in the Town of Harvard, which began from Shakers, who continue to impact the townsfolk to this day.