



MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release....

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“Please Touch” Room offers authentic experience

New permanent installation at Hancock Shaker Village, a living-history museum in the Berkshires, allows visitors to travel back in time

PITTSFIELD, MA -- A new interactive program debuts on April 12 at Hancock Shaker Village, when the living-history museum devoted to the Shaker legacy re-opens for the season.

The “Please Touch” Room, installed permanently in the Brick Dwelling, allows visitors to experience daily life just as Shakers themselves might have over one hundred and fifty years ago. Visitors are invited to interact with everyday items exactly like those used by the Shakers, including the furniture they sat on and slept in, and the clothing they wore. The Brick Dwelling is one of 20 historic buildings at Hancock Shaker Village.

The special installation occupies an actual bedroom used for decades by Shakers in their main dormitory-style building, says Todd Burdick, Director of Interpretation and Public Programs, who developed the program with Lesley Herzberg, the museum's Curator. "All the artifacts, however, are reproductions."

Special Setting

Visitors to the "Please Touch" Room are invited to sit on the bed, open drawers, and basically live life as a Shaker for a while. "You can open the drawer of a sewing desk, for instance, to find items inside to explore," Herzberg says. "Visitors can even try on the Shaker clothes they find in the closet." The Village's interpretive staff will be on hand to facilitate the experience and answer questions about the Shakers that are bound to arise.

While visitors normally engage with costumed interpreters who are stationed at key buildings throughout the Village, "Please Touch" goes a step further. Visitors can actually experience what it might have been like to be a Shaker by understanding, first hand, the things they made and used. "This is helpful among our visitors who are craftspeople, woodworkers especially," says Burdick. "They can now get their hands on top-quality Shaker reproductions to examine the craftsmanship and really feel how an item is made -- a nice change of pace from inspecting Shaker items from afar in the museum collection."

All items in the "Please Touch" room are top-quality reproductions from the museum's Education Collection that have been made available by an anonymous donor. Many were made by the esteemed Shaker craftsman Marty Travis.

The "Please Touch" Room is open daily and included with normal admission. Adult admission is \$18; youth admission (ages 13 to 18) is \$8, and children age 12 and under are always free.

About the Village

From 1784 until 1959, Hancock Shaker Village, known as The City of Peace, was home to hundreds of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing (commonly called Shakers because of the whirling, quaking and "shaking" they exhibited during their religious services). Since 1960, the Village has operated as a living-history museum preserving the Shaker legacy. While only a few Shakers are still living (and none live at Hancock), they are best-known today for their simple and elegant furniture and many ingenious inventions.

Located on 750 acres in the beautiful Berkshires of Massachusetts, Hancock Shaker Village has more than 20,000 authentic artifacts, 20 historic buildings in a preserved rural village setting, a rotating schedule of exhibits, programs and workshops, a working farm with heritage-breed livestock, as well as extensive gardens of heirloom vegetables, flowers and herbs. The Village offers a host of individual and group tours, a mile-long hiking trail, and picnic area.

The Village Harvest Café is open daily from 11 am to 4 pm. The Hancock Shaker Village Store (also online), open daily during visitor hours, features unique gift items and locally made products.

Hancock Shaker Village is open from 10 am to 4 pm daily from April 12 through June 30. From July 1 to Nov 2, hours are 10 am to 5 pm daily. Visit our website for more information: www.hancockshakervillage.org.