



Trail Overview

Canterbury Shaker Village was founded in 1792. At its peak, over 300 people lived, worked and worshipped in 100 buildings on 2,400 acres.

Canterbury Shakers devoted their ‘hands to work and hearts to God’ while striving to make their community a self-sustaining ‘heaven on earth.’ Today, the museum includes 25 original buildings and 694 acres, all protected by a conservation and preservation easement.

The trails at Canterbury Shaker Village are designed to encourage visitors to explore the land and learn how the Shakers supported their community through innovative farming and a variety of water-powered industries.

Trail Distances

- Meadow Pond Trail** from Visitor Center  
Meadow Pond (out + back) = 1.1 miles  
Meadow Pond loop (returning on Shaker Road) = 1.7 miles
- Turning Mill Pond Network** from Visitor Center  
Turning Mill Pond loop = 1.1 miles  
Sawmill Pond loop = 1 mile  
Factory Pond loop = 1 mile  
Three Ponds loop (Factory Pond + Turning Mill Pond + Sawmill Pond) = 1.8 miles
- Carding Mill Pond Trail** from Asby Road Parking  
Carding Mill Pond Loop = 2 miles

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We ‘welcome you kindly’ to the beautiful walking trails at Canterbury Shaker Village. Enjoy and visit often.

Meadow Pond Trail

In 1792 the Canterbury Shakers established their community with the radical intention of becoming as self-reliant as possible