American Communal Societies Quarterly

Volume 15 | Number 1 Pages 19-32

1-1-2021

Mothers and Daughters at White Water Shaker Village

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American Communal Societies Quarterly

Volume 15, no. 1 — January 2021

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Front cover illustration: *Tony Mathews relaxing on the front steps, Montague Farm.* Photo: Laura Bradley. Collection of the author.

Back cover illustration: *Milking time: writer Jesse Kornbluth and farmer Tony Mathews, Montague, 1969.* Photo: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

From the Editor –

Dear *ACSQ* subscribers,

I am thrilled to announce that I am writing this editorial note from my ACTUAL DESK in my ACTUAL OFFICE (and not in my bedroom).

What better way to start 2021 than with an article about the Shakers' medicated vapour bath! Kerry Hackett is well known to many of us as a researcher of Shaker medical practices and a practicing herbalist. In this article she examines the Shakers' embrace of an innovative therapeutic practice.

Tom Sakmyster, a regular contributor to the *American Communal Societies Quarterly,* and the author of two books published by the Richard W. Couper Press, has once again graced our columns with a piece on mothers and daughters at the White Water, Ohio, Shaker community. Shakers were supposed to eschew natural, or "blood," relations. Sakmyster's article explores the practical effects this had on individuals at White Water.

Finally, *ACSQ* newcomer Tom Fels has contributed a memoir of his time living communally in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Fels is an independent curator and writer specializing in American culture and art. He has worked as consultant to a number of museums, including the Canadian Centre for Architecture, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and the van Gogh Museum, in Amsterdam. In 1986 he was named a Chester Dale Fellow of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and in 1998 a Fletcher Jones Foundation Fellow of the Huntington Library. He currently directs his research and writing toward contemporary American history. He is the founder of the Famous Long Ago Archive at the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst, and the author of several books and articles on the period of the 1960s and its repercussions.

CORRECTIONS

Our diligent readership brought a couple of minor errors to my attention from vol. 14, nos. 3 & 4, the issue focusing on Shaker Revolutionary War Veterans. Douglas Winiarski informed me that the murky story of veteran Joseph Stout (page 307) was even murkier than I thought. Stout was married a second time to a woman named Rosina who died in the faith at UnionVillage. What remains to be discovered (and Winiarski is researching) is whether or not Stout was possibly a bigamist! We await Doug's findings! Also, Roben Campbell informed me that Samuel Blood and Hosea Winchester (page 146) were actually members of the Harvard, Massachusetts, Shaker community, and not Shirley, as I wrote. Thank you, gentle readers, for your attention and welcome corrections!

Best wishes for a safe and healthy spring!
— Christian Goodwillie

"A great blessing to mankind": The Medicated Vapour Bath at the Shaker Community of New Lebanon

Kerry Hackett

Introduction

The profound social transition that marked eighteenth and nineteenth century America was also evident in an intensely pluralistic medical sector. Heir to the theories of English and European immigrants, confronted with the practices of Native Americans, and propelled by the rise of the press, the therapeutic marketplace was a tumultuous sea of practitioners, healthcare literature, and commercial medicines. Of those striving for prominence in this highly competitive field were a group of religious sectarians whose leaders had sailed from England to New York State in 1774 to avoid persecution and begin a new life. Commonly known as the Shakers for the extreme physical manifestations found in their mode of worship, the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing went on to establish nineteen villages from Maine to Kentucky by the mid-1800s.[1]

The Shakers were innovators. Highly successful in community-driven industries as diverse as garden seeds, brooms, chairs, and tanned goods,[2] this communistic society also developed a medicinal herb enterprise that supplied physicians and apothecaries throughout North America[3] as well as "England, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia, Constantinople, Greece, India, Africa, and in fact all parts of the world."[4]

Shaker physicians directed the growth, collection, and production of these herbal products in conjunction with their other duties, including care of the sick. This multifaceted role not only allowed access to people, literature, and materials from outside the faith but also introduced novel healthcare practices to the community. Indeed, Shaker diaries and journals show that over the years brethren and sisters experimented with numerous treatment forms such as humoural medicine, Thomsonianism, hydrotherapy, Grahamism, medical electricity, sea air cure, and taking the waters at various medicinal springs. Yet despite the informal and often inconsistent use of these therapies, one invention appears to have inspired an official commitment between the Society and the "world" (non-Shakers): the "medicated vapour bath."

This commitment was recorded in an 1826 letter between Union Village (O.) and South Union (Ky.). Like many Shaker Ministry communications, it opened with a report from New Lebanon that detailed the general health of its members and introduced the recent "gift" of washing feet. However, following this missive came a note from Eliab Harlow and Garret K. Lawrence, physicians at the lead society. They stated that they had "been in the possession of a Medicated Vapour Bath, obtained of a man by the name of Charles Whitlow from England." Moreover, in union with the Ministry and elders at New Lebanon, these two brothers had procured the patent rights for this invention on behalf of all the Shaker communities in the United States.[5]

This announcement begs several questions: what exactly was the medicated vapour bath and why did this system so impress Harlow and Lawrence? For which conditions was it used and how was it employed? Equally as interesting, who was Charles Whitlaw and what was his relationship to the Shakers? In this paper, I will aim to answer these intriguing questions. Furthermore, I will illustrate that although the Shakers' use of this healthcare device was intimately tied to nineteenth century therapeutics, it was also strongly grounded in a medical understanding that had spanned the previous two millennia.

Charles Whitlaw: botanist, inventor, and chameleon

In November 1824, Scottish botanist Charles Whitlaw (1771-1850) arrived in New York armed with a new invention and a plan to enter the highly competitive American market. This was his third voyage across the Atlantic; already he had established a landscaping enterprise in Manhattan and a reputation as a collector of botanical specimens. Indeed, in 1812 he was credited with the discovery of a new species of nettle: *Urtica whitlawii* (Wood Nettle, now *Laportea canadensis*). Notably, Whitlaw had also patented the use of this plant's fiber as an alternative to flax.[6]

Beyond his botanical talents, Charles Whitlaw displayed an uncanny ability to reinvent himself. In 1814, having sold his share of the aforementioned patent for an incredible $20,000 to $30,000, he set sail for England a very wealthy man. The same year he was nominated for membership in the prestigious Linnaean Society of London; a future as an eminent naturalist appeared to be within his grasp. Unfortunately, his life then took a dramatic turn. Within three months, his sought after membership had been rejected and, perhaps in response, he returned to North America and began to offer horticultural lectures in Canada, New York, and the Southern states as a newly minted "Professor of Botany." This chapter ended in 1819 when Whitlaw headed back to England with

a plan to use American herbs in various medical experiments. He was on the brink of yet another new life.[7]

The following four years were packed with opportunity for this Scottish chameleon. Although he continued to present lectures on botanical topics, it seems that Whitlaw's major aim was the creation of a novel therapeutic system: the medicated vapour bath. Indeed, this invention became the core treatment at the new London-based Medical and Botanical Institute as well as at an asylum for scrofulous patients. Moreover, he marketed a product for scrofula entitled "Whitlaw's American Extract"—all by 1822. It was at this point that his quickly rising star came under fire from the British medical establishment; several vehement attacks were published and he was labeled as an "itinerant quack or vendor of American herbs in London."[8]

Perhaps to cool his opposition, Whitlaw again sailed to New York in November 1824 with the goal of ensuring "a supply of the requisite medicinal herbs adequate to the increasing demands of the Public [which are] in the highest state of perfection." Here began his association with the Shakers.[9]

Two worlds collide

According to Brother Edward Fowler, the New Lebanon community commenced growing, collecting, and processing herbs on an informal basis around 1802. Within twenty years and under the guidance of Eliab Harlow and Garret K. Lawrence, "a more systematic arrangement, and scientific manner" was put into place, which resulted in a rapid increase in herb sales. Given the reputation the Shakers enjoyed for their medicines and Whitlaw's quest for high quality botanical products, it was only a matter of time before the newly transformed "Doc Whitlow" and his wife visited New Lebanon. This they did on November 23, 1824.[10]

Ever the confident and enterprising businessman, Whitlaw had also transported two prototype vapour baths from England to New York. They were designed to treat a number of conditions, including scrofula (swollen lymph nodes), inflammation, respiratory and digestive complaints, fever, cancer, and nervous afflictions. Around the same time, the Shakers had experienced an increase in illness among their members. Records show that those at New Lebanon and Watervliet had been "rather sickly" and subject to influenza and hard colds. Consumption too, had played a part, with approximately one member under twenty-five years of age being lost per month to this disease. In addition, their beloved leader, Mother Lucy Wright had died from "remittent typhus" three years previous and "winter fever" had inflicted an incredible toll upon the Society in 1812 and 1813. It

was therefore unsurprising that the medical team at New Lebanon would show a strong interest in a therapy that was easily accessible, employed available herbs, offered symptomatic relief, and appeared to be effective.[11]

And interest there was—particularly from Eliab Harlow. He seemed, in fact, so eager to share the news of this novel discovery that two days later he and John Dean carried the Whitlaws to Niskayuna to meet Watervliet physician David Miller. Then, in little more than a week, both Harlow and Miller followed "Dr Charles Whitman, celebrated Scottish doctor"[12] back to New York City where they "got directions for a vapour bath, made one at Watervliet and tried it on some of the brethren and sisters."[13] Evidently, a second bath for the New Lebanon community was also constructed; both societies were using this device by January 1825.[14]

The Shaker medical personnel appear to have been well pleased with this new invention. Lawrence and brother physician Abraham Hendrickson referred to it as an "invaluable improvement in the healing art"[15] and praised its ability to reduce both acute and chronic inflammation, relieve obstructed perspiration and remove spasm as well as catarrh. However, they shortly found themselves facing a dilemma: although enthusiastic for this new therapy, Harlow and Lawrence knew that Whitlaw had been selling the rights to a number of prospective buyers, who would in turn open bath institutions across the country. Indeed, the year 1825 saw establishments open in Charleston, Washington, Albany, Boston, and two in New York City. This situation seems to have had the Shaker physicians worried—in the hands of the "world" (non-Shakers), access to the bath might become difficult due to decreased availability and/or exorbitant pricing. Decisive action needed to be taken and taken immediately. Therefore, in union with the New Lebanon Ministry and elders, Harlow and Lawrence made a rather startling decision: they obtained the rights from Whitlaw for all eighteen Shaker communities in the United States. It is unknown whether the Society actually paid for these rights or whether they received them gratis. Nonetheless, the bath was now theirs to use in perpetuity.[16]

The Medicated Vapour Bath

Having sketched a history of the inventor and his introduction to the Shakers, let us turn our attention to the medicated vapour bath itself.

Although Whitlaw did not divulge the details of his bath's construction or treatment methods, we may form an understanding through contemporary publications. Generally speaking, the apparatus was based on an independent boiler fitted with a safety valve. From the boiler, steam passed through a brass tube into the bottom of a metal box divided by a perforated plate. It then travelled across the plate and into an upper

chamber that held a perforated round tin packed with herbs. Once the steam had passed through the plant material it continued via a second tube into a curtained area where the medicated vapour enveloped the seated patient. The temperature was regulated via a thermometer suspended from the same frame that supported the curtains. This simple yet effective system allowed moistened heat and the therapeutic properties of selected herbs to interact with the patient's integumentary (skin) and respiratory systems.[17] The following illustrations published in 1831 further add to our knowledge: figure 1 shows the apparatus employed by Whitlaw at his Medicated Vapour Bath Institution in London and figure 2 shows the apparatus used in America "by Dr. D. T. Coxe, after the plan obtained from Mr. Whitlaw."[18]

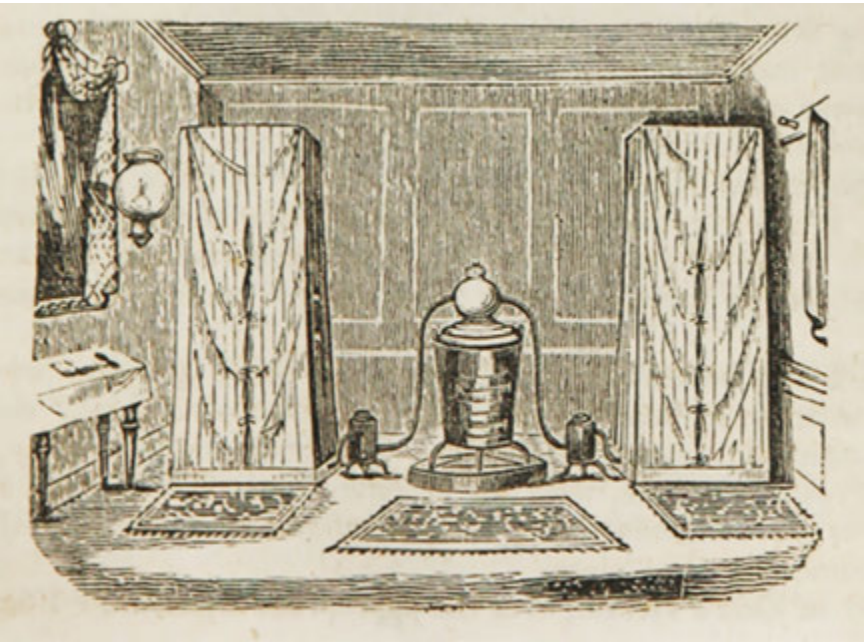

Figure 1: The apparatus employed by Whitlaw at his Medicated Vapour Bath Institution in London. Edward Jukes, *On Digestion and Costiveness with Hints to Both Sexes* (London, England: Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, 1831), 155.

Figure 2: The apparatus "used by Dr. D. T. Coxe, after the plan obtained from Mr. Whitlaw" in America. Wooster Beach, *Beach's American Practice Condensed: Or, the Family Physician* (Boston, Mass.: B. B. Mussey & Co., 1854), 107.

The treatment process

Before experiencing the vapours, patients were required to evacuate their bowels with internal medicines specifically formulated by Whitlaw. Two functions were accomplished by this task: one, given the contemporary belief that steam drew intestinal poisons into the circulation and thus exacerbated illness, it was imperative that the bowels be cleared. Two, it was also understood that these purgative medicines would be drawn to the skin's surface through the act of perspiration, which would in turn cleanse the blood. Therefore, these remedies would not only impact the stomach (primary contact) and the rest of the body (secondary contact) but in addition, affect tissue previously deemed inaccessible.[19]

And indeed, the formulations advertised by Whitlaw (twenty-one extracts and five types of pills) appear to have been frequently prescribed: in 1831 the London Vapour Bath Institution provided 2112 baths and

administered 1205 bottles of medicine, 104 boxes of pills, 139 pots of ointment, and 30 dozens of powders. It is therefore probable that most patients received some form of internal or external medication in addition to the herbs used in the bath itself.[20]

Once the bowels were empty, an assistant helped the patient into the seating area of the bathing apparatus and through the judicious arrangement of curtains the entire naked body or part thereof would receive treatment. At this point, a valve on the boiler would be opened and the temperature inside the curtained space would climb to 100°F to 120°F. Within seconds, profuse perspiration would commence and a constant wiping of the body would allow the pores to be "opened and cleansed." After fifteen to twenty minutes of bathing, the patient would be completely dried by an assistant "with as much friction as possible" before he or she dressed and sat quietly for half an hour with a cup of coffee to restore circulatory balance. Advice was also provided with regards to regimen or diet and repeat appointments were scheduled according to the individual's illness and their rate of recovery.[21]

Whitlaw noted that it was easier to treat those in the "incipient" (early) stage of their condition; once secondary symptoms commenced the protocol became more complex and required repeated visits over time. It was therefore in the patient's best interest to seek this therapy immediately whilst the speed of cure could still offset the expense. Regardless of cost, this invention appears to have been popular. Whitlaw noted that by 1820 he had treated sixty thousand people; a decade later, one New York physician reported that he had provided twenty thousand baths within twenty-six months.[22]

Theory: intake, outflow

Although Whitlaw asserted that his medicated vapour bath was founded on the frequent observation of traditional American Indian "sweats," he also declared that disease could be attributed to "a deranged state of the exhalent arteries of the skin, or follicles immediately under it; and when this insensible exhalation is not present, disease must, to a greater or less degree, supervene." [23] As opposed to confirming the influence of Native American practice, this statement belies a strong tie to the ancient Graeco-Roman use of steam as a therapeutic tool.

