Nathaniel Silver, executive director and CEO of Hancock Shaker Village, explores the object collection in the 1830 Brick Dwelling.

H V S V executive director sees ‘reimagined’ visitors center

By Jessica Rosenbaum — The Berkshire Eagle

Nathaniel Silver has a penchant for objects.

Objects, he says, are a unique resource that connect the past and present, no matter what culture they come from.

"Objects speak to me, no matter what culture, because objects speak. They can speak a language of quality of personal stories and of historical context, which is so powerful. And that’s a unique resource here," said Silver, who stepped into the role of executive director and CEO of Hancock Shaker Village mid-September.

"It’s going to be hard to keep my hands off of this collection, because, first and foremost, in my background, I’m an art historian, I’m a curator. I’m an objects person."

But his primary focus, he said, will be the renovation and renovation of the museum’s visitors center, which was announced in September.

The "reimagining" will include additional gallery space, a second-floor viewing area, a gift shop, a new café, a new reception area, a new store, an expansion of the visitors center, and an expansion of the building.

"The Gardner is a work of art in itself, and what I was doing at The Gardner is about those connections between the past and the present and really driving with today and something that we’re still connected to," Silver said.

"The Gardner kind of opened my eyes to those connections between past and present and really drove with today and something that we’re still connected to," Silver said.

Another factor for Silver was the Shaker story, of how Mother Ann Lee founded the United Society of Believers in the Perpetual Peace and Justice.

"There are a number of things here that connect a lot to my previous work at The Gardner," Silver said.

"There is an opportunity, and I know she agrees with me, to do more with the collection."

"What can this tell us about past and present? It’s not going to explain anything, but it can provide a way into a different mentality. It can encourage people to think about those connections between the past and the present and to stimulate those conversations."

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"I’ll just say it, I’m not an expert on Shaker collections or Shaker history, but I was very familiar with."