



# Museum Profile

## **CANTERBURY SHAKER VILLAGE**

MERRIMACK COUNTY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

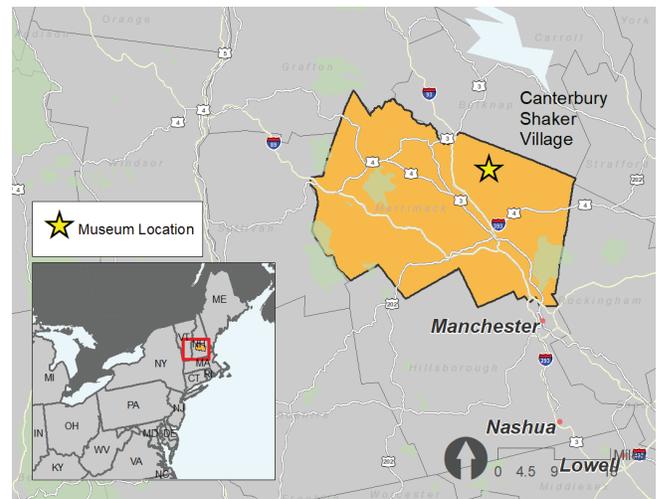
# Museum Profile: Canterbury Shaker Village



## MERRIMACK COUNTY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Canterbury Shaker Village (the Village) operates as a nonprofit museum to preserve the 200-year history of the Canterbury Shakers at the site they founded in 1792 in Merrimack County, New Hampshire. The Shakers were a religious group formed in 18th-century England among a mix of dissidents from various religions, including English Quakers and Methodists. The Shakers emigrated to the United States in 1774 and eventually established 19 self-contained communities from Maine to Kentucky. The Village consists of 29 buildings, 700 acres under permanent conservation easement, and extensive collections representing every aspect of Shaker life.

The Village's mission is "preserving the 200-year legacy of the Canterbury Shakers and providing a place for learning, reflection, and renewal of the human spirit." The Village is open May through October, weekends in November, and for occasional special events from December through April. In 2018, the Village reported \$1.1M in revenue that supported nine full-time staff



members, 23 part-time seasonal staff members, 50 volunteers, and 14 board members. Through a variety of formal and informal programming, the Village promotes the wellbeing of visitors and the broader community through its preservation of Shaker heritage and stewardship of the land itself.

## MERRIMACK COUNTY

The Village is in Merrimack County, a predominately rural county in central New Hampshire with a population just under 150,000. The population is predominately White, with no other racial/ethnic group accounting for more

than 2 percent of the population. The median household income is about \$67,000, substantially higher than the national median household income, and the county's 5.5 percent poverty rate is well below the national rate.

	Population	% Change in Population (2000–2016)	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Asian	% Other	Median Household Income	% Families in Poverty
United States	318,558,162	13.2	62.0	12.3	17.3	5.2	3.3	\$55,322	11.0
Merrimack County	147,715	8.4	93.4	1.1	1.9	1.7	1.9	\$67,181	5.5

Compared to other rural counties across the country, Merrimack County residents enjoy elevated levels of overall community health and a high-performing K–12 educational sector. Merrimack County fell in the top quartile on the School Effectiveness and Community Health

Indexes.<sup>1</sup> The Health Care & Social Assistance and Education Services sectors also represent the largest employment sectors in Merrimack County, employing nearly 30 percent of all working adults.

	Total Labor Force	% Health Care & Social Assistance	% Education Services	\$ Retail Trade	% Public Administration
United States*	131,362,978	14.5	9.2	10.9	4.7
Merrimack County	77,407	17	12	12	11

Data Sources: 2012–16 American Community Survey five-year estimates; U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), 2017.

\*Continental figures for total labor force include the 48 lower states and Washington, DC.

<sup>1</sup> Data elements included in the Community Health and School Effectiveness Indexes, along with measures for Merrimack County, can be found in the Technical Appendix.

## SITE VISIT PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

In fall 2019, the study team conducted interviews with eight current or former Village staff, three partners, and seven current or former board members. Site visit interviews conducted with Village staff and their partners focused on understanding Village programming and partnerships that support community health, and formal and informal education as well as the Village's institutional approaches to assessment and sustainability.