Linked to the theory of the four humours where the ever-changing human body relied on a constant balance of the elements hot, cold, wet and dry, it was believed that all channels of elimination must be kept free from obstruction, including the stomach, bowels, kidneys, lungs, womb, and notably, the skin. Moreover, the Greek physician Empedocles (495-

430 BCE) observed that the skin could breathe; like the act of respiration, this tissue allowed "invisible vapours" to be drawn in or pulled out. Thus, the resultant unseen breath (insensible perspiration) rhythmically flowed via the "exhalent arteries" nearest the skin's surface. Furthermore, through a "contiguous sympathy," this phenomenon could profoundly influence the health of the underlying organs. As seen in the work of Sanctorio Sanctorius (1561-1636), insensible perspiration was blocked by cold, dampness, or affectations of the mind, which in turn would bind vapours, congeal humours, and lead to inflammation, fever, and disease. Health was restored when the body was allowed to sweat (sensible perspiration). Recommended medicines to encourage or promote this function were known as diaphoretics and sudorifics.[24]

Interestingly, the use of diaphoretic medicines was also the mainstay of Samuel Thomson (1769-1843), the New Hampshire farmer who patented a novel therapeutic system and penned a best-selling self-help guide for the masses: "New Guide to Health." Ever protective of his patent, Thomson accused Whitlaw of taking his ideas without proper acknowledgement.[25] Former Thomsonian Alva Curtis succinctly expressed these sentiments as follows: "Mr. Whitlaw was a radical steam Doctor, but he did not tell anybody of that, he used the old Roman, or modern Turkish vapour bath, improved in its apparatus and aided by the innocent but powerful medicines of the Physio-Medical system, which Doctor Samuel Thomson, of New Hampshire, pointed out to him."[26]

As Thomson did not choose to prosecute, it is impossible to determine whether Whitlaw was at fault. Nevertheless, both gentlemen had much in common: their respective programmes called for circulatory equalisation, increased bodily heat, and steam as a means to health. However, Thomson's basic system of six remedies produced a raised perspiration through the use of internal medicines, prescribed with or without sweat through dry or moist means. In contrast, Whitlaw's main plank was his medicated vapour steam bath, which used the therapeutic properties of plants to affect the integumentary, digestive, and respiratory systems. Furthermore, the latter's wide variety of formulae showed a close affinity to nineteenth-century patent remedies, whereas Thomson's simple plan relied on ingredients found in most (particularly rural) homes. In addition, both gentlemen sold "rights" to their schemes and kept their therapeutic protocols tightly guarded. Here, the main difference was price: Thomson, through his wide network of agents, offered the use of his system to members of the public for twenty dollars apiece. Whitlaw, on the other hand, focussed on those who would establish their own vapour bath institutions, the cost of which was apparently between one and three thousand dollars! With so much

profit at stake, it is no wonder that these men shrouded their patented information in mystery.[27]

Herbs to medicate the vapour

Unfortunately, this air of mystery also prevents us from knowing precisely which therapeutic materials were employed in the medicated vapour bath. However, in studying Whitlaw's published works, contemporary texts, and Shaker manuscripts, it is possible to make an educated guess.

First, this Scottish inventor was insistent on the use of plant-based substances, confidently stating that his botanical medicines could "only be obtained from the forests of America."[28] He also noted that his apparatus would "hold in suspension the most insoluble properties of plants, even rosin … and being highly charged with the various oils, gums, mucilages, rosins, aromas, and all the various gaseous properties of the herbs, produced the most salutary and instantaneous effects on the constitution."[29]

This quote holds several clues. First, the use of the terms "aromas" and "gaseous properties" is helpful when identifying herbs via their chemical compositions. Second, Whitlaw's 1831 text distinguished a number of medicinal plants by their actions, i.e., the various effects a herb has upon the body. Third, many Shaker catalogues also classified their herbs by action. Finally, accounts show that Whitlaw purchased items from New Lebanon between June 1827 and November 1836. Whilst many of these sales were recorded solely as "medicines," five entries listed six herbs by name. Therefore, by triangulating these resources, we may be able to identify the plants employed in the medicated vapour bath. Table 1 shows the (non-exhaustive) outcome of this investigation.

It should be noted that actions and constituents do not directly correspond, i.e., one herb may display any number of actions, and the effects of each action are due to various chemical constituents. In addition, historical sources may not agree on terminology or the classification of each herb, therefore the information below has been simplified for ease of understanding.[30]

Table 1

Actions NL (1841) Catalogue	**Constituents** Whitlaw (1831 & 1838)	**Treatments** Whitlaw (1831)	**Catalogue** NL (1841)	**Ledger No 1** NL (1827-38) re: Whitlaw
Aromatic	Aromatic		Basil Benzoin Calendula Marjoram Oregano Bee balm Pennyroyal Poplar Saffron S. Savoury Spearmint Sweet flag Thyme	
Demulcent	Glutinous Mucilage		Coltsfoot Elecampane Hollyhock Ground ivy Marshmallow Parsley Sarsaparilla Solomon's seal	Superfine Elm
Diaphoretic	Aromatic Volatile	Germander Pennyroyal Skullcap	Lemon balm Borage Hyssop	Southernwood Hyssop Bugle
Sudorific	Aromatic Volatile	"Sudorific" (8)	Boneset Cleavers Elderflowers Pleurisy root Valerian Blue vervain	

The category known as "volatile oils" is responsible for the aroma, taste, and therapeutic actions of a particular herb. For instance, these constituents have the ability to raise body temperature (diaphoretic, sudorific), relieve spasmodic conditions (antispasmodic), clear congested respiratory passages (expectorant), reduce inflammation (anti-inflammatory), promote calmness and sleep (nervine, soporific), improve digestion (carminative, aromatic),

and help heal cuts and wounds (antibacterial, antiseptic). As the name suggests, these oils are highly volatile and are therefore easily dispersed via hot water vapour.[31]

Whitlaw also referred to plants that were glutinous and/or contained mucilage; the action provided by this constituent class is known as "demulcent." These herbs have traditionally been employed to soothe irritated mucous membrane surfaces such as the sinuses, mouth, throat, stomach, and intestinal tract. Given the actions listed above, it is likely that plants which contained volatile oils and mucilaginous herbs would have been employed in the treatment of respiratory, digestive, and integumentary complaints. It is therefore quite possible that herbs with high levels of these chemicals (i.e., those in Table 1) formed the core of Whitlaw's protocol.[32]

The Shakers and Charles Whitlaw

Having ascertained an image of the bath and its associated protocol, let us now focus on the New Lebanon physicians and their relationship with Charles Whitlaw. This association was anchored on at least two fronts: their mutual interest in the business of buying and selling herbs, and the medicated vapour bath.

As mentioned, these parties first made their acquaintance in November 1824 when the Scottish inventor arrived in New York in search of herbs "of the highest perfection." Within a short period of time, Whitlaw found himself at New Lebanon, hoping perhaps, that the Shaker's packaged "vegetable medicines" held the key. Indeed, Whitlaw's statement that his herbs were "prepared and packed in a peculiar manner, well calculated to retain their full physical powers unimpaired for a considerable length of time" [33] may well be an allusion to the products produced by the Shakers. Moreover, the "peculiar manner" here noted might refer to the one-ounce "cakes" (bundled in pound lots or sixteen to a package) prepared and sold at New Lebanon and Watervliet apparently by 1820 or 1821. However, one wonders if this date is entirely correct. Is it possible that the size of these blocks may owe a debt to Charles Whitlaw?

The medicated vapour bath included a "cistern" which was "three and a half in length, two in breadth and about fourteen inches in depth" and was divided by a perforated plate into two sections: the lower portion where the steam entered from the main boiler, and an upper area which held "a round tin box also perforated." Whitlaw corroborated this description by noting his herbs were "enclosed in a condensing box." Given that a one-ounce herb "cake" produced at both Watervliet and New Lebanon measured 1⅝ by 3¼ by ⅞ inches, it is intriguing to contemplate whether

these blocks were originally manufactured to accompany this novel apparatus. Further research is needed on this topic.[34]

The second point of connection between the New Lebanon Shakers and Charles Whitlaw centered on the latter's vapour bath. Three letters were penned by Harlow, Lawrence, and Hendrickson, two of which were filled with praise, stating that "in cases of obstructed perspiration it is unquestionably the safest and best remedy we have ever seen"[35] and the bath brought on "a free and easy universal perspiration, [it is] the most expeditious method we have ever tried."[36] Remembering the aforementioned theory of insensible perspiration, these phrases offer clues as to why the bath was believed to provide comprehensive relief. In addition, the third letter listed the wide variety of cases treated by this system: "obstinate obstructions of the uterus, obstinate and long standing rheumatism, deafness, hydrothorax (pleural effusion), hydrops pericardii (pericardial effusion), anasarca (oedema), erysipelas, chlorosis (anaemia), sciatica, wounded nerve, etc."[37] Thus, one might surmise that Whitlaw's plan was highly valued and considered to be an important tool in Shaker healthcare. But was it? What evidence do we have of its use?

Vapour baths and journals

Although this invention first made its appearance at New Lebanon in late 1824, the term "vapour bath" surprisingly does not appear in their records until 1829. However, terminology may here be at fault. As diaries tend to reflect the voice of their authors, language can be inconsistent both within a single manuscript and/or across a given community. For example, several journals at New Lebanon describe an infirm brother or sister going to the Second house to be "steamed," have a "sweat," receive a "vapour bath" or take a course of hydropathy (water cure). However, it was also not uncommon for authors to combine their terms, i.e., "hydropathy sweat" or "take a thorough sweat in the vapour bath."[38] Therefore, we should be aware that records using the words vapour bath, steam, sweat, and hydropathy may imply several concepts: general or vague allusions to the use of water for therapeutic purposes, entirely differentiated therapies, interchangeable designations, or the same treatment with four separate titles.

If, in fact, the words steam, sweat, and hydropathy all refer to Whitlaw's invention, none appear in a New Lebanon journal until 1827, 1831, and 1844 respectively—the earliest, a full two years after the new system made its debut. This gives rise to a paradox: although the initial reaction of Brothers Harlow, Lawrence, and Hendrickson was (as we have seen) overwhelmingly positive, why were the New Lebanon diaries silent

on its use? One might think that as a noteworthy and novel event, the bath's introduction and early employment would have been recorded. Unfortunately, we can only speculate. Perhaps despite the enthusiastic response of the Shaker doctors, those who penned the surviving diaries felt otherwise or believed that this phenomenon fell solely within the former's domain. Indeed, the letter that announced the procurement of the patented rights was appended to correspondence from the lead Ministry, not found within the main body itself. Diarists also may have had other items to record such as the loss of one Shaker community in 1825 (Savoy, Mass.) and the birth of another in 1826 (Sodus Bay, N.Y.). Alternately, following the initial flurry of excitement, it may be that the medicated vapour bath became just one more option within the Shaker infirmary, alongside emesis, purging, medical electricity, sea air cure, Thomsonianism, and taking the waters at various springs. Nonetheless, Whitlaw's bath did experience continual, albeit intermittent use—and it appears in the New Lebanon records at least until 1861. Further research is also needed in this area.[39]

Conclusion

The direct business relationship between Whitlaw and the New Lebanon physicians seems to have lasted until September 1844. Unfortunately, from 1836 onward, both parties experienced personal difficulties. The Scottish inventor fell into a series of public arguments with his nephew (and business partner), which resulted in Whitlaw moving his London practice to another part of the city. This affair was later followed by financial losses in America and England and a bout of severe illness. The Shakers too suffered a critical blow in early 1837 with the death of physician Garret K. Lawrence. A strong supporter of the bath since its introduction, it was Lawrence who had been instrumental in pursuing the rights from Whitlaw and had also co-authored three letters in its support.[40] Nevertheless, Whitlaw and his wife did return to New Lebanon in 1843 and apparently conversed with Lawrence's successor, Barnabas Hinckley. The following August, the Whitlaws again visited the lead society for what may have been the last time and transported an unknown number of Shaker publications back to England.[41]

Therefore, for nearly two decades the personal association between Charles Whitlaw and the New Lebanon Shakers had been one of mutual benefit: the former saw his invention placed in up to eighteen new venues, received three glowing testimonials, and purchased countless packaged herbs "of the highest perfection." The latter gained increased herb sales and a therapeutic system that brought "permanent relief" to suffering

members, particularly those with respiratory complaints. Indeed, as a regulator of "insensible perspiration," the bath and its use of steam proved invaluable to the Shakers—as it had for countless patients over the previous two millennia. Moreover, the documented use of this apparatus over a minimum of thirty-seven years shows that the faith and enthusiasm exhibited by the early New Lebanon physicians was sustained over time, as was the belief that the medicated vapour bath was a "great blessing to mankind."[42]

Notes

[1] Edward D. Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (New York, N.Y.: Dodd, Mead, 1953); Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992).

[2] Edward D. Andrews, *The Community Industries of the Shakers* (New York, N.Y.: University of the State of New York, 1933).

[3] Amy Bess Miller, *Shaker Herbs: A History and a Compendium* (New York, N.Y.: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1976); Andrews, *Community Industries*.

[4] A. B. Miller, *Shaker Herbs*, 52.

[5] Union Village, O., Ministry to South Union, Ky., Ministry, April 16, 1826, Shaker Manuscripts, Western Reserve Historical Society (hereafter OClWHi) IV:B 35.

[6] E. Charles Nelson, "Charles Whitlaw (né Whitly) (1771-1850): Botanist, Horticulturalist, Charlatan and Quack," *Archives of Natural History* 40, no. 1 (2013): 94-96, DOI: 10.3366/anh.2013.0139.

[7] Nelson, "Charles Whitlaw," 97-98.

[8] Ibid., 94, 98; N. A., *Asylum for the Care of Scrofula and Glandular Diseases, upon the Medical Principles of Charles Whitlaw* (London, England: Printed by F. Warr, 1824), archive.org e-book, 8.

[9] N. A., *Asylum*, 23-24.

[10] A. B. Miller, *Shaker Herbs*, 28; Joseph Bennet, A Domestic Journal of Domestic Occurrences Kept Originally by Joseph Bennet, and then by Isaac Crouch, Nicholas Bennet, Issac N. Youngs and John M. Brown, November 23, 1824, OClWHi V:B 68.

