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## **Hancock Shaker Village strengthens internship program with innovative gift from Feigenbaum Foundation and intern housing in historic Village**

Pittsfield, MA (February 23, 2021) -- A generous grant from the Feigenbaum Foundation will allow Hancock Shaker Village to offer paid internships for up to ten people during the 2021 season. Launched in 2017, the Village's internship program engages undergraduate students in a vibrant living history museum and farm to develop professional skills and connect to career opportunities. In addition to the gift from the Foundation, an anonymous donor in 2020 supported the creation of onsite intern housing, thereby also providing interns the option to live on campus beginning in the summer of 2021.

"We are grateful for the Feigenbaum Foundation's generosity and long-standing commitment to the Village," said Jennifer Trainer Thompson, Director of Hancock Shaker Village, "This recent gift will allow us to continue with this robust program while also extending our commitment to making our programs more accessible. Paid internships are an important step towards creating opportunities and building equity and offering housing as an option further opens doors."

Over the past eight months, renovation work on the 2nd floor of one of the museum's historic buildings will allow the museum to accommodate interns beginning this coming summer. The anonymous gift enabled the Village to make critical repairs on the historic building, including upgraded heating, plumbing, electrical, and security. Initially used by the Shakers to transact business with the "outside world," the Trustees' Office & Store was constructed in 1813, enlarged in 1852, and then again in 1895 when it was "Victorianized." Business-minded Shaker Brothers and Sisters served their communal family in the role of Trustee; they lived in this building and were responsible for business transactions and managing the communal family's property and investments. Participating interns will now have access to this lodging, if needed, and the immersive experience of living in an historic Shaker village. The combined total of these two gifts is \$230,000.

By providing both housing and stipends for a full program in 2021, the Village hopes to increase its intern candidate pool by removing previous barriers. "Our goal is to offer local interns the opportunity to learn more about operating a cultural organization, given that culture is one of the fastest growing businesses in the Berkshires," noted Thompson, "and to also make the experience available to interns who are new to the region and who, in conjunction with their gained knowledge of Shakers and museum management, may realize the benefits of living in the Berkshires and choose to stay or return after college; thus, infusing the Berkshires with more vibrant, cultural energy."

Begun with three interns back in the summer of 2017, the ten-week program has graduated several dozen interns with focus in areas such as Farm & Garden, Curatorial, Education, and Development. Balancing the work between mentorship and independent projects, the program has many alumni who continue their work in the museum and not-for-profit world post-graduation. Although the program is predominantly

college undergraduates, the Village has also hosted graduate students and mid-career professionals looking to shift or bolster their occupations. Throughout the summer, interns contribute to the life and work of the Village as they learn from museum professionals. And, like the Shakers, they keep a daily journal.

Arguably the only museum in the region that is also a working farm, the program includes four farm interns who assist in operating a small, productive, farm as they learn regenerative farming practices, harvest produce, assist in running a CSA (community-supported agriculture), and gain basic animal husbandry skills. Curatorial interns research the permanent collection, catalogue objects, assist with curating exhibitions and programs, lead tours, and research a topic of their choosing related to the Shakers. Education interns act as interpreters giving talks and tours, coordinate summer family programs, and research a topic of their choice. Development interns research funding opportunities, help with social media outreach, and assist with the ideation and execution of events. New this year is an internship at Shaker Mercantile, the museum's store. This intern will learn the ins and outs of retail management in a museum setting. The program also offers interns an introduction to a living history museum and farm, not to mention the rich Berkshire cultural landscape, by participating in staff meetings, Village-wide plans, and connections with other cultural organizations.

Barring any additional limitations with COVID, the ten-week program runs from June to August. More information about applying can be found at: <https://hancockshakervillage.org/home/employment/summer-internship-program/>