

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Hancock Shaker Village

AND/OR COMMON

Hancock Shaker Village

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Lebanon Mountain Road (U.S. Route 20)

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Hancock/Pittsfield

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

1st

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE

025

COUNTY

Berkshire

CODE

003

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Shaker Community, Incorporated (principal owner)

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 898

CITY, TOWN

Pittsfield

STATE

Massachusetts

\_\_ VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Berkshire County Registry of Deeds, Middle District

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Pittsfield

STATE

Massachusetts

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1931, 1939, 1945, 1960, 1962

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D C

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED - restored	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Hancock Shaker Village is located on a 1,000-acre tract of land extending north and south of Lebanon Mountain Road (U.S. Route 20) along the boundary of Hancock and Pittsfield, Massachusetts (the larger portion of the village lies in Hancock). The buildings preserved in the village are those constructed for the Church Family, which occupied the center of the original Hancock complex and maintained the Sunday meeting house. Five other families of 30 to 90 people--each with its own dwelling, meeting house and workshops--were included in the full Hancock community, two to the east of the Church Family and one each to the north, west, and south. Of those five clusters, only the foundations of the North and West Family buildings remain.

As a rule, Shaker architecture varied little from one community to another. The buildings at Mount Lebanon, the center of Shaker authority in America, served as models for other settlements. In some cases master builders from Mount Lebanon supervised construction in satellite communities like Hancock. Artisans followed the theory of building enunciated by Mother Ann: "Every force evolves a form." Utility was the ideal of Shaker architecture and functionalism its result. Builders used a variety of materials. The exteriors of all buildings were unembellished and well-proportioned. Communal dwelling houses in particular were the acme of plainness, neatness, and symmetry. Inside, partially wainscoted walls, built-in cupboards and sets of drawers, and ubiquitous rows of wooden pegs made for order, convenience, and cleanliness. Walls were plastered and painted white or cerulean blue. Floors were either done in natural finish or stained a reddish yellow.

Nineteen original buildings are preserved at Hancock Shaker Village (four others nearby serve as private residences), ranging from the main Brick Dwelling, which provided living quarters for 100 people, to the small Ministry Wash House, used for bathing. Exhibits in the various workshops illustrate the full range of industries carried on by the Hancock community. None of the buildings appears to have been substantially altered since its construction and fourteen have been fully restored. The extensive grounds of the complex include gardens, orchards, and open fields still in active agricultural use.

Also included in the landmark boundaries for the Hancock Shaker Village are the Shaker cemetery, established at the end of the 18th century and last used in 1959; the Shaker reservoir and visible remnants of their water supply system, located on the wooded slope northwest of the village center (north of Route 20); the Shaker Mountain or Mount Sinai, which was the scene of and retains archeological remains of the Shaker's feast day celebrations; and the archeological remains of Hancock's North and West Family complexes, also located in the area north and west of the present village center.

A description of representative buildings in the Hancock Shaker Village complex follows (numbers correspond to those on the accompanying perspective view, taken from the visitors guide, dated 1974):

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1790, 1820-1860, 1960

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Organized in 1790-92 and finally dissolved in 1960, the Shaker community at Hancock, Massachusetts, flourished during the four decades preceding the Civil War. Nineteen remarkably preserved buildings remain from the early period and are now the property of Shaker Community, Inc., a nonprofit corporation that maintains them as a memorial to the sect. They illustrate the communitarian life, distinctive architecture and furnishings of the Shakers. The most distinctive building in the village is the Round Barn, built in 1820 to house 52 cattle and the hay to feed them. A massive structure about 270 feet in circumference, it is believed to be the first round barn built in the United States.

An outstanding feature of the community buildings is their interiors. They have remained unchanged due in part to the fact that the structures passed directly from Shakers to preservationists. Shaker Community, Inc., was able to purchase many of the original furnishings as part of the purchase price, and since 1960 has been successful in securing many other Shaker items with Hancock provenience. The corporation owns the largest collection of Shaker furniture in the United States. To date 14 of the buildings have been carefully restored and refurnished. Hancock Shaker Village is open to the public from June 1 to November 1 and by appointment at other times.