[11] Thomas Gill, *The Technical Repository Containing Practical Information on Subjects Connected with Discoveries and Improvements in the Useful Arts* (London, England: T. Cadell, Strand, 1827), 10:124, googlebooks; Charles Whitlaw, *A Treatise on the Causes and Effects of Inflammation, Fever, Cancer, Scrofula, and Nervous Affections* (London, England: Published by the Author, 1831), 173; New Lebanon, N.Y., Ministry to Union Village, O., Ministry, July 30, 1825, OClWHi IV:A 34; New Lebanon, N.Y., Ministry to South Union, Ky., Ministry, February 14, 1821, OClWHi IV:A 34; New Lebanon, N.Y., Ministry to Union Village, O., Ministry, February 26, 1813, OClWHi IV:A 32.

[12] Bennet, et al., A Domestic Journal, November 25, 1824.

[13] Ibid., December 6, 1824.

[14] Freegift Wells, Detailed Records of the Church at Watervliet, N.Y., December 4, 1824, OClWHi V:B 279.

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Mothers and Daughters at White Water Shaker Village

Thomas Sakmyster

One of the core beliefs of the Shakers was that only by making a firm commitment to a life of purity and piety as a member of a community of Believers could an individual escape the sinfulness of the world and properly prepare for salvation. This required that individuals sever ties with their natural, biological families and become a member of a new spiritual family, which would offer the love and emotional support that natural family members had formerly provided. Perhaps because of the realization that it would be difficult to break the bonds between husband and wife and parents and their children, Shaker leaders often used harsh language in urging Believers to love their "gospel relations" and renounce their natural kin. This can be seen in a remarkable stanza from the Shaker song "Gospel Relation:"

> Of all the relation that ever I see
> My old fleshly kindred are furthest from me,
> So bad and so ugly, so hateful they feel
> To see them and hate them increases my zeal.
> O how ugly they look!
> How ugly they look!
> How nasty they feel![1]

James Whittaker, one of the more uncompromising of the early Shaker leaders, took these words to heart. In a letter to his relatives who had refused to embrace Shakerism, he denounced their "fleshly lives" and declared that they were "a stink in my nostrils."[2] But even if all Believers understood the need to separate themselves from family members who remained in the world, many, perhaps most, found it impossible to think of former loved ones as "ugly" or "nasty." It must also have been difficult for some to abide fully and faithfully by the rules designed to break down the bonds of natural families whose members had become Believers. Typically, an effort was made to place husband and wife in different Shaker families and their children in a separate Children's Order. But in the smaller Shaker societies, such as White Water, which is the focus of this study, this was not always possible, and frequent interaction between natural family members was inevitable, especially if they spent considerable time together in the Gathering or Novitiate Order.

The traditional family relationship that was no doubt most resistant to the kind of disruption required by life in a communitarian Shaker society was that between mother and daughter. This must have been particularly the case in the early years of the Shaker movement in the West, for family and kinship relationships among women were a critical factor in coping with the hardships of life in Ohio and Kentucky in the first half of the nineteenth century. Women, as grandmothers, aunts, mothers, and daughters, were vitally important to each other in sharing the work load, raising children, and coping with economic and marital problems.[3] This article is an investigation of the ways in which these intense emotional and practical ties between mothers and daughters were affected when one or more members of a family made a commitment to join the Shakers.

Although most of the records of White Water village, which was founded in 1823, were destroyed in a devastating fire in 1907, a sufficient number of membership lists and certain other related sources are available to make possible an examination of the position of, and relationship between, mothers and daughters in the first half of the nineteenth century, the period when Shakerism was probably the most dynamic American communal movement. In doing so I have focused on three ways in which the mother-daughter relationship was transformed when one or more family members joined a Shaker society. First, when a mother and one or more daughters became and remained Believers; second, when a mother became a Believer, but her daughter either left White Water or never joined; and third, when a daughter was a Shaker at White Water but her mother had either left the society or had died.

The number of Believers at White Water in the mid-1820s was about one hundred. Almost half of these belonged mainly to three local kinship groups, the Agnews, McKees, and Boggetts. Six married couples bearing these names joined, bringing with them large numbers of children. By the mid-1830s the membership had fallen to about seventy-five, in part because of the departure of a sizable number who refused to sign the first covenant, which was presented at White Water in 1830. Surprisingly, among married couples who joined White Water in the 1820s, it was more often the wife who resisted signing the covenant and wished to break away from the Shakers. For example, Charlotte and Martin Simmons were among the earliest White Water converts, but when Martin died in the late 1820s, Charlotte withdrew from the society with her seven children.[4] Several instances are known of husbands who were reluctant to accede to their wives' pleas to have the whole family return to the "world." Sometimes this led to the separation of the couple and the complete rupturing of family ties. In one case, described more fully below, some of the children

remained with the father at White Water and some departed with their mother. In other cases, as occurred with Manley and Fanny Sherman, the father, who had legal authority over the children, insisted on keeping the children at White Water. The Shermans had arrived at White Water in 1827 after the disbandment of the failed Shaker colony of West Union in Indiana. By 1830 Fanny was resolved to leave, but she had to depart on her own, for Manley, oblivious to her tearful pleas, insisted on staying and having their children raised as Shakers.[5]

From surviving source materials it is possible to draw a broad statistical overview of the mother-daughter relationships at White Water in the first half of the nineteenth century.[6] Leaving out individuals who were at White Water only for a brief time, the lists for the early 1830s contain the names of twenty-one girls or young women, ranging in age from six to twenty-seven. Of these, only six had mothers living at White Water.[7] Surprisingly, among these mothers, who were three in number, not a single one bore the name of Agnew or McKee. Four mothers of the six original White Water families had become "turnbacks" (individuals who left a Shaker society) and one had died. Perhaps the most notable thing about these six daughters whose mothers were with them at White Water was that, except for two siblings who left or died before1850, all remained faithful Shakers until the 1860s or later. Three of them, Hannah Boggett, Eliza McGuire, and Lucy Woodward, in time took on leadership roles. In fact, Hannah Boggett was the first convert from the local area to be appointed to the Elder Order.

Hannah Boggett's mother, Margaret (Peggy) is the only woman at White Water in this period known to have had a daughter, Phebe, who was a non-Shaker. Phebe and her husband had left White Water before 1830 and moved to Tennessee. This had caused Peggy Boggett, who was a very devout and committed Believer, much sorrow, especially since Phebe for a time apparently broke off all contact with her mother, perhaps because she was unwilling to listen to further pleas that she and her husband return to White Water. In a letter in 1830 Peggy Boggett expressed her dismay at the breach that had opened between them, although her "parental affection" prevented her from scolding her daughter.[8] Perhaps there were additional reasons for the estrangement between mother and daughter in this case, but their differing attitudes towards the Shakers seemed to be the primary cause.

The mothers of the other fifteen girls or young women at White Water in the early 1830s had either died, were "turnbacks," or had never lived in a Shaker society.[9] In other words, they almost all came from families that can be described as unstable or even traumatized.[10] In the cases where the

mother had died, the daughter was usually taken to White Water by her father or another relative. Such was the case with Louisiana Stroud (1818-1873), whose mother had died in 1823. Her father, Reese, brought her and several siblings to White Water in 1827 as part of the transfer of Believers from West Union. Reese Stroud stayed on for seven years, but, as Louisiana later expressed it, he failed "to receive much sap and nourishment from the true vine" and "dropped off as a withered branch." When he left in 1834 he took all his children with him, except Louisiana, who refused to go. So Louisiana was "left alone, having not one of my natural kindred remaining with me." But this didn't discourage her; indeed, as she later wrote, "not for one moment did my soul desire the vain pleasures they were pursuing. I love the way of God, & I love my precious gospel relations, they have labored for the good of my soul, have taught me the way of salvation … and with them I will spend my days, for they possess the true riches of Heaven."[11]

The case of Phebe (Phoebe) Agnew (1819-1912) is somewhat different. Her parents were one of the few in the Agnew clan that had chosen not to become affiliated with the Shakers. However, on her deathbed in 1832 Phebe's mother expressed the wish that her children be placed in the care of Believers at White Water. When the relatives who were given custody of the children were reluctant to comply, Phebe, who may have been influenced by several of her cousins who were at White Water, insisted that she be allowed to join the Shakers, for she felt that "nothing but tribulation, sorrow, and disappointment awaited me in the world." Eventually she broke down the resistance of her relatives, took up residence at White Water, and in 1835, at the very young age of fifteen, signed the covenant.[12]

Perhaps the most remarkable cohort of girls and young women at White Water were those who chose to remain there in the 1830s in opposition to their mothers who were "turnbacks" or in a few cases had never been members of a Shaker society. Nancy McKee's parents had joined the Shakers when White Water was first established, but became disenchanted and left after about one year. However, they continued to live on their farm near White Water. Nancy apparently was on good terms with her mother, but the one year with the Shakers had made a great impression on her and, as she later wrote, her "soul's desire was to be among believers." On Sundays she would walk to a place sufficiently close to the White Water meeting house so that she could "hear them sing and labor." Eventually her mother yielded to her pleas and allowed her to rejoin the Shakers. She was fourteen at the time. [13] In 1835 she signed the covenant and was to remain at White Water until her death in 1894. Nothing further is known of her relationship with her natural family.

In four other cases the conflict between mother and daughter was more pronounced. In the mid-1820s two sisters, Lavina (born 1813) and Emeline Jackson (1816) arrived at White Water with their mother, whose husband had recently died. But their mother, as Emeline later recorded, "became dissatisfied with the cross, and [was] unwilling to obey her faith." In 1831 she decided to leave, perhaps because she could not bring herself to sign the covenant. Whether the mother tried to take her children with her at this time is unclear, but her daughters were adamant in their refusal to leave. Emeline later wrote: "I then resolved in my own mind, never to follow her, but to obey my faith, and stand for myself; this I have been able to do, by walking in obedience to my visible Lead. I have been taught the way of God, and directed in my duty; Yea, I have found kind friends in the gospel, that are able to help me out of my loss, and plant in my soul a feeling of love and respect for the precious way of God, which shall increase with my days on earth." Later the mother sent "pressing invitations" to her daughters, advising them that if they became dissatisfied they should come and live with her again. She offered "many allurements" but Lavina and her sister Emeline "never for one moment felt inclined to leave the way of God, and his people, to follow her."[14]

The case of Hortincy Brown (1819) is perhaps even more poignant. When her father either died or abandoned the family in the early 1820s, her mother took her to live in a Shaker village (possibly Union Village). But after two years her mother left, leaving Hortincy behind. So during the formative years from the age of six to twelve, she was raised in a Shaker society. But then her mother returned and, as Hortincy later wrote, "in a very wicked spirit took me away against every feeling of my soul." By this time she felt no connection to her mother, who, she later declared, was "like a stranger to me." She bitterly resented being removed from her Shaker home, and cried out against her mother, who, trembling with "rage and malice," thrust her into the wagon. At her new home Hortincy was miserable. She felt her mother was treating her in a "very harsh and unnatural" manner, and pleaded in vain to be allowed to return to her "true home" with the Shakers: "My cries and lamentations were distinctly heard a quarter of a mile … from the place where I had been taken." When economic problems eventually overwhelmed Hortincy's mother, she relented and took not only Hortincy, but also her four siblings, to White Water. It was there that Hortency seemed to find contentment and, as she wrote in 1841, intended "to continue to the end of my days in this great & wonderful work of God."[15]

A third case of a conflict between a mother and daughter at White Water bears some similarity to the one involving Hortincy Brown and

her mother. However, it is undoubtedly one of the darkest chapters in the history of the Ohio Shakers. Rhoda Howard, who was born in 1801, had been raised from infancy by the Shakers at Union Village, the home of the central ministry for the western Shaker societies. In the spring of 1829 it was discovered that she was pregnant and, according to a Union Village diarist, she thereupon "eloped," that is, departed for the "world."[16] She went to live with a sister and on August 22 gave birth to a daughter, Phoebe. In the autumn of that year Rhoda, with her infant in her arms, showed up at White Water Village She was taken in, but stayed only a few months. In early 1830 she departed, leaving Phoebe behind to be cared for by the Shakers. Mother and daughter would not be united again until many years later. In 1838 Rhoda married Roger Easton, a former Shaker from Union Village, and in 1845 the couple apparently decided to "rescue" Phoebe from the Shakers. But Phoebe, who was now sixteen years old and a committed Believer, felt no attachment to her biological mother and adamantly refused to leave. Nonetheless Rhoda Easton managed to take her away, "very much against her will." But Phoebe quickly made her unhappiness clear, even threatening to take her own life unless she was returned to her Shaker home. Rhoda finally relented, and took Phoebe not to White Water but to Union Village, perhaps because Rhoda's elderly mother was still living there. Phoebe was thankful "to get back among believers again," but preferred to return to White Water. There she resumed her immersion in Shaker life, becoming an eldress in 1856. In 1861 she moved to Watervliet Village, near Dayton, Ohio, where she died in 1861.[17]

Surviving Shaker records offer only the bare outline of the story involving Rhoda Howard and her daughter, leaving unexplained how Rhoda could have become pregnant while living at Union Village, why she went to White Water village after giving birth to Phoebe, and why she then left for the "world" and abandoned her baby. Persuasive answers to these questions were offered in 1847 by Joanna Hollaway (née Wallace), who in the late 1840s wrote several newspaper articles in which she recalled incidents from her early life as a Shaker, including her tenure as eldress at White Water. Joanna Wallace was taken by her parents to live at Union Village in 1805. She and Rhoda Howard were of roughly the same age and apparently became good friends while growing up together in the Children's Order. Wallace must have impressed the society's leaders with her devotion and leadership potential, for in 1828 she was sent to White Water to serve as a junior eldress. She would thus have been on hand to witness the events involving Rhoda and her baby.[18]

According to Wallace's account,[19] Rhoda Howard was seduced by a Union Village trustee, Daniel B., who forced his "inordinate affections" on her.[20] When Howard's pregnancy became known, the elders insisted that she leave the society and have her baby elsewhere. But after Howard gave birth while living at her sister's house, the Union Village elders began to worry that she would take legal action to force the Shakers to pay her some compensation for maintenance of the child. Daniel B. was apparently instructed to deal with the matter. His solution to the problem was to lure Rhoda Howard away from her sister's home by implying that he was now prepared to marry her. Instead he took her in a wagon and dropped her off at a place close to White Water Village. He told her the Shakers there were ready to welcome her and her child. Seeing no other alternative, Howard proceeded to walk with her baby to White Water Village and asked to be taken in. Finding that Joanna Wallace was a junior eldress there, Howard soon told her story to her friend. Wallace was appalled to hear how Rhoda had been treated, and to find that the Shaker leaders at White Water were apparently prepared to join the Union Village Ministry in their plan to hush up the incident. Letters exchanged by Howard with members of her biological family were carefully scrutinized by the elders to make sure that she and her relatives were not plotting to take legal action against the Shakers. A few months after Howard's arrival, the White Water elders decided to take more definitive action. Eldress Joanna was instructed to bring Howard before the elders, who presented her with a legal document to sign, according to which she promised "never to bring debt, blame or damage against any persons living at Union Village." Rhoda Howard at first refused to sign, but the elders persisted and eventually, with tears in her eyes, she complied. In her despondency and desperation, she decided to make a complete break with the Shakers. She left White Water and abandoned her baby, perhaps feeling that she would be forever hounded by Shakers if she tried to take Phoebe with her.