In addition, Village staff provided the following data to create the network map included in this profile:

- 2018 Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 990 forms
- Annual donation and funding reports
- Payroll documentation
- Lists of institutional programming
- Interview notes and related materials collected by the case study team

This site profile includes the following:

- A summary of select Village programming and partnerships that support formal and informal education and community health
- The Village's institutional approaches to sustaining its work
- A descriptive network map that illustrates the scope and variety of connections the Village maintains with local partners throughout the county and beyond

## KEY PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS PROMOTE WELLBEING AND VILLAGE VALUES IN THE COMMUNITY

During the time the Shakers lived at the Village, they created rich relationships with the local community. Community members and staff who participated in the site visit shared the history of the Village as a welcoming place to which the community feels a strong connection. Throughout the Village's long existence as a museum, there have been different periods when the Village's leadership has focused more intensively on the grounds, its exhibits, and internal events, rather than on external partnerships. The Village's two most recent directors moved to increase collaboration and reinvigorate external relationships and local partnerships.

The Village's 700 acres serve as a physical and mental health resource for the local community and visitors. The Village's land provides space for a variety of outdoor recreation activities (e.g., walking and cross-country skiing). The Village offers tai chi and yoga classes on-site as well as occasional nature walks and workshops on health and wellness. One staff person called it "a place of refuge, calm, and inspiration," and a board member described the Village as "a safe, sacred space" that promotes mental health.

Multiple educational offerings take place at the Village, and staff also take some educational programs off-site. In addition to on-site guided and self-guided tours, the Village offers on-site programs for school classes, with a primary focus

on 8- to 12-year-old children. Youth educational program topics include the Shakers' care for the environment, their inventions and use of technology, and Shaker community life. Village staff also take programs to the local elementary school and to senior centers. In addition, the Village offers fee-based workshops by staff or local experts (e.g., Shaker cross-stitch classes and growing and using herbs). The Village also hosts educational opportunities for, or with, partners (e.g., a Permaculture Design course held at the Village). In October 2019, the Village and the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester, New Hampshire, partnered to mount a major exhibit of Shaker artifacts at the art museum.

Several key partnerships illustrate how Village activities contribute to formal and informal education as well as the health of the local community. Each of these partnerships also advances the Village's historic mission as it carries forward the Shakers' commitment to education, learning, health, and stewardship of the land.

The Dewey School, a nature-based preschool that opened in fall 2019, rents a Village building and uses its woods and meadows. The director of the Dewey School noted that she sees the school and the Village as a "perfect fit." The school enhances the Village's visibility and presence in the community in multiple ways. Each participating family receives a Village membership; most had never visited before. The school schedules its monthly family days to coincide with the Village's Saturday events so that families can participate in both. Other school-sponsored events and advertising also increase awareness of the Village. For example, the school holds a monthly Roots Walk for children up to three years old and their caregivers, and a summer camp for children ages four to seven was scheduled to begin in summer 2020.

The Dewey School's director described the alignment of its values with those of the Village: "I wouldn't have done this anywhere else. It only works here because of the interaction and connections . . . we are encouraging new generations to appreciate land and preservation."

The school's focuses on learning, social experiences, community, and the natural world aligns with important Shaker values. It also supports the social, emotional, and cognitive development of the children, and enhances their connections to the Village and the broader community.

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (Extension) provides research-based information and informal learning opportunities on topics ranging from natural resources to community and economic development.<sup>2</sup> An Extension staff person described the Village as a "true partner" in that both groups benefit from their ongoing partnership focused on preserving and caring for natural resources.

The Village provides space and resources for Extension activities and classes, while the Extension provides expertise, access to volunteers, and an extensive network.

The Village-Extension partnership started in 2015, focused on specific projects or events. For example, the Extension hosted a Permaculture Design course at the Village, and several Master Gardeners created an herb garden at the Village as part of their required volunteer service. Design course participants created designs to improve three Village areas designated by staff; one, a reimagined entrance, has been implemented. More recently, the Extension hosted an Arbor Day program at the Village and engaged participating arborists to return for a workday at the Village.