### Historical Background

The origins of Shakerism are to be found in late 17th-century France, where a group of peasants claimed inspiration of the Holy Ghost and preached the necessity of a return to primitive Christianity. They believed that physical manifestations were outward signs of religious fervor, so tremblings, faintings, and visions were regarded as vehicles to attain salvation. These religious ideas were carried to England, where converts became millennialists, preaching the doctrine of Christ's imminent second coming, and the violence of the former physical manifestations was sublimated into a ritualistic dance. Adherents were won primarily from the working class, among whom was Ann Lee, the daughter of a Manchester blacksmith who had experienced an unhappy marriage and the early death of her four children. So intense were her beliefs and so impressive her sincerity, she soon became known as Mother Ann.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 1,000 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,3,7</u>	<u>2,6,0</u>	<u>4,7</u>	<u>10,0</u>	<u>7,6,0</u>	B	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,3,8</u>	<u>0,4,0</u>	<u>4,6</u>	<u>9,8</u>	<u>0,5,0</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING
C	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,3,5</u>	<u>9,6,0</u>	<u>4,6</u>	<u>9,8</u>	<u>0,7,0</u>	D	<u>1,8</u>	<u>6,3,5</u>	<u>7,0,0</u>	<u>4,7</u>	<u>0,0</u>	<u>5,8,0</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by John D. McDermott, Historian, 7/23/68

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Historic Sites Survey - National Park Service</u>	<u>9/3/76</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L Street NW.</u>	
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington</u>	<u>D.C.</u>

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

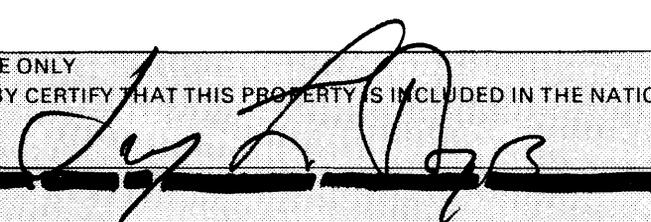
THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE N/A National Historic Landmark

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
	DATE <u>9/30/83</u>
ATTEST:	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY-NOMINATION FORM**

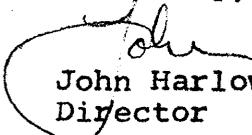
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Below are the most current names and addresses of the owners of the property that abut the museum's land:

- 1. Mr. & Mrs. William J. McCulloch                      413-499-0168  
Central Berkshire Blvd.  
Postal Route 49  
Pittsfield, MA 01201
- 2. Mrs. Harold A. Shedd    617-335-3819  
299 Essex St.  
Weymouth, MA 02188
- 3. Mr. & Mrs. Roy Whitaker    413-443-1218  
Central Berkshire Blvd.  
Postal Route 49  
Pittsfield, MA 01201
- 4. Mr. & Mrs. Harry N. Creamer    413-443-9756  
Mr. & Mrs. Harry N. Creamer, 2nd                      413-499-2758  
Central Berkshire Blvd.  
Postal Route 49  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

I hope this brings your file up to date and all the best from Hancock Shaker Village.

Sincerely,

  
John Harlow Ott  
Director

JHO/mtf  
Encl.

*3/6/81*

*Supt. Pittsfield State Forest:  
Mr. Douglas Pollard  
413-442-8992*

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Library (3). This 2-story, gable-roofed brick building was constructed in 1878 as a combined poultry house, corn and apple drying area and calving pen. It was remodelled on the interior in 1962 to serve as a reception center and in 1974 became the village library, housing both historical and contemporary volumes, manuscripts and photographic collections and special exhibits.

Brick Dwelling (4). Completed in 1830, this 3-1/2 story brick building with gabled roof contained living quarters for 100 brothers and sisters, various cooking, canning and storage rooms, and two of the village's most important communal rooms--the dining room and the meeting room (used for weekday worship). The basement and first two floors of the restored building are open to the public; the third floor contains offices and work rooms.

Brethrens Shop (5). This 2-story frame and clapboard building, probably constructed in 1820, housed some of the most important industries of the Hancock men. Shaker crafts now exhibited include chairmaking, cooperage, clock-making, cobbling, harness-making, basket-weaving and broom-making.

Sisters Shop (6). This 2-1/2 story frame and clapboard building was begun in 1795 as a 1-story building and enlarged to its present size in 1830. The first floor contains the restored dairy, buttery and medical department, the second spinning and weaving rooms.

Tan House (8). This 2-1/2 story building of rubble masonry and frame with clapboarding was constructed in 1835. Originally a tannery, it was converted to other purposes when commercial tanneries made that Shaker industry unprofitable and unnecessary. The building was restored in 1973 and now contains the last blacksmith and forge shop at Hancock as well as the cider room and press, cabinetmaker and carpenters' shops. Power for the Shaker machinery was supplied by the water turbine on the ground floor.