This incident had a shattering impact on Joanna Wallace as well. Up to then she had been a committed Shaker who seemed destined for a leading role at Union Village. But she was "horror-struck" by the way Rhoda Howard had been treated. With a growing realization that she had been unwittingly complicit in this injustice and thus a "slave to idolatry," she soon asked to be allowed to return to Union Village. She remained there for about a year, mulling her future. Finally, in June 1831, she too made her break with the Shakers. For many years she did not speak or write publicly about her experience as a Believer, feeling honor-bound to comply with the maxim that "turnbacks" should never speak ill of Shakers. But in 1847, outraged at what she regarded as highly deceptive articles in

a newspaper published at Union Village, she wrote (as Joanna Hollaway) several newspaper articles in which she endeavored to alert the public to the true nature of Shakerism, describing their leaders as "wolves dressed in sheepskins." The Shaker movement, she insisted, was a "despotism" that violated the "liberty of conscience" and relied on "lying and deceit."[21] At around the same time Rhoda Howard (using her married name Rhoda Easton) also broke her silence, feeling it to be her duty to join other ex-Shakers who were now revealing the "cruelty, ignorance, superstition, and idolatry" to which they were subjected when growing up at Union Village. She did not, however, relate the story involving her daughter Phoebe, merely stating that the way the Shakers treated her was "far more cruel and abusive than I have revealed or ever will try to reveal, for it is a painful subject to contemplate—every nerve gives way and my heart bursts with grief."[22]

A final example of a disrupted mother-daughter relationship involves two of the most remarkable individuals in the history of White Water village, Miriam McKee Agnew and her daughter Hannah. In 1823 Miriam and her husband Joseph took the initiative in bringing the first Shaker preachers to Whitewater. Miriam, a determined and independent-minded woman, walked by herself eighteen miles to Union Village and was so impressed by what she saw and heard that she immediately confessed her sins and thus became the first White Water convert. She proceeded to persuade many of her fellow McKees and Agnews to join. Yet during the remainder of the 1820s as the White Water society was being established and consolidated, Miriam Agnew appears to have played no part. In fact, one can infer that she soon became disenchanted with the Shaker experiment. By the late 1820s her opposition to the conduct and decisions of the elders who had been assigned to White Water was so strong that she refused to sign the covenant that was presented to the Believers in 1830. [23]

Miriam Agnew's dissidence had a shattering impact on her family. When her husband, Joseph, expressed his desire to sign the covenant and remain at White Water, the couple agreed to separate in a kind of amicable divorce. The children were apparently given a choice of staying at White Water or leaving with their mother to settle in Indiana. Three daughters and two sons decided to leave with their mother, but two daughters, Marietta (1818-?) and Hannah (1819-1905), chose to remain at White Water and become fully covenanted Believers. Clearly these two daughters had been sufficiently won over to Shaker ideals that they were willing to accept a separation from their mother that was likely to be permanent. Nothing is known of Marietta's motivation. She remained at White Water until 1844, at which time she removed to Union Village. In 1861 she left

and married a Shaker brother from Union Village.[24]

A good deal more is known about Hannah Agnew. She was an intelligent girl who emerged from the Shaker school at White Water with excellent writing skills and an artistic flair. She had many friends and apparently had found spiritual and emotional contentment. In 1836, however, she was thrown into emotional turmoil when, after intense deliberations, the White Water elders selected her to be a travel companion to Joanna Mitchell, a Shaker returning to her eastern home. The latter had declared that she had received a "privilege" from the Central Ministry in New Lebanon to take back with her to the East one of the young sisters who was "a sample of the fruits of White Water." This decision caused considerable lamentation at White Water, for Hannah Agnew was much liked and admired.[25] Although she agreed to go if this was indeed the "gift," she was overcome with sorrow and despair, as can be seen in the remarkable travel journal she kept as the party made its way to Mt. Lebanon.[26] An aspiring poet, Hannah composed lyrics that expressed her pain on leaving her home of White Water, that "quiet peaceful shore." The world, she wrote, is "quite too sad for me," for it deeply pained her to be separated from her friends at White Water, whom she loved dearly.

However, at no point in her journal did Hannah express dismay that she would probably never again see her mother or father. She clearly had imbibed the message of the Shaker hymn cited earlier: "My gospel relations are dearer to me, than all the flesh kindred that ever I see." Hannah Agnew spent the rest of her life in the East, where she served as eldress in three different societies and at her death in 1905 was called "one of the stalwarts of the faith."[27] However, in 1856 she was able to make a brief return visit to White Water. Her father apparently retained a flicker of devotion to his "flesh kindred," for he arranged a one-day family reunion at White Water at which Hannah was able to meet with her mother and some of her siblings. Nothing is known of the sentiments expressed at this reunion, but for Hannah it seemed far less important and emotionally satisfying than the opportunity to see once again the friends she had left behind at White Water. In a journal she kept on this return to the West, Hannah wrote with delight of a picnic she went on with her childhood Shaker sisters, whom she had not seen for twenty years. Yet in the journal there is no mention of her reunion with her parents. In a poem she wrote on her departure from White Water, " A Farewell to White Water," she referred to the "kindred of my native land," by which she clearly meant members of her Shaker and not her biological family.[28]

The example of Hannah Agnew demonstrates how powerful the influence of Shaker doctrines was at White Water in the first two

decades after its establishment, especially on girls and young women. The difference between adult women and girls and young women in this respect is noteworthy. Although many adult women made an initial commitment to White Water in the early or mid-1820s, by 1830 most of them, like Miriam Agnew, had become disillusioned and left. But many of their daughters, who had been raised in a Shaker environment in their formative years, chose to remain as Believers. Any former attachment to their natural family, especially to their mothers, had been severed and a new bond was established with their "gospel relations." The result was a peculiar demographical situation at White Water in the mid-1830s: there were only a few adult women with children living at White Water, and a disproportionately large number of girls and young women whose mothers had died or were apostates.

The existence of this large pool of girls and young women whose mothers were not present was to prove significant beginning in 1838 when the intense spiritual activity known as the Era of Manifestations began at White Water.[29] Of the seven so-called visionists known to be active at White Water, all were girls or young women from this cohort, with one possible exception.[30] No doubt Hannah Agnew would also have been a visionist had she remained at White Water, since she was very active as an instrument in the Era of Manifestations at her new Shaker home, New Lebanon. There were three young women without mothers at White Water who did not become visionists, but in each case another close relative was present or the mother had only recently died. Furthermore, not one of the six girls or young women whose mothers were present at White Water became visionists.

Several tentative conclusions might be drawn from these facts. It would seem that those girls or young women who came from broken families and whose mothers were not present at White Water were psychologically predisposed to become spiritual instruments. Perhaps, as Carol Medlicott has suggested, serving as a "spiritual seer" was "one way for lonely and disenfranchised young women to gain status."[31] It may also be that these girls and young women unconsciously sensed that the motherly love and emotional support that was missing from their lives could be obtained through the intense and ecstatic experiences available to a spiritual instrument. Above all, as the Believers of White Water learned from reports about manifestations at other Shaker societies, visionists had the special privilege of close spiritual contact with Mother Ann. Like a biological mother, Mother Ann offered her daughters emotional support, gave them delightful, albeit imaginary, gifts, showed them heavenly splendors, and provided spiritual guidance for the future. That they apparently had been

singled out to have a special relationship with Mother Ann was deeply gratifying to the visionists, as can be seen in the declarations of testimony that they wrote in 1841.

Why were young women whose biological mothers were present at White Water not drawn into spiritualist activity as visionists or instruments? It seems that having "fleshly kindred" at hand, even if Shaker strictures on the severing of close ties between members of a biological family were enforced, acted as a kind of restraint. Perhaps these young women did not feel such an acute emotional need for the kind of motherly affection that a spiritual connection with Mother Ann could bestow. But the fact that a young woman did not play a direct role in the spiritual activity during the era of manifestations did not, of course, suggest that they had a lesser commitment as Believers. As has been seen, when a mother and her daughters were present at White Water in the 1830s, the daughters almost invariably remained life-long Shakers and in many cases played leading roles in the society. With those who became visionists the opposite was the case. In 1841 one of them, Hortincy Brown, wrote that she intended "to continue to the end of my days in this great & wonderful work of God." Yet by 1850 she and all but two of the other seven visionists had become apostates, as had Eldress Eunice Sering, the only older woman at White Water who had claimed a special relationship with Mother Ann during the Era of Manifestations.[32] Several of the visionists eloped with and married brothers from White Water.

All of this suggests a great irony. The Shaker insistence on the superiority of "gospel relations" over "fleshly kindred" had a highly disruptive effect on many families, particularly on the relationship between parents and children. All too often the result was bitterness and estrangement between family members, including, as we have seen, mothers and daughters. It is true that at White Water many young women who accepted and even exalted in the rejection of their natural family and embrace of their spiritual family played leading roles in the exhilarating atmosphere of the Era of Manifestations. But once that excitement had died down, their own fervor and commitment withered away as well, and they eventually left White Water. On the other hand, those women whose mothers and other close female relatives were also Believers tended to become more stable and durable Shakers. The insistence of Shaker purists on the need to renounce one's natural family thus was probably counterproductive, not to mention the fact that at times it proved to be a very destabilizing factor in family life. The findings of this case study of mothers and daughters at White Water also seem to support Priscilla Brewer's contention that even though biological families were separated in a Shaker society, "natural relations"

were sometimes informally preserved. The resulting "kinship networks," she argues, helped to create stability in a Shaker society and were "a key factor in the early success of the sect."[33] In the case of White Water this can be seen in the fact that those girls and young women whose mothers (or in some cases grandmothers or aunts) were also at White Water were the most likely to make and keep a life-long commitment to Shakerism.

Notes

[1] The full text of "Gospel Relation" is found in Edward D. Andrews, *The Gift to be Simple. Songs, Dances and Rituals of the American Shakers* (New York: Dover Publications, 1940), 20.

[2] Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America. A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven: Yale U. P., 1992), 35-36.

[3] Tamara G. Miller, "'Those With Whom I Feel Most Nearly Connected': Kinship and Gender in Early Ohio," in *Midwestern Women: Work Community, and Leadership at the Crossroads*, eds. Lucy Eldersweld Murphy and Wendy Hammand Venet (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 130-31; and Lindy Cummings, "'A Promising Little Society': Kinship and Community among the White Water Shakers, 1824-1850," Master's thesis, Miami University (Oxford, Ohio), 2010.

[4] *The Shakers of White Water, Ohio, 1823-1916*, edited by James R. Innis Jr. and Thomas Sakmyster (Clinton, N.Y.: Richard W. Couper Press, 2014), 22-23.

[5] This story was later told by Joanna Hollaway (née Wallace), who was an eldress at White Water in the late 1820s: "Further Corruptions of Shakerism," *Advent Harbinger* 15, no. 1 (June 29, 1847): 6. Fanny Sherman's situation bears some resemblance to the better-known case of Mary Dyer. See Elizabeth A. De Wolfe, *Shaking the Faith: Women, Family, and Mary Marshall Dyer's Anti-Shaker Campaign, 1815-1867* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

[6] A White Water membership list for 1833 was compiled by Wallace Cathcart in 1912, and is available at the library of Canterbury Shaker Village. An 1835 membership list for White Water is found in Marjorie Burnside Burress, ed., *Whitewater, Ohio. Village of Shakers, 1824-1916* (North Bend, Ohio: self-published, 1979), 46.

[7] There is some uncertainty about one possible mother-daughter relationship. On the 1833 membership list one finds Serepta Hinman, aged thirty-one and Rhoda Hinman, aged fifteen. It is possible that they were mother and daughter, but they might have been sisters or even aunt and niece.

[8] Letter of Peggy Boggett to Phebe McKee, February 3, 1830, Archive of the Friends of White Water Shaker Village; Lindy Cummings, "Women," in *Shakers of White Water*, 176.

[9] For three of the girls or young women in this sample there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the mother was still alive and how it came

about that the daughter ended up alone at White Water.

[10] Much the same seems to have been true of other Shaker societies in the early nineteenth century. See D'Ann Campbell, "Women's Life in Utopia: The Shaker Experiment in Sexual Equality Reappraised—1810 to 1860," *New England Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1978): 34-35.

[11] Louisiana Stroud, "Declaration of Testimony," October 22, 1841, *Library of Congress Shaker Collection*, #251, reel 18. Hereafter cited as LCSC. Louisiana's father, Reece, returned to White Water some time before 1850 and remained there until his death in 1859. However, none of Louisiana's siblings chose to return to White Water.

[12] Phebe Agnew, "Declaration of Testimony," October 25, 1841, ibid.

[13] Nancy McKee, "Declaration of Testimony," October 22, 1841, ibid. See also Lindy Cummings, "Women," in *Shakers of White Water*, 175.

[14] Lavina Jackson, "Declaration of Testimony," October 24, 1841; and "Declaration of Testimony," October 22, 1841, ibid. In fact, despite this fervently expressed devotion to Shakerism, the two Jackson sisters did not long remain Shakers. In 1843 Emeline eloped with and married a brother from White Water, and Lavina departed for the "world" at some point in the late 1840s.

[15] Hortincy Brown, "Declaration of Testimony," October 22, 1841, ibid.

[16] Diary of John Dennie, April 21, 1829, LCSC, #167 (reel 10).

[17] Union Village journal, September 18, 1845, Shaker Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society (OClWHi), V.B.242 (reel 41); entry for Phebe/Phoebe Howard in James R. Innis, Jr., *Footprints at White Water Shaker Village. A Directory of Shakers, Visitors, Business Associates and Thieves, 1823-1916* (Harrison, OH: self-published, 2015), 41.

[18] On Joanna Wallace at White Water, see J. P. MacLean, *Shakers of Ohio. Fugitive Papers Concerning the Shakers of Ohio, with Unpublished Manuscripts* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975), 238-40; and entry for Joanna Wallace in James R. Innis, *Footprints at White Water.*

[19] J. Hollaway, letter to the editor, *Voice of Truth* 14, no. 7 (May 12, 1847): 56.

[20] "Daniel B." is most likely Daniel Boyd, who served as a deacon and trustee at Union Village in the 1820s and 1830s. He would have been forty-six years old in 1829. Hollaway asserted that "Daniel B." was married before he became a Shaker and that his wife also lived at Union Village. This was true of Daniel Boyd, whose wife, Anna, lived at Union Village until her death in 1837.

[21] In addition to the previously cited letter to the editor, Hollaway earlier wrote "Further Corruptions of Shakerism," *Advent Harbinger* 15, no. 1 (June, 29,1847): 6.

[22] Rodah [Rhoda] Easton, "Corruption of Shakerism," *Advent Harbinger* 15, no. 2 (July 6, 1847): 15.

[23] *Shakers of White Water,* 14-15, 22.

[24] Entry for Marietta Agnew, in Innis, *Footprints at White Water*.

[25] *Shakers of White Water*, 30.

[26] "Journal of a Memorable Journey from White Water, Ohio to New Lebanon, N. Y. Taken by Hannah R. Agnew when 16 years of age. In the year 1836," LCSC, no. 50, reel 4.

[27] Alonzo Hollister to John MacLean, October 2, 1904, OClWHi, IV.A.46, reel 22; Leila Sarah Taylor to John MacLean, January 9, 1905, Ibid.

[28] Journal of Hiram Rude and Hannah Agnew, OClWHi, V.B.161.

[29] On spiritualist activity at White Water in the 1830s and 1840s, see Carol Medlicott, "Spiritualism," in *Shakers of White Water*, 139-55.