<sup>2</sup> The Cooperative Extension Service is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-supported system that operates through the nation's Land-Grant University program to develop strategies with food producers to meet their challenges, adapt to changing technology, improve nutrition and food safety, prepare and respond to emergencies, and protect the environment: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-map>.

After the Village hosted the 2019 New Hampshire Permaculture Day, the partnership moved into a new phase. Extension staff recognized the Village as an ideal location for its education efforts. In 2019, the Extension began holding its 12-week Natural Resource Steward (NRS) training at the Village. The Extension also brings its own partners, such as the New Hampshire Departments of Environmental Services (DES) and Fish and Game, to the Village to engage class members in demonstration projects that both teach students and benefit the Village. For example, DES staff showed participants how to assess the water quality of the Village Pond. Extension staff encourage participants to do their post-training 40 hours of volunteer service at the Village and provide a list of possible projects. One NRS participant has designed and built a new perennial garden and spent 100 hours restoring an historic Shaker fence. A Village staff member described it as “a wonderful teaching and lab site” for the Extension.

This partnership helps the Village carry forward both the Shaker legacy and the Village’s current mission by making the Village a site for lifelong learning about conservation and supporting the Village’s ability to care for its land, ensuring that the site remains a refuge for physical and mental renewal. Visitors have the opportunity to engage in learning about and practicing conservation through Extension classes as well as participate in Village classes and workdays. Gaining skills, contributing to the health of the Village land, and being able to transfer those skills to other sites and projects all support enhanced wellbeing for participants and the larger community.

The Concord Food Co-op renews the Shakers’ historical cultivation of an array of crops. Over the past eight years, a partnership with the Concord Food Co-op has revived vegetable and herb gardens where Shakers previously gardened. These create visual interest and opportunities for visitors to tour and learn about food and gardening from both Shaker times and in the present. A farmer employed by the Co-op cultivates the gardens, lives in Village housing at a reduced rate, and sometimes uses Village equipment for farming. The farmer engages with visitors, offers tours, and participates in events and classes.

The partnership also helps the Village reach new segments of the community—for instance, Co-op members receive a free Village membership. In summer 2019, the partners held a joint garden party for their members. The Co-op also supplies some food items for sale at the Village café and has supported Village events (e.g., doing marketing and food preparation for Permaculture Day).

While the Co-op sells products from Village gardens in its store, a Co-op staff person noted that profit is not a main motivator for the partnership. “It’s about the farm itself, not about transactions.” He noted that the Village and the Shakers had the same vision of promoting organic and natural farming methods. “It was an opportunity we couldn’t pass up.” The partnership benefits the Co-op and its members by providing land for organic farming and increasing the amount of high-quality organic vegetables available in the community. The partnership also benefits the Village by recreating features of the landscape that were important during Shaker times and opening possibilities for other classes or events focused on food and agriculture.

## **APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABILITY INCLUDE REFINING INTERNAL STRATEGIES, ENHANCING KEY PARTNERSHIPS, AND INTENTIONALLY BEING IN THE BROADER COMMUNITY**

Since 2017, Village leaders have taken steps to build financial stability by working to eliminate debt, increase fundraising, grow the endowment (valued in 2019 at \$900,000), be more efficient with the physical plant, and restart rentals at the Village. Over this period, fundraising income has increased, as has the number of special events. In 2019, the board established four task forces (nature, arts, spirituality, history) to explore future directions.

The Village's partners are also finding ways to sustain their work with the Village and expressed interest in expanding their partnerships. The director of the Canterbury Singers has included its partnership with the Village in her job description at the Concord Community Music School. The partnership with The Dewey School can also become self-sustaining if the school is successful; the director expressed her desire to grow the school at the Village by expanding preschool enrollment or expanding into elementary grades. And the Concord Co-op aims to grow a little more food each year, while the manager has ideas for further expansion like starting a farm stand.

In the broader community, a recent town vote to fund improvements on Village property also illustrates the strength of the current town-Village relationship. A dammed pond on the Village's land supports local conservation efforts and supplies water for local firefighters beyond the Village. At a 2019 town meeting, residents of Canterbury approved a contribution of \$25,000 to the dam repair fund. Staff and board members had worked actively to build support for the vote, and the head of the Canterbury Historical Society wrote a letter to the editor of the Concord paper urging a "yes" vote. One board member said, "We are conscious of the social wellbeing we can bring to the community, and they can bring to us. All trustees and staff want to be deeply embedded in the community."