Round Stone Barn (10). This is the most famous of the Hancock Shaker buildings. Erected in 1826, it consists of a fieldstone cylinder 95 feet in diameter with a wooden interior. The barn could be approached on three levels, each with a specialized use. The top level, a balcony around the interior circumference of the cylinder, was used for unloading hay from wagons into a central storage area. The middle level accommodated 52 cattle in stanchions radiating from a central manger. The bottom level was the manure pit, which could also be serviced by wagons driven around its interior circumference. After fire gutted the barn in 1864, the wooden interior and roof were rebuilt and a brick ell was added for equipment storage. The latter space is now used for exhibits related to Shaker farming equipment and techniques. The barn was completely restored in 1968.

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Laundry and Machine Shop (11). This 3-1/2 story frame and clapboard building dates in part from 1790. The ground floor contains the machine shop (east) and laundry and ironing rooms (west); the second floor houses the herb and seed department (east) and clothes drying rooms (west). Power for the machine shop was provided by a small tub-turbine operated by water from the reservoir on the hill to the north.

Meeting House (13). This frame and clapboard building with gambrel roof and dormers was constructed by the Shaker community at Shirley, Massachusetts in 1793. It was moved to its present location in 1962 to replace an identical building dismantled by the Hancock community in 1938. The first floor of the restored building is devoted entirely to the meeting room; above are the living quarters of the Shaker elders and eldresses.

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Spurred by what she claimed was a revelation, Mother Ann left for America in 1774 with eight followers. There she founded the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing. The tenets of the new church were a belief in a dual Deity, Messiahship, confession, celibacy, sex equality, and separation from the world. The virtues most highly prized were honesty, continence, simplicity, and charity. Each Shaker community divided into "families" of from 30 to 100 persons. Trustees appointed by the ministry held all property and made all business contacts with the outside world. Celibacy was enforced. In essence once a novitiate member made his decision, he gave up his family and his property to the community.

Mother Ann and her disciples eventually settled in a small New York village called Niskayuna, later Watervliet, a few miles northwest of Albany. In 1779 a religious revival conducted at nearby Mount Lebanon, New York, indirectly won adherents to her cause, and interest in the Shaker version of pietism spread. Stimulated by newly-found success, Mother Ann began traveling through New England to win converts. Before her death in 1784 she established the foundations for Shaker communities in most of the New England States. Strong leadership continued to mark the sect; between 1787 and 1794 eleven communities were established in New York and New England. The center of Shaker authority was the community begun at Mount Lebanon in 1787.

The Hancock Shaker community near Pittsfield, Massachusetts, was one of those established in the decade following the death of Mother Ann. Founded in 1790 the community eventually divided into six families of from 30 to 90 people. Each family had its own dwelling house and cluster of buildings that included workshops and meetinghouses. The church family occupied the center of the complex and maintained the Sunday meetinghouse.

The Hancock community prospered in the early 1800's and reached a peak in the four decades following 1820. Membership at one time rose to 300. To sustain themselves the Shakers raised vegetables and grains and bred livestock. What money they needed came from a grist mill, a small mine, and a number of small manufacturing enterprises. Textiles, pails, brooms, and nails were some of the products offered for sale.

Following the Civil War, Shakerism began to decline. Since the society was celibate, it had to depend on converts for growth, and there were simply too many competitors. Potential members and disciples alike responded to the opportunities and needs of a growing Nation. The new demand for women workers proved especially deleterious to the movement. In the past Shaker communities had served as refuges for young women and widows left alone in the world; now many of them could earn an independent living as "female typewriters." By

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1874 only 98 members remained in the Hancock community.

Shakerism continued to decline in the present century. During the peak years about 6,000 men, women, and children called themselves Shakers. At one time there were 19 Shaker societies operating in the United States. Today there are two: one at Canterbury, New Hampshire, and one at Sabbath Day Lake, Maine. Members total 12. All of them are women.

The Hancock Shaker community dissolved in 1960. At that time Shaker Community Inc., a nonprofit corporation formed to preserve the Hancock complex as a permanent memorial to the Shaker sect, purchased the 19 existing buildings, many of the original furnishings, and 935 acres of land. To date Shaker Community Inc. has restored 14 of the Hancock buildings. The corporation has also been successful in locating many Shaker-made items with Hancock provenience and now owns the largest collection of Shaker furniture in the United States. In addition to its preservation and interpretation programs, Shaker Community Inc. frequently sponsors special activities, including traditional Shaker dinners, concerts, craft demonstrations, seminars, and educational conferences.