[30] They were Hortency Brown, Lavina Jackson, Emeline Jackson, Louisiana Stroud, Phebe Agnew, Aletha Purcell, and Rhoda Hinman. Phoebe Howard's background suggests that she too would have been active as an instrument in the era of manifestations, but she was perhaps too young (just nine years old in 1838) to participate.

[31] Medlicott, "Spiritualism," 144.

[32] The tendency of female visionists to become apostates once the era of manifestations came to an end can be seen at several Shaker societies in the East. See Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1986), 139; and Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality. Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 70.

[33] Brewer, *Shaker Communities*, 23. In a similar vein, Christoph Brumann has argued that communal societies that allowed for "wider kin ties" tended to be the "most successful in terms of longevity." "'All the Flesh Kindred That Ever I See': A Reconsideration of Family and Kinship in Utopian Communes." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (2003): 398.

Six Scenes from the Sixties

Tom Fels

As a veteran of the 1960s, I have been interested, over the years, to investigate the significance of those times, to look at the background from which they emerged, and to assess—to the extent possible after such a relatively short time—the effects of the political and social turmoil with which we associate them. In the essay that follows, I explore six experiences of my own, looking at how a time of activism and change affected the post-World War II generation, and might influence the world of today.

My experiences are drawn from the trajectory created, over the course of some fifteen years, launched from the point of view of a clueless youth in 1957, and ending in that of a back-to-the-land communard in the early 1970s. In between, high school, college, and a stint working in Boston intervene. At the time of my communal life, 1969 to 1973, Montague Farm on which I lived was touted as a model of progressive community living, and that is the end toward which the story here is told. The tale of the farm itself stretches far beyond that another thirty years, but this essay is focused on the decade of the 1960s, and so we will stop shortly after that period.

Background / History

Consider first one of the major problems of the 1950s and 1960s, discontent among American youth. In his essay "The Idea of the New Left," the introduction to his influential 1969 anthology *The New Left Reader*, writer and activist Carl Oglesby, an early president of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), gives a good description of one of the underlying causes of the new movements in politics and styles of life.

Why, asks Oglesby, in the 1950s, an age of affluence, was crime rising among the children of the middle class? Why did they look for their models not to their gray-flannel-suited elders, but to a denim and fatigue wearing, left and oriental leaning coterie called the Beats?

As Oglesby ably explains from his own experience and observation, the abrupt gap between how the world had been presented by adults, and how it actually felt to the youth of the time, was worrisome enough to be deeply unsettling.

Looking at the evidence, Oglesby suggests that the growth of radical and alternative approaches to life arose from the perception that society's

outsiders seemed to offer more of value than those who believed they had succeeded at its goals. The resulting discontinuity produced a broad mood that Oglesby describes, with only apparent humor, as "a national park for the exploratory cultivation of ambiguity."

More of *what*, did outsiders have? Integrity, one might say. Pleasure. Comfort. Time. Identity. Imagination.

In pursuing these possibilities, a key sector of the youth of the late 1950s and early 1960s decided, then, that they had better things to do than to expand the consumer culture, build larger bombs, and work to fit into a society whose values they perceived to be seriously misguided.

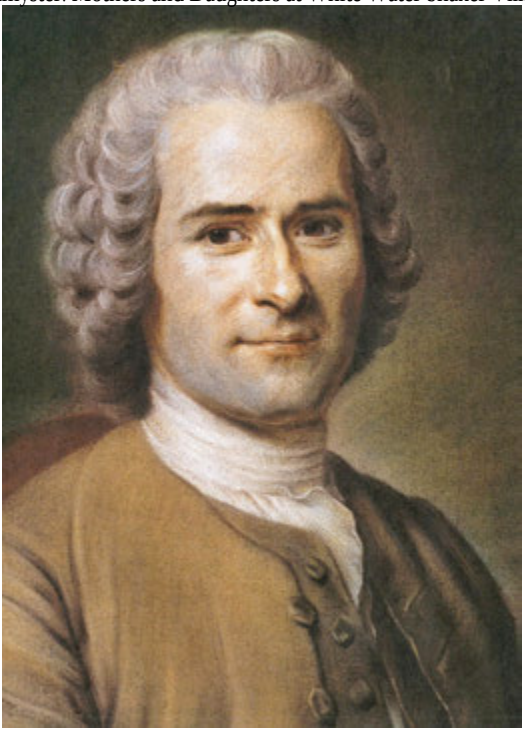
And, where would they turn for alternatives?

My experience and research into American cultural history usually lead me to the same few places. They are not the only places, but in enumerating them, most of the essential sources of what we might call, in shorthand, the culture of the 1960s are addressed. Approached chronologically, they look something like this:

Rousseau: Little that involves American cultural history, from the Revolution on, can be pictured without recognizing the contribution of the Enlightenment and Rousseau. While Rousseau was among an important group of writers who enunciated the political principles on which revolution and democracy came to be based, he is for our purposes also the foremost champion, in the current historical era, of the development and recognition of the individual. Without Rousseau's *Emile*, on education, his novel *La Nouvelle Heloise*, reminding us of the example of the medieval clerical couple Abelard and Heloise, and his astonishingly frank *Confessions*, completed in 1765, the individualism of the sixties generation would be difficult to imagine.

Thoreau: Of all the mentors of the generation of the 1960s, perhaps the best known is Thoreau. A graduate of Harvard, and student and acolyte of the philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau combined the independence of the Enlightenment with the spiritual conscience of his mentor to arrive at an individualism which considered and balanced the complex matters of the personal and the public world. In *Walden* (1854), and the earlier *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (both 1849), among other writings, Thoreau set standards for free thought, humanitarianism, personal independence, and the environment that have never been superseded. Today, more than 150 year after the appearance of *Walden*, he remains an influential and important figure.

Darwin: The publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 was the culmination of a number of developments through which science



Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), champion of individualism.
Portrait by Maurice Quentin de la Tour (1704-1788).
Collection Musée Antoine-Lécuyer, Saint-Quentin, France/public domain.

had challenged the hegemony of religion over a period of more than a half century; indeed, in retrospect, perhaps much longer than that. Darwin was the analog in science of Rousseau in social philosophy. Through his own original thinking, along with that of geologists and other forward-looking theorists of his time, he helped to usher in an age in which disinterested thought, and commitment to objective principles, would supersede the reign of superstition and tradition, creating an environment in which new ideas were welcomed, and change became an accepted part of life. While we are still debating, apparently, the emotional and spiritual fallout of Darwin, the intellectual impact of his conclusions are considered, by those who have considered them carefully, to be irreversible.

Freud: What Darwin had done for "hard" science, Freud achieved for the new study of the mind. Working again to shed illuminating light on the sources of superstition and tradition, in 1900 Freud, an Austrian neurologist, published *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a work which clarified the structure of emotion. His work offered new coordinates for the understanding of the motivations that shape the life of mankind, and the symbolic language

The Beats preening: Hal Chase, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs posing at Columbia University.
Courtesy of the Allen Ginsberg Trust.

The Beats in relaxed mode: Peter Orlovsky (white cap), Larry Rivers, Jack Kerouac, David Amram, and Allen Ginsberg at the Cedar Tavern in New York.
Copyright John Cohen.

in which they are expressed. The basis of many of Freud's discoveries was the new, enlightened attention he gave to the importance of sexuality. The resulting explosion of curiosity affected the entire century that followed, and certainly the generation of the 1960s.

The years of the Depression generated another important mentor for the post-war generation. The programs of Franklin Roosevelt, although demanding, were intended to mobilize the nation and to apply cures to its wounds that would release it from the Great Depression. In a battle that still continues today, FDR applied to the nation the benefits of government, which is merely community on a larger scale. Detractors of those actions—most of whom, it is fair to say, also benefited from them—see in them the ghost of Communism then a specter on the world stage. But Americans growing up in the post-war era following shortly after, saw in the work of FDR, as did most of their parents, a model for helpful, positive action. In the programs of the New Deal lay the ideals, and to some extent the methods, through which society could be tangibly improved.

Finally, as among the most important incitements to alternative styles and approaches, I would cite the Beats and the growing Bohemian culture of the fifties. James Dean, Marlon Brando—what were these but the entertainment industry's attempts to present sanitized, salable interpretations of the popular Jack Kerouac and his crew? Elvis? A white clone of the jazz and blues to which the Beats were so attached. Holden Caulfield? A lost soul hankering for completion and rest. Eastern religion was still too hot to touch, but otherwise, throughout the media world of records, books, radio, film and then television, the popular culture offered to the youth of the 1950s was largely a filtered, thinly disguised version of the temptations of Bohemian life. It's no wonder that the Right has a longstanding quarrel with the media—even though they own it.

Influence of the gray flannel suit: the author and his father, 1950s.
Collection of the author.

I

Vermont, 1960

With a background in mind of a potential culture of individualism, intellectual freedom, and social change, consider the situation of an American youth in the year 1960.

In 1957 my family had moved from city and suburbs to Bennington College, in Vermont. In Bennington we had a house on a small road. Out back there was a field where in winter I could build a modest ski jump, and in summer hunt troublesome woodchucks with my new .22 caliber rifle. I could have a dog, and when I wasn't late I could bike the mile to school on a country road.

The summer I arrived, the local kids played in an orchard, and in the hayloft of an immense local barn. The smells were so intense I can remember them today. At the college nearby we would spend rainy days trying on costumes in the attic of the theatre, or use the swords there to recreate a medieval battle. On better days we built and manned rafts in the large campus pond.

In the adjacent village, only a five-minute walk from orchard and barn, I spent three years at a public school that held kindergarten through the twelvth grade. Everyone knew each other. The younger set wore out the knees of their pants playing marbles at lunchtime. The older teenagers congregated around their cars and whatever girls they could assemble. Basketball and soccer produced the superheroes of our small world, and local adults could attain to celebrity through a role in the annual minstrel show. Layered onto this local scene was the cultural influence of the college.

Three years later, in the summer of 1960, my parents took my sister and me to Europe. This was the ur-voyage many have experienced, our introduction to a larger world. In the month that we spent there as a family, we roamed the Continent in a large Citroen station wagon, staying at hotels and visiting the occasional friends my parents had in Europe. We returned with stories, adventures, and private memories that would sustain us for years.

The result of that trip was the sense of a safe post-war world. No, one could not always drink the water. Yes, it paid to be wary in the outdoor market. But compared to today's world, Europe in 1960 was a very manageable place. One of the high points for us was visiting a tiny town that made its own cheese. It was much like home.

When we came back, I moved on to another new experience: the precincts of the progressive Putney School.

Today, Putney and Brattleboro are part of an axis of alternative culture in the Connecticut Valley. But in those days Putney was simply a small town with a paper mill, a General Store, and other typical features of New England life. At the school, students lived in tiny, spartan dorms. Meals were collegial but not elegant. We were transported in trucks; the school didn't own a bus. Each week we were obliged to perform two types of work, one a daily indoor job, the other a weekly outdoor task like clearing brush, house painting, or work on the school's farm.

Putney encouraged engagement and self-determination. Classes were small, so there was no back row to sit in. Radios and record players were not allowed, so music had to be played to be enjoyed. The heroes of this school, though to a minor extent skiers and other athletes, were more often painters, writers, printmakers, or actors. A sign of achievement was

Putney School, students at work in the school's gardens.
The Putney School archives.

Putney School, students learning the fine points of farming,
The Putney School archives.

acceptance into the school choir, or moving up one chair in the orchestra.

This was a fairly rarified atmosphere, producing in my era figures such as Errol Morris, Jonathan Schell, and Wallace Shawn. I mention it because, like my move to Vermont and the trip my family took to Europe, my three years at Putney in the early 1960s opened doors to new experience, and helped develop a foundation from which optimism and positive action seemed reasonable principles on which to pattern one's life.

While my family had been away on its European tour, the country had been embroiled in a national political campaign, and shortly after I began school at Putney, John F. Kennedy was elected President. Of the several epochal events we will review, this would turn out to be among the most important.

Much, of course, is known and discussed about the Kennedy era. Suffice it to say here that this youthful figure represented hope, integrity, intelligence, and a breath of fresh air. After the Second World War, after Korea, after McCarthyism, after the tail-fin fifties, the accepted liberal view was that the courage displayed in Kennedy's war experiences and his book *Profiles in Courage*, the intelligence he showed in choosing his advisors, and the wit and culture apparent in seeing Pablo Casals play at the White House had finally won the day.

Whatever might follow, the early sixties were a time of hope, and John and Jackie Kennedy certainly represented it. This is important in setting the scene for the events that would ensue.

II

Change: 1963

In 1963 I had a chance to meet Kennedy myself. Soon after I graduated from high school and arrived at Amherst College, the school conducted a convocation ceremony for the dedication of its new library. The building was named for its most famous teacher, Robert Frost. Who better to commemorate the memory of the poet, who had recently died, than President Kennedy, who had asked him to read at his inauguration? A prominent board member was dispatched, and in October, 1963 the President appeared in Amherst for a speech and brief ceremony focused on Frost and the enterprise of education.

For supporting staff, the college decided to draw on students with some connection to professional education. Coming from an academic family, I was an obvious candidate.

And so on a fine afternoon in October 1963 I found myself hurrying from the convocation to the house of the president of the college. When I got there I found that, in my eagerness to perform my duties, I was only the second to arrive. The first was the President.

While others began to filter into the large official residence out front, we had a chance to speak briefly, alone, on a spacious verandah, outside, near the house's courtyard garden, farther than any of the other guests had yet ventured. These were pleasantries and inconsequential talk, the sort of "And what are you majoring in?" that you might hear from an uncle or an aunt. In return, I told an amusing story for him about my father, which I thought he might enjoy, because they had once met. It was an idyllic scene.

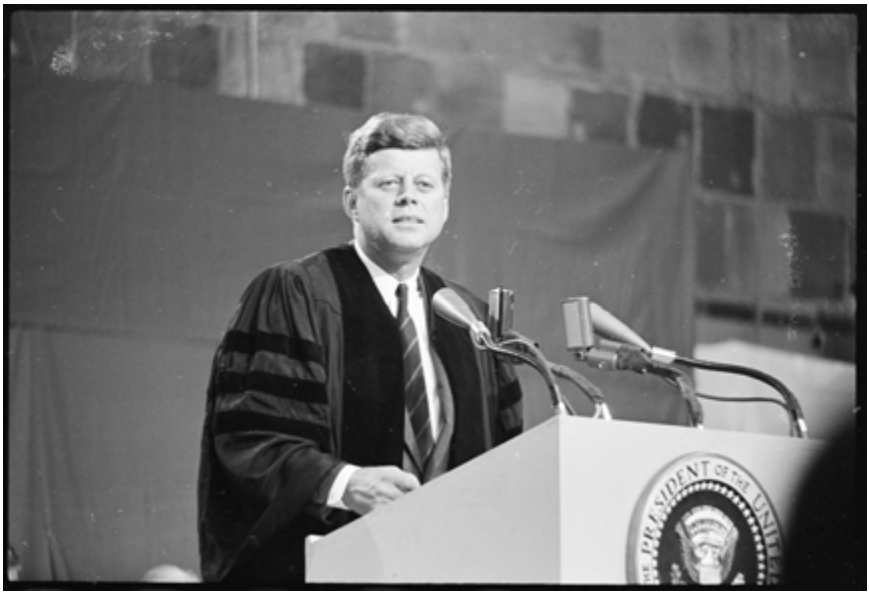
I point to this because in the early fall of 1963, the cool crisp air of New England was still filled with hope.