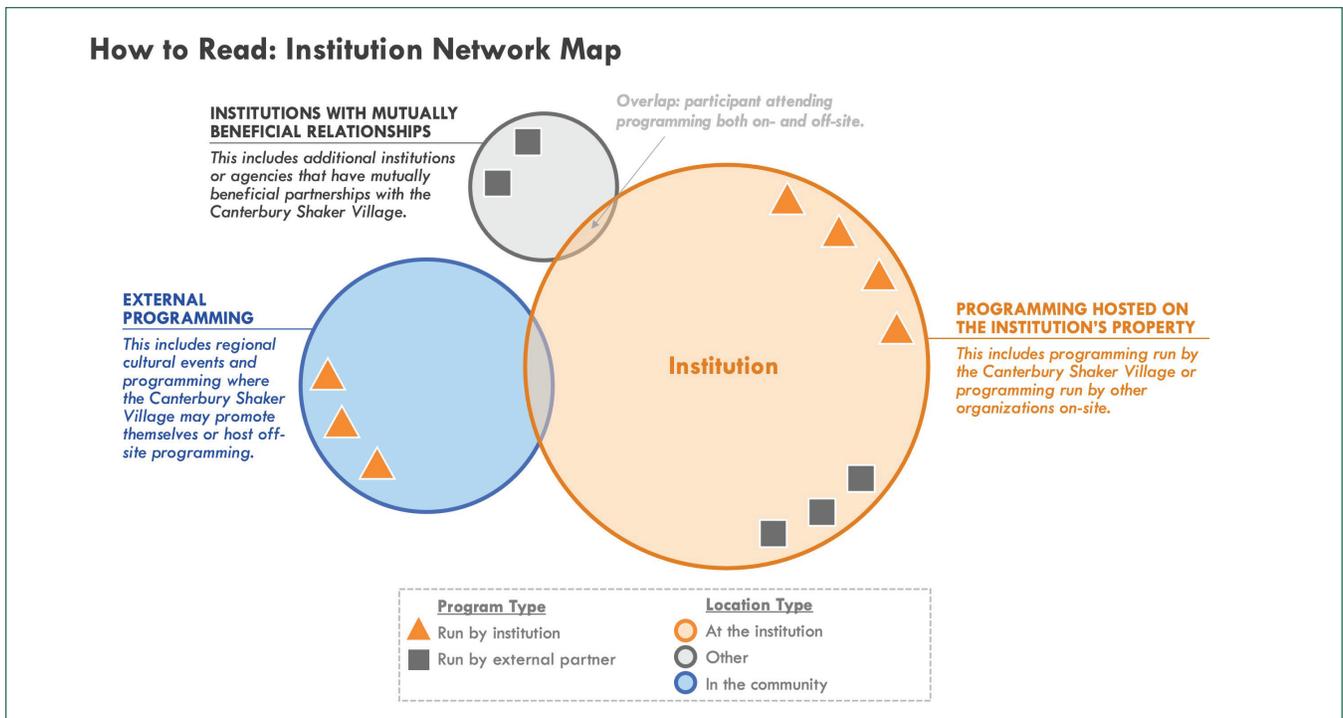
The Village's stewardship of the grounds, the programming offered to visitors, and the partnerships that support a diverse range of activities on and off the grounds promote the institutional values of lifelong learning through a connection to nature. The Village simultaneously provides a refuge for physical and mental renewal for its community. This work, and the partnerships that support it, enhances access to high-quality educational opportunities and provides outlets for healthy living, and the networks facilitate, strengthen, and ensure sustained access to these opportunities throughout the region. In these ways, the Village is actively expanding what it means to be a history museum in the 21st century while maintaining its historic mission to serve the holistic wellbeing of the Village's residents, visitors, and the broader community.