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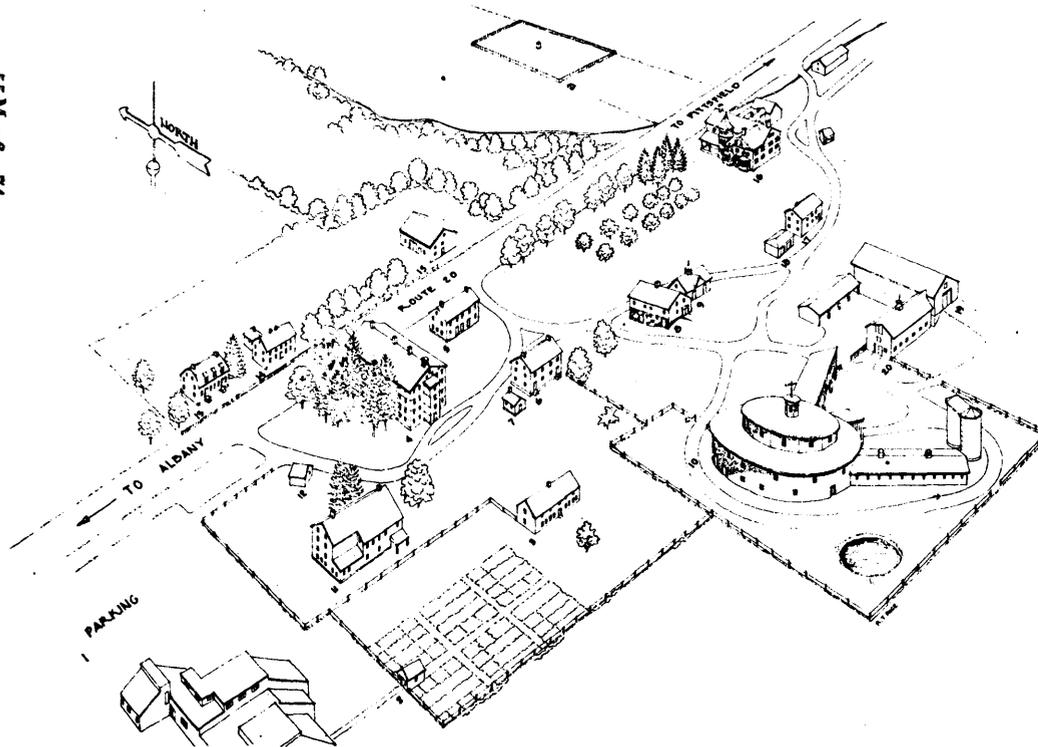
ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

The boundaries of the national historic landmark designation for Hancock Shaker Village in Hancock/Pittsfield, Massachusetts, are shown in black on the accompanying U.S.G.S. map:

7.5 minute series; Pittsfield West, Ma. - N.Y.; 1959. Those boundaries include the following parcels, identified by number on the U.S.G.S. map:

1. All property owned by the Shaker Community Inc. as recorded in the Berkshire Middle Registry of Deeds as of January 1, 1976, with the exception of the parcel lying south of a straight line approximately 3,300 feet long running from the northwesterly corner of land conveyed by the Shakers to one Schiffman in a deed dated April 1, 1912 (middle Registry, Book 368, Page 240) to the southeasterly corner of land conveyed by the Shakers to one Kelly in a deed dated November 29, 1957 (Middle Registry, Book 532, Page 474).
2. Four house lots lying east of Central Berkshire Boulevard, on each of which is an original building of the Hancock Shaker complex, said lots being surrounded by property of the Shaker Community Inc. lying southeast of the intersection of U.S. 20 and Central Berkshire Boulevard.
3. That portion of Pittsfield State Forest on which is situated Shaker Mountain, described as follows: beginning at the intersection of the northern line of property owned by the Shaker Community Inc. and the Hancock/Pittsfield town line; thence northerly along said town line to a point 1,500 feet north of the north line of property owned by the Shaker Community Inc.; thence, westerly along a line parallel to and 1,500 feet north of said northern property line to the eastern bank of Shaker Brook; thence, southerly along said eastern bank to its intersection with the northern line of property owner by the Shaker Community Inc.; thence easterly along said northern line to the point of beginning.

55M-0-74



## HANCOCK SHAKER VILLAGE

U.S. Route 20

Hancock, Massachusetts

5 Miles West of Pittsfield

1. Visitors' Center and Village Office
2. Garden House
3. Library
4. Brick Dwelling
5. Brethrens Shop
6. Sisters Shop
7. Ministry Wash House
8. Tan House
9. Ice House
10. Round Stone Barn
11. Laundry and Machine shop
12. Garage
13. Meeting House
14. Ministry Shop
15. Wagon Barn
16. Trustees House and Shed Complex
17. Boys Shop
18. Brick Garage
- 19-20. 1880-1910 and 1939 Two Barn Complex.
21. Cemetery

photocopy of perspective view from Hancock Shaker Village  
visitors guide, 1974