A month later the tide changed. I was in the hall outside of science class when the news came. It was November 22, Dallas, all of that.

Following so closely on the heels of his visit to Amherst, the assassination of President Kennedy took on a personal tone. I'm sure this is true for many beyond our small scene. For those who had seen him, heard him talk, witnessed the energy of a lively public figure—even for those who had followed him, like most, on television or in the papers—something much larger died that day, something it has been very difficult, perhaps

President Kennedy and poet Archibald MacLeish at Amherst College, October, 1963.
Archives and Special Collections, Amherst College Library.

President Kennedy with the college's president at Amherst College, October, 1963.
Archives and Special Collections, Amherst College Library.



President Kennedy speaking at Amherst College, October, 1963.
Archives and Special Collections, Amherst College Library.

impossible, to retrieve.

As a survivor into the present, I date many changes from that moment. In my younger years I used to relate to friends, in some amazement, that I had met three presidents. It was true. As a youngster in New York, the campaigning Dwight Eisenhower lived on the next block. Then Kennedy, at Amherst, and earlier, while he was still in Congress, Lyndon Johnson. But after Kennedy, who really cared? Nixon. Ford. Reagan. Bush? To many these were not inspirational figures. Even Jimmy Carter, during his term of office, was often a disappointment.

In the mid-60s, though, much of the Kennedy agenda was still in play. In 1963 through 1964 the Civil Rights movement motivated college students throughout the country. Sit-ins and demonstrations grew, and voter registration and literacy projects continued. Students for Racial Equality (SRE) a group on our own campus, tutored in nearby cities. During spring vacation we traveled to Raleigh, North Carolina, to work with volunteers from Fiske University to register voters. It was a scary time. The Klan conducted cross-burnings. We were not looked upon kindly.

1964 was Freedom Summer. A number of Americans, young and old, headed south to help in voter registration and education. Some returned and some did not.

In February 1965 our Students for Racial Equality sponsored a large Civil Rights conference. Hundreds of participants and many speakers came for two days of workshops and talks. Among the speakers were the actor Ossie Davis and activist Tom Hayden, then in the early days of his career.

Hopeful? Yes, but also arduous, and in some unintended ways emblematic of changing conditions. Winter weather kept Michael Harrington, President Johnson's feisty advisor in the War on Poverty, from flying in to the conference. And Malcolm X, scheduled to speak, was detained in London, recently expelled from France as "undesirable." In a week he would be dead in Harlem, the victim of assassins' bullets.

The conference was a success, but in taking action we had to note, as well, that reality had intervened on levels unknown to us before.

Another such effort was something we called "The Society," an organization offering an alternative to fraternities. In the early to mid-sixties, fraternities were still the principal form of social organization at most colleges, and the pressure to join them was intense.

While there were of course exceptions, fraternities, even at good schools, tended to perpetuate a program of rowdiness, harassment, and intimidation. Beyond their heavy drinking and strange quasi-mystical ceremonies, they were often racist, sexist, and exclusionary. In a few years

The Amherst Student

News in Brief

Civil Rights Conference Meets Despite Weather Obstacles

UMass Grade Fraud Involves 2 Students

Civil Rights conference, Amherst College, February, 1965: report in the student newspaper. Collection of the author.

the system would be seriously questioned. But at the time I arrived at college, it still took courage to break with fraternities.

To bolster our resolve, we created an alternative. The Society had no special agenda or strict structure. It was democratically run, and worked to support the interests of its members. We put on the plays, concerts, and readings our directors, musicians, and writers wanted to perform—and of course we were usually their principal audience, as well.

Soon The Society became so popular that it needed more space. Negotiations with the college eventually yielded us a dormitory. By the time we graduated we had two. We had a little theatre of our own, and shared the benefits of community life. To us, this victory smelled very sweet.

But there was another lesson to be learned, and this is where this small piece fits into our story. Soon after the original founders of The Society graduated, the college took back the dorms, and the program ceased to exist.

This was rather shocking to a group of young idealists. What was all that work for—the meetings, the negotiations, the agreements we had obtained, the physical changes to the buildings—if authorities were to simply reverse them in the absence of further pressure?

On the one hand, this was an important wake-up call. Generally, it

The Society, Amherst College, 1965-67: a Friday evening event.
Collection of the author.

seems, progress—economic, political, social—*does* roll back in the absence of further pressure. On the other hand, it was one of a series of such occurrences that had an effect more difficult to see.

Actions like these helped to expand a generation's already strong mistrust of institutions and authority. In winning the battle, the college and its peers effectively began to lose the war, creating a generation which measured success more carefully, and accepted progress more tentatively.

Such encounters, I think, have driven many in my generation to more solipsistic pursuits. I measure progress only by what I can see done, myself. A board or committee I am on may altruistically assign work to be done, but I count it accomplished only if I actually see the results.

The conflict of principle and authority again came to a head for us in 1966. That year, during the spring that would bring the graduation of the class ahead of mine, the college chose to award an honorary degree, at that ceremony, to the Secretary of Defense of the United States, Robert McNamara.

Robert McNamara at Amherst College, June, 1966: McNamara on the dais at graduation. Archives and Special Collections, Amherst College Library.

At the time, little had been done to protest the growing war in Vietnam. The mid-1960s had seen the slow evolution of the peace movement into a nascent anti-war movement. In November 1965 Americans were still surprised when a young Quaker, Norman Morrison, burned himself to death with kerosene in front of the Pentagon, an action inspired by similar ones conducted by Buddhist monks in Vietnam.

But the same era had also brought Civil Rights, SDS, and the Free Speech movement at Berkeley. If we were caught unawares several months after Mr. Morrison's act, it was not for lack of concern about the war, or inexperience on the picket line, but because we had assumed, naively, that in an educational institution all would be beginning to judge the war harshly. With the news of the invitation of Robert McNamara, we were rudely awakened.

The McNamara invitation set in motion an intense period of group discussion, self-scrutiny, and confrontation. Unlike the negotiations involving The Society, which were relatively subdued and internal, an

(Above) *Robert McNamara at Amherst College, June, 1966: demonstration.* Archives and Special Collections, Amherst College Library.

(Right) *Robert McNamara at Amherst College, June, 1966: seniors protest at graduation, protest armband at center.* Archives and Special Collections, Amherst College Library.

invitation by the college's trustees to a member of the President's cabinet necessarily came freighted with institutional pride, high visibility, and a conflict of values that surpassed anything I had ever seen at close hand.

As discussion proved fruitless, our long meetings eventually yielded the one realistic option we had—a peaceful protest. At the time, even a picket line, a pamphlet, and a few speeches constituted a radical statement. Evenings were spent hammering out wording, and developing a strategy that merged a strong statement against the war with the respectful atmosphere of public figures and a college graduation.

In the end, on a misty spring morning, we all went out with our signs, and our best suits, to bear silent vigil in front of the auditorium. Inside, however, when a group of seniors, their black robes accented with white arm bands of protest, rose together during McNamara's speech and walked out, it was too public a declaration to be ignored. Cameras clicked, and although the speech continued, this early Vietnam protest went farther than we had expected, ending up on the front page of the *New York Times*.

From the fall of 1963, then, when the innocence of 1960 had been violated, to the spring of 1966, when McNamara was protested, the mood of the country, and especially of the nation's youth, had moved considerably toward the raw and the discontented. The stakes had risen considerably as well. But as with the college in its dealings with The Society, earlier, we had perhaps won the battle of making ourselves heard, but as we would see, we had certainly not won the war of principle we were pursuing.

III

The Cities: 1967-1968

A year later, in 1967 and 1968, I took a year and a half off school before going back for my final semester in January 1969. As an aspiring young architect I worked in two offices in Cambridge and Boston, to test whether I wanted to go to architecture school.

At this time Boston was in the midst of a building boom. The office I worked for first had designed, and was in the midst of building, Boston's controversial new City Hall. Whatever one thinks of this building, with its eccentric, bold design—cribbed, as it turned out, from Le Corbusier—it provoked endless comment, and has proven over time to be very influential. Other projects in the office, then, were a Boston bank, a large downtown parking garage, and a building for Phillips Exeter Academy.

At my second job, in Cambridge, I worked for the architect and developer Ben Thompson on a project to renovate a large house for himself

New Boston City Hall (at right), Kallmann & McKinnell, architects; view from North Market Street.
Drawing by Clark Goff, used by permission of the artist.

and his wife. Thompson would later design the new Boston waterfront adjacent to City Hall, and many other high-profile projects.

Both of these jobs took me throughout Boston and Cambridge, delivering plans, consulting with contractors, and relaying information to the home office.

In 1967 and 1968 Boston remained a very conservative city. School busing was a daily issue, and Irish South Boston basked in its reputation as one of the toughest neighborhoods in the country. The most talked about figure in public life was Louise Day Hicks, a popular, outspoken opponent of integration.

Cambridge, on the other hand, was full of colorful hippies, street musicians, and young radicals. Huge crowds assembled on Sundays for free live music on the Cambridge Common. The coffee houses were crowded,

and marijuana was smoked on the street.

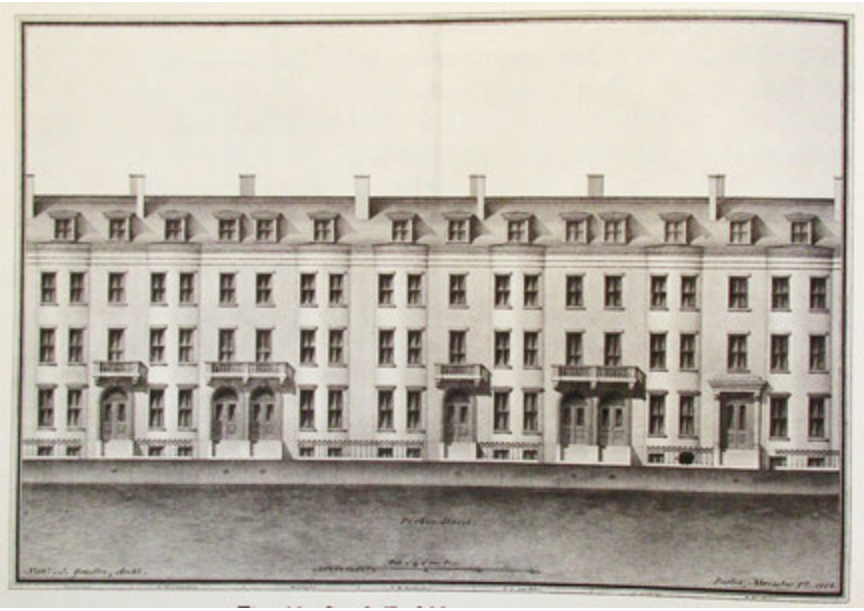
Somewhere in between, these two worlds were getting to know each other. There were peace demonstrations on the Boston Common, but demonstrators were often roughed up. There was good rock and folk music at clubs, like the immense Boston Tea Party, housed in a cavernous old theatre, but the Tea Party was in a risky border zone at the edge of the downtown.

For most of my time in Boston I lived in the city's South End, an extensive area built as speculative development in the late nineteenth century, but never fully occupied. In the South End you could afford a large, wood-paneled space with tall, arched windows intended for the family of some long forgotten attorney or ambitious clerk.

Space like this was not available in most other parts of the city. It allowed fringe populations the room they needed to pursue their lives, from raising a family to producing paintings too large for a small apartment.

The artistic and cultural community in the South End, though, was thinly spread. The area was really what would be called a slum. It was dotted with large and small ethnic groups of various origins and colors, among them Blacks, Greeks, Caribbeans, and Lebanese.

Crowd on Cambridge Common: J. Geils Band performing (J. Geils, guitar), April 1968. Photo: Tom Benedek.
Tom Benedek Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.



South End, Boston, a typical block of buildings; designer: N. J. Bradlee, c. 1855.
Collection of the author.

Life there was pretty dicey. Spouses who drank too much were simply locked in, and left to pound on the door all day until someone came home to let them out. When my apartment was broken into, and almost everything I had of value disappeared, some telltale jewelry reappeared on the wife of the Gypsy family living downstairs. She just looked at me brazenly and said she knew nothing about it.

In the spring and summer of 1968, this was, of course, a questionable place to live. The summer of 1967 had brought riots to the nation's cities. The *Kerner Report* of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, produced soon after, offered close studies of some eight cities in revolt, a distillation of twenty-four disorders in twenty-three cities surveyed, representing a selection of the most important of the 164 civil disorders reported during the first nine months of the year. The commission called the disorders of 1967 "unusual, irregular, complex and unpredictable." Damage in Detroit alone was estimated to be in the range of $45 million.

The fall had brought the huge "Mobilization" at the Pentagon, against the war in Vietnam, and the initiation of the anti-war campaign of Senator Eugene McCarthy. Now, in early 1968, Americans experienced news of the disastrous Tet offensive, and U.S. bombing of Vietnam was increased. As Tom Hayden wrote in his 1988 memoir *Reunion*, "As 1968 began, I felt I was living on the knife edge of history."

On March 12, candidate McCarthy came in a surprising second in the Democratic primary in New Hampshire. Four days later Robert Kennedy entered the presidential race. On March 31, to the complete surprise of the nation, President Johnson announced overtures toward peace, and informed the country that he would not run again.

Continuing this unprecedented set of events, and extending the threatening, powerless quality of the mood, on April 4 civil rights leader Martin Luther King was assassinated. Washington was soon in flames. On the day of King's funeral, April 9, the then unknown activist Mark Rudd interrupted the memorial service for him at Columbia University, one of many in the country, initiating a university-wide strike and week-long building occupation that ended in a bloody bust by New York City police. Rudd would later head SDS and spend years underground with the radical, anarchistic group the Weathermen.

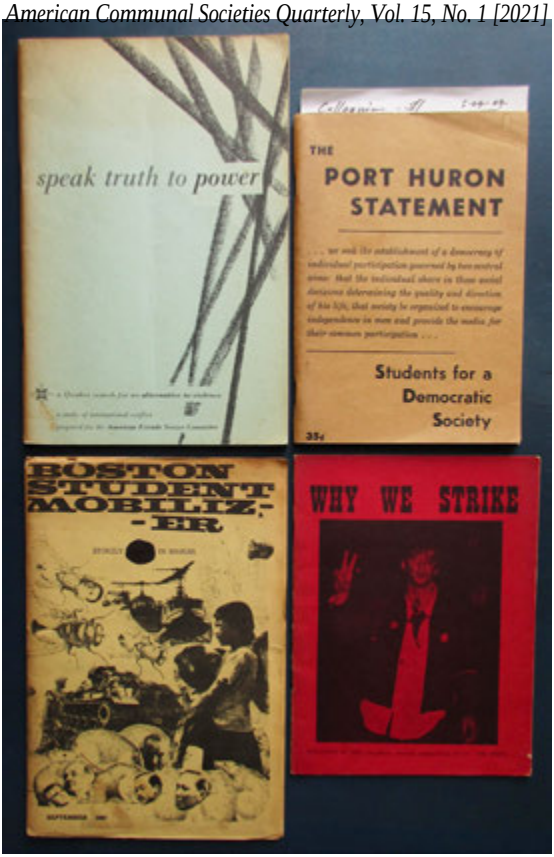
In May, French students launched a large-scale revolt, one of a wave of international uprisings that year. In early June, Robert Kennedy was shot in Los Angeles just as he had announced his victory in the important California primary.