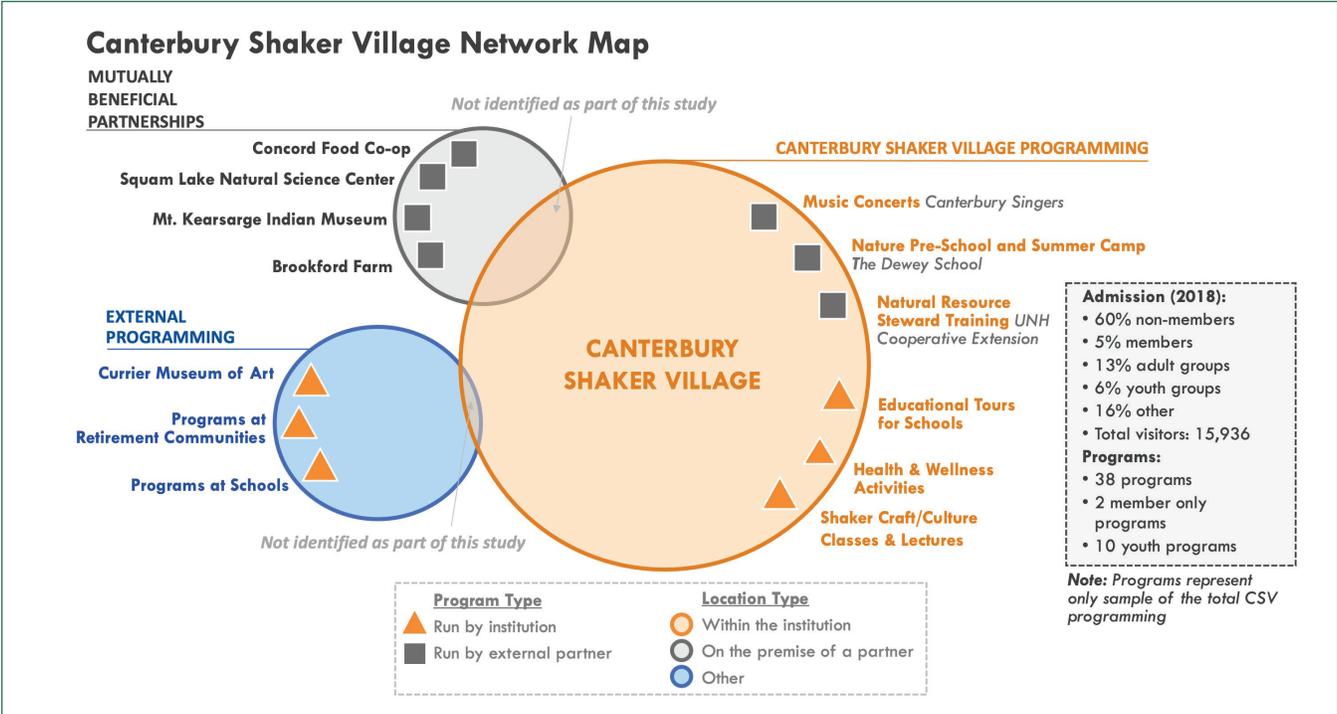
# CANTERBURY SHAKER VILLAGE NETWORK MAP

Using data provided by the Village, the study team developed a descriptive network map to highlight the different types of connections the Village maintains with other institutions in the local community. The map illustrates the relationships between the Village and those entities that offer programming at the museum

itself and those that support cross-marketing efforts or have reciprocal relationships with the museum, and it includes examples of off-site, Village-led programming. The map does not provide an exhaustive list of the museum’s programs but attempts to illustrate a subset of the relationships that the museum maintains.

*NOTE: The network map is purely descriptive. The connections represented on the map do not necessarily, and are not intended to, provide estimates of the duration, durability, intensity, or broader economic impact of the relationships between the Village and any single entity, or the broader network itself. The goal of the network map is to represent the range and diversity of different types of institutions that connect to the Village in different ways.*





The Village network map illustrates several aspects of the network of local connections maintained between the Village and outside organizations. Within the orange circle is a sample of programs that operate on the physical property of the Village—both programs produced by the Village and those produced by others. Within the blue circle is a sample of regional partnerships through which the Village offers off-site programming or participates in other community events. The gray circle represents a sample of connections with other institutions that have reciprocal relationships with the Village.