In August, the nation experienced the violence and internal strife of the Democratic convention in Chicago. In November Nixon was elected. The Yippies' candidate for president was a pig, duly ushered into office the next January, in Washington, at an event they called the In-hoguration.

As a young person taking time off from school to consider my future, I viewed these events with interest and alarm from my perch in the South End. At times like the assassinations of Kennedy and King I didn't venture far from my familiar neighborhood. Looking back at my journal, I can see that I was both registering the changes around me, and at the same time assessing my own possible role in an unfolding American life.

On April 7, 1968, three days after the shooting of Dr. Martin Luther King, I wrote that "in the tension of Boston" visiting friends and I had been up for the last two nights. That morning my mother and sister had called to suggest that I leave for the safer haven of Cambridge, where they were each living, separately. What I tried to tell them, and others who called, was that my feelings about safety and social responsibility had changed.

"Having been closer to danger and discomfort these months," I wrote, had increased my sensitivity to my immediate environment, enabling me, paradoxically, to feel more comfortable. "I haven't learned to dodge bullets, or predict the unexpected," I continued, "but I can tell much more than before about the mood on the street.… Because of this, I think I am no worse off in my neighborhood than others are. As a result, I now feel less

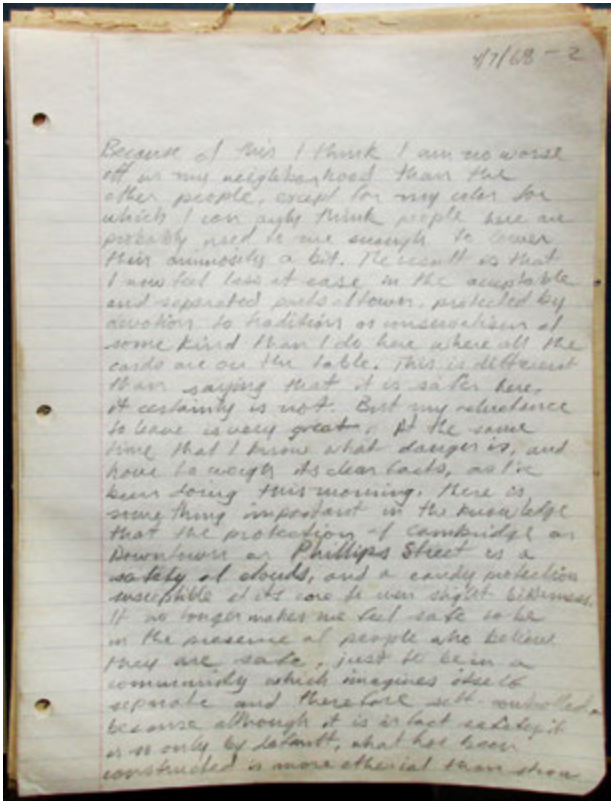


Four political publications from this period.
Collection of the author.

at ease in the acceptable, separated parts of town than I do here where all the cards are on the table.… It no longer makes me feel safe simply to be in the company of people who believe they are safe." Theirs is only a safety "by default," I wrote, constructed of social perceptions they were actually powerless to defend.

To myself I noted that I was aware of the "untimed and self-defeating character of street violence." I had been beaten up earlier in the year, presumably for my beard and non-conformist appearance—but actually that had been in a 'safe' part of town. I knew I was in danger.

As a young person moving through this era, my distinct sense was that the danger was much larger than the tension of one neighborhood. Referring to a recent incident I wrote, "I no longer get more excited about the murder of a single schoolteacher in Cambridge than about the tacit mass murder of a slum.… The fact is that one feels threatened by a murder in his neighborhood, but only disturbed by one on the other side of town."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Because of this I think I am no worse off in my neighborhood than the other people, except for my color for which I can only think people here are probably used to me enough to lower their animosity a bit. The result is that I now feel less at ease in the acceptable and separated parts of town, protected by devotion to tradition or insurance of some kind than I do here where all the cards are on the table. This is different than saying that it is safer here. It certainly is not. But my relevance to here is very great. At the same time that I know what danger is, and how to weigh its clear facts, as I've been doing this morning. There is something important in the knowledge that the protection of Cambridge or Downtown or Phillips Street is a safety of clouds, and a candy protection susceptible at its core to even slight bitterness. If no longer makes me feel safe to be in the presence of people who believe they are safe, just to be in a community which imagines itself to separate and therefore self-controlled because although it is in fact real, it is so only by default, what has been constructed is more ethereal than stone

Page from author's journal recording his reaction to the death of Martin Luther King.
Collection of the author.

Personal involvement had changed my moral view or, perhaps more accurately, just confirmed one that had been growing.

Such views reflected my immersion in what was, for me, virtually a foreign culture. Looking back at the pages I wrote later that summer, it is clear that, increasingly, I had been identifying myself as a resident. A nearby fire frightened me. I could see it from my window. Clearly, the building could have been my own. A crane visible over neighboring roofs, brought in for what was euphemistically called "urban renewal," felt threatening as its work of destruction drew closer to my own block.

One night in August a fight broke out in my building. "It felt as if the house was coming down," I wrote. "Some guy was caught with someone else's wife. When it quieted down, I opened the door to see what was left of the building. Outside, across the hall, the guy was wedged in a corner, panting, still holding his shirt in his hand. He came in. I cleaned off his cut and gave him a drink. After a few minutes he sneaked downstairs."

As the sixties neared their end, I saw that this was the world in which we still lived—a world which, though in a sense eternal, had been carefully hidden from us, or cordoned off as something distant and separate.

Reading through documents, histories, and memoirs of that time, including my own, I find that this was a prevalent feeling. As far back as 1962, the *Port Huron Statement*, which had defined SDS, had outlined the anger of a generation that felt shortchanged by the contradictory, passionless culture in which it had been reared—the one described earlier here by Carl Oglesby. A social movement was needed, said its authors, to bring realities like the ones I was seeing into line with the stated ideals of American life.

But by late 1968 it was clear that even this effort had stumbled. As Jane Alpert, another former Weather fugitive, wrote of these changes in her later memoir *Growing Up Underground* (1981): By this time "many … had already abandoned the cause for yoga, meditation, communes … [or] religious groups."

Indeed, in the end this is what I did. One of the ironies of the post-war generation is that although you labor to act alone, news and then history reveal that a good portion of seventy million other individuals thought and did roughly the same.

IV

Upswing: The Farm, January 1969

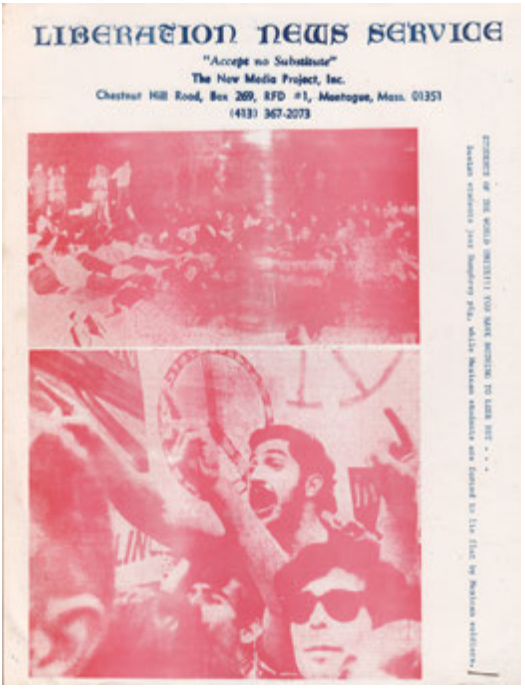
In the fall of 1968, while I was still living in Boston, an old college friend stopped by on his way through town. Marshall Bloom, one of the founders of the Liberation News Service, a centralized news source for underground papers, had been the editor of my college newspaper.

"Some friends and I have bought a farm near the college," he said. "When you go back to school, why don't you come live with us?"

In my newly independent state, living on a farm seemed far more attractive than living in a dorm. I took him up on his offer.

The word "commune" had not yet reappeared in the national vocabulary, but when I arrived at the farm, this seemed indeed what I had stumbled into. Later, the farm, which we called Montague after the town it was in, near Amherst, became one of the poster children for the new generation of communes in the United States.

What Marshall had called a group of friends, several months later, was calling itself a family. In bringing their news service to the country, the farmers at Montague were embracing a new strategy. If using radical



Liberation News Service at Montague farm, 1968-69.
Collection of the author.

Approaching the farm from the west, c.1969.
Photo: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

politics to move the system forward did not seem to work, they reasoned, why not start anew and show on your own, by leadership and example, what could be done?

Montague was thus something of a new Eden. The comparison was obvious. Moving to the country offered all the resources with which to create an autonomous life. During their first summer the farmers had relaxed, visited, socialized, played music, explored the area, and met the neighbors, enjoying a carefree country life.

As the season progressed into fall, however, it had become clear that managing the promised land was quite different than anything they had experienced before. As in any cultural genesis, everything had to be created anew—though fortunately not in only seven days.

In January 1969, when I arrived, the farm was a fledgling effort, conducted by about ten ex-urban and -suburbanites, to adjust to rural life. Having bought, in the glow of summer, some sixty acres with a house and barn, the neophytes at Montague were now facing such questions as: How to heat a rambling house? How to start a car in below-zero weather? How to make a living miles from town? and, How to get along with each other without the distractions of the city?

In the morning we would attempt to light the antiquated coal furnace. Eventually we discovered that wood stoves would serve us better. We learned to park our cars at the edge of the hill, so that gravity could assist us in starting them. Livelihoods tended to evolve from urban-based pursuits toward those that could be accomplished at home.

But, once having gotten through winter, life improved. One of our number came from a family that practiced organic gardening, then considered a fringe activity at best, at worst the pursuit of hard core zealots and kooks. Spring brought a new greenhouse, efforts at composting, seedlings galore, and plans for a large garden.

Spring also brought the new Dylan album, *Nashville Skyline*, which lifted our spirits significantly. As we swept away the detritus of winter, planted our garden, and prepared the barn for reuse, new songs wafted from the house windows. Early summer brought vegetables for salad and small amounts of our own home-grown dope. This, again, felt more like heaven.

As news spread of our presence, neighbors appeared who could help us, or who needed our assistance to accomplish their own aims.

Jim, a former graduate student, needed help taking down old barns and houses. His business was to resell the beams, planks, paneling, and siding to renovators in more affluent areas. Orders for him were work for us.

Cow stall at the farm, c. 1969.
Photo: Mary Davis Dewart. Collection of the author.

New Greenhouse, Montague Farm, spring 1969.
Photo: Laura Bradley. Collection of the author.

Boys and cars: Jim, left, with Harvey and Jonathan, shows off his new Model A in front of the farmhouse at Montague.
Photographer unknown. Collection of the author.

Milking time: writer Jesse Kornbluth and farmer Tony Mathews, Montague, 1969
Photo: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

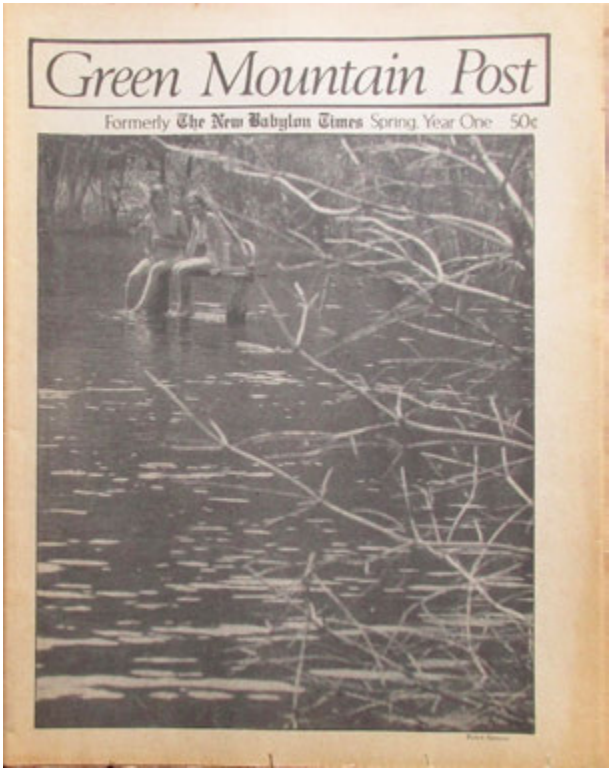
Fred, a refugee from Cambridge, had a lumber business. The trees he cut for clear wood were immense, and he needed help both in the woods and at the sawmill he had set up.

Eventually, we bought a cow, chickens, and other livestock, but until we did, we got our butter and milk down the road. Farmer Perkins milked his cows by hand. The milk, in glass bottles, and the butter his wife pressed into neat stamped blocks, were kept in a metal box cooled by a stream that ran through the middle of his milk house. Eggs and fresh syrup we bought, similarly, from other neighbors nearby.

On our own we learned to bake and build, to fix our cars and what equipment we had. With experienced friends we undertook plumbing, roofing, and wiring. When the old water line from the well gave out, the youthful, hip proprietor of a new contracting business brought his backhoe, early one morning, digging a fresh trench for pipe before breakfast, before going off for the day to more remunerative projects. We of course could fill it back in by hand.

To us this was the face of the New Age, as it was then called. Looking back at the principles and habits we generated, or adopted, it's easy to be dismissive. Certainly to some extent this was a naïve effort, helped by its isolation from intruding forces. But looking at the succeeding three decades, it remains one of the last bastions of wide resistance to less appealing aspects of American life—the consumerism, conformity, and dependence we all went to the farm to escape.

The farm and its extended family were important because they took a stand. In creating communities independent of the reigning social and political values of the time, they enabled young people (and some older who joined them) to demonstrate the potential of their ideas, and to move from the negativity of protest to a constructive mode of life.



Green Mountain Post, the farm magazine, Spring 1970.
Collection of the author.

V

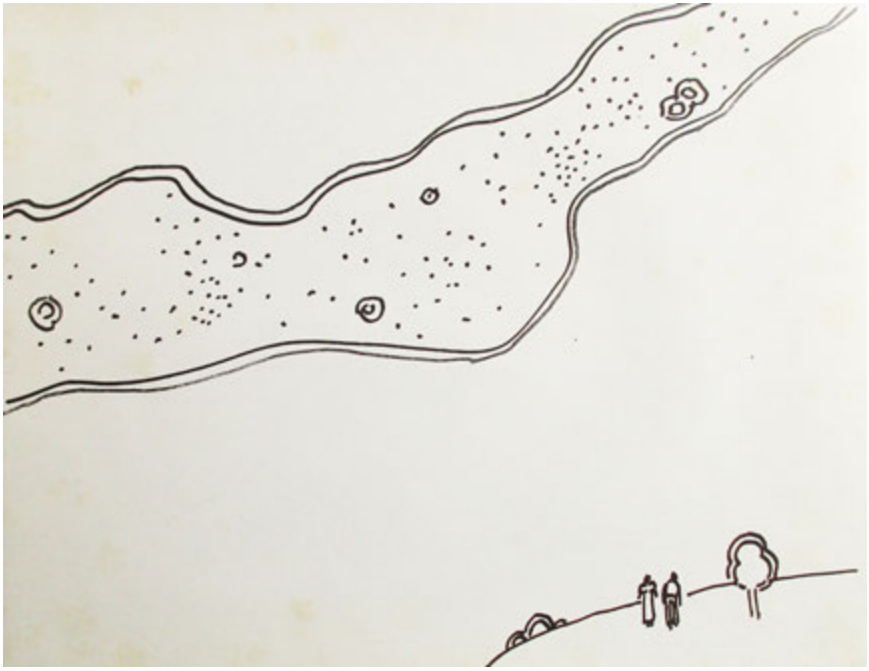
New Territory: The Farm, September 1969

Part of this new mood was something that has come to be called a culture of hedonism. If 1967 was a season of violence, it was also the so-called Summer of Love. Experimental relationships, rock music, the spread of drugs—these were some of the results of what many perceived as the overly permissive upbringing of the post-war generation. To those experiencing them, though, they were seen as matters of exploration and learning, as well as pleasure. No doubt some pursued them out of mere boredom or misguidance. But, by and large, they proved to be tools of liberation, offering new perspectives and lessons of great use.

At the farm, our drugs were comparatively mild. Marijuana, mescaline, LSD: these were social drugs, not habit-forming but, when used in moderation, like a cocktail hour, encouraging a relatively temperate,

Tony Mathews relaxing on the front steps, Montague Farm. Photo: Laura Bradley. Collection of the author.

Maypole: annual May Day celebration, Total Loss Farm, Guilford, Vermont. Photo: Jennifer Fels. Collection of the author.



Milky Way. 1970.
Drawing: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

modified view of the world around. In my case, and probably many others', use was sporadic and hesitant. Most were secure enough in their own world not to want to give it up for the unknown benefits—and the well known possible side effects—of mind-altering drugs.

Outside one's own world, experiences at this time also came by chance. Hitchhiking, foreign travel, encounters with unfamiliar people met through the counterculture could all lead to anything from instant disaster to a long marriage. It was in this way, by chance, through unfamiliar people, that I happened upon one of the strongest drug experiences of my life.

I was about to leave the farm for a period, as people did, off and on, during their time there. On the afternoon before, I went with Jonathan, a grizzled veteran of the underground press, into town to do some errands. On our way home, we stopped off to visit some people he had met. I think they had taken one of the puppies from our last litter. Jonathan had an unerring instinct for finding good dope, and sure enough, we were soon invited in.

Two hours later, after sitting with our new acquaintances, and smoking some hash, we decided we ought to be going. We detected that this was more than just hash, even good hash. A foreign, immobilizing force was

beginning to overcome us. The house and the people were becoming more clearly revealed as transient, bordering on evil. As we watched, they became (and I believe they were) more stereotypical. Though dressed as hippies they were really bikers, posing for the convenience of this particular scene before moving on to something else: Anonymous, people of the ages. We looked at each other. This was not where we wanted to be.

Somehow we managed to navigate the one mile back into the center of town—a straight, well paved road that in our condition more resembled a pass in the Swiss Alps. We parked in the middle of town, on the edge of the village green, in a stupor, unable to go farther. Before us the town floated in paisley and stripes. It's hard to say how long we were there. Eventually, John and Susan, two of our fellow farmers, spotted us and drove us home.

Once home, things looked up. If there was one thing the farm was good for —was almost made for—it was taking drugs. It was entirely real. It bristled with interesting surfaces and textures. It was latent with meaningful differences and places to be discovered for oneself: the warmth of the stove, the coolness of the barn. It revealed itself in smells of hay, and bread, and milk, and animals. It hid a myriad of microcosms from the barn, and nature itself outside, to the house and its rooms, where the lives of individuals were set next to, and over and under, each other in vivid contrast.

In moments of exhilaration it was easy to see the farm as a very grand thing: a ship steaming through the night with its precious freight; the seed of a new age; a human community; an entire functioning organism from garden to outhouse.

And the farm was safe: it was our own territory.

That night I saw in the farm a world we had made, in which things had purpose. I saw a lot more, of course, but in the end, after a long night of sitting and wandering, talking and silence, it was the physical reality of the farm that I finally glided back into, and it was very comforting.

The early morning hours brought a light rain. I stared at cobwebs and roof beams and the rampant late summer growth framed in the large barn doors. The laundry hanging in my room to dry looked beautiful. Well it might after what I had seen: a world of much greater order in which values were absolute and linked in one large system. Opposites were related; large structures of meaning floated about in a powerful, whirling vortex next to which human life and thought, as well as physical reality, were insignificant by comparison.

How good it felt to see my own bed, my clothes, weathered boards, the dirt road covered with a dark canopy of maples, the first smoke of the breakfast fire from the chimney.

Like the farm itself, this trip had come out of nowhere to severely rearrange my mind just as I'd least expected it. But then, like the farm, it let me go, continuing on as just a vivid dream.

I was relieved, because while I was glad, in a way, to know what strong drugs were all about, I felt even luckier to be able to return to my own life after the experience. I had certainly not been in control of my mind, and I suppose it could just as soon have decided to return me not to myself, but somewhere else.

Hippie Constellations, 1971.
Watercolor drawing: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

Approaching the farm from the east.
Photo: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

VI

Success: Haying, Summer 1971

By the time of my later days at the farm, we and our peers had ironed out some of the difficulties we faced, and felt more successful in managing our new life.

As the seventies began, we worked at haying for our neighbors. This had two advantages. We now had the equipment, and could provide the labor, and so would benefit directly from anything we did. By haying our neighbors' fields we also produced food for our animals, and had to grow less of our own. In addition it was a satisfying experience in its own right, revealing how our new life could feed back to us, influencing us in turn.

So, in 1971 we spent the summer haying continuously through the season in Gill, Massachusetts, making use of land lent to us by the owner, who could no longer keep it up. Each time we managed to finish the eighty acres comfortably curled into a bend of the Connecticut River, it was time for a new cutting and we would begin again.

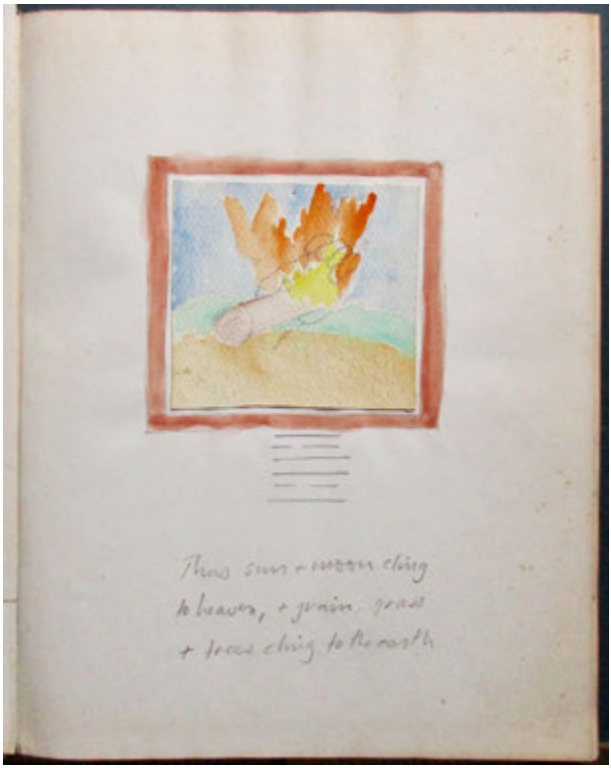
Day after day we ferried ourselves, the hay, and various tractors and farm equipment back and forth over the ten miles that separated us from

The farm from the upper field.
Photo: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

our workplace. Each morning we would arrive in Gill, gas up, tune up, and then mow, rake, bale, make repairs, load the hay, and ship it back to the farm continuously until dark. Each night we would lie aching and sweating in our beds with only another day in the fields to look forward to. The work was so continuous and protracted that day and night seemed by comparison to flash on and off at unexpected moments. Long days seemed at dusk to have been almost nothing, and so much like the ones that preceded them and followed them that they all merged into a single span over which day and night reigned as implacable but somehow arbitrary forces. You could not work at night; that seemed the only difference. Sleep was not restful, it simply restored in you enough energy to get you through till you reached your bed again.

Still, it was a wonderful summer. In the steady, apparently unfamiliar rhythm of night and day there was a sense of compression that revealed nature more clearly. A daily life of errands, meals, and social obligations seemed almost capricious when viewed against the inexorable movement of the planet. As we pitted our finite strength and endurance against the season, the day, or the cycle of a particular weather system we could see what the real physical limits were.

Sweeping across the land again and again I began to feel it under me and to know it through the machines I was driving. Invisible and hidden



Influence of the I Ching
Watercolor drawing and text: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

in the grass below, the earth can be clearly felt. The sense of it moves up through the tires, bolts, springs, and gears and can easily be read through the hands on the steering wheel or the well worn seat of the pants.

Whether mowing alone around the irregular edges of the lower fields, under the extended branches of maple hedgerows, where the air was cool and the river near, or circling more regularly on the higher land—cutting together in formation, the red tractors moving in ever smaller figures toward the center, watching each other and feeling the heat move over us in waves, the smell of the gas and exhaust drowning the sweetness of the hay—the shape and feel of the land revealed themselves, both the particular place and the overall pattern formed by the movement of water over underlying rock as it made its ancient way downhill to the river.

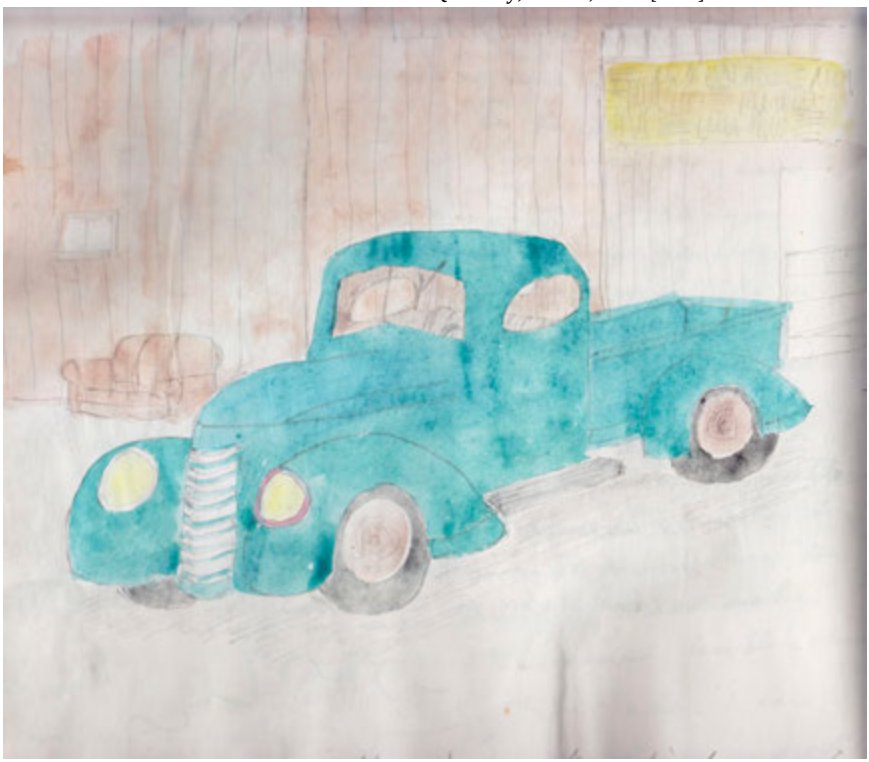
As we hayed I recognized a simplicity in life I had all but forgotten, or perhaps except in the smallest amounts ever really known. The work reduced our lives to the bare skeleton of the social life. The farm became a bunkhouse and cookhouse to which we repaired only for functional

A light moment at the farm: Laz, Cathy, and Whit, 1969-70.
Photographer unknown. Collection of Cathy Rogers.

reasons. The tractors and farm equipment became a moveable camp, a place where we met each morning to make repairs and adjustments and to plan the day's work.

Each morning this place, determined by where we had ended the previous day's work, was in a new location. As we grouped there, tinkering, sipping coffee from a thermos, and waiting for the grass to dry, I would survey the new field we had begun from the fortress of amassed human strength and ingenuity that our little camp represented. At these times I felt we were not much different from a band of primitives stopping briefly in the shade of some skins stretched over a tripod of spears, scouting the land as we planned how to best harvest or hunt it.

In the landscape I found a delicate balance between man and nature. Farm roads led almost invisibly around and across fields, a double track closely following the undulations of the earth. There were small fields of gem-like beauty in which even at the center one felt the power of the looming hedgerows all around, fields that were isolated, and quiet, and were small worlds. The landscape was a labyrinth, an endless chain of these interconnected blocks. From day to day they structured our experience as they had determined for years the daily lives of the farmers who had worked the land before us. As I moved from field to field through openings



Whit's truck, Montague Farm, 1971.
Watercolor drawing: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

in the trees, along roads which existed only by virtue of memory and use, and traced in lines the shapes of fields again and again—cutting, raking, tedding, baling—I began to see in farming immemorial structures of order, a pattern, a physical record of interaction between man and nature. In fields, roads, barns, mowing, and plowing were implicit lessons, as much the result of instinct as of learning, of space, volume, line, and economy. To farm the land was to unravel its history, to retranslate its features into the experiences that had shaped them.

As I swept around the fields leaving behind me a broad, even swath of fallen grass, and beyond it a wall of grass unmowed, and as the hay accumulated in curving parallel lines repeating the shape of the field, and revealing the exact topography of the land below, I experienced the deep sense of satisfaction, a feeling more complex and hopeful than those through which I had confronted the farm on my arrival several years before.

(Right) *Working drawing for the author's cabin, Montague Farm, 1971.* Drawing: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

(Below) *Sketch of the author's cabin, Montague Farm, 1972.* Watercolor drawing: Tom Fels. Collection of the author.

These, then, are some six scenes of which I was a part in the 1960s: the Kennedy era, protest, the slums, and the farm in its various forms from experiment to accomplishment. Today the sixties are often viewed as a lost era, and are certainly one which has provoked a strong backlash. I continue to think, though, that there is much to be learned from a time when Americans went to work to prove that ideas have power, and that commitment and effort can produce change against great odds—a lesson of which we have much need today.

For, if we look back at the times we've just explored, what we see is a generation preparing itself to make principled decisions, and beginning to live out many of the traits desirable in the new global landscape we now inhabit. Following the activists of the generation of the 1960s through to today, an interested reader can find books, articles, and projects ranging from environmentalism to sound business practice, and from physical and social concerns such as community building and healthful living to the more abstract realms of philosophy and art.

Tragically, however, these are by far the smaller number of this outsized generation. If we look not at the activists but at the headline news, and the larger policies and actions its stories represent, our impressions will not be so sanguine. Looking at the reduced support for the environment, education, health, business ethics, and civil liberties, and at the apparent preference for vituperation and violence over negotiation and diplomacy, that currently make up the public realm, we would probably be disposed to lament the decline of the society whose future looked so bright only a quarter century ago. For, while a few independent-minded individuals and organizations have followed through on their promises from the 1960s, many more have not.

For a generation tempered by disillusion and disappointment, and now mired again—after brief success—in the entanglements of international growth and the maneuvering for power, the message that civility, independence, and respect constitute viable modes of life, and that dissent can be as patriotic as acquiescence, could not come at a better time.

Tragically, idealists are by far the smaller number in this outsized generation: The Prez.
Watercolor on styrofoam: Tom Fels, November 10, 2016.
Collection of the author.

Broadside published by Free Vermont, cairca 1970.
Communal Societies Collection, Hamiltno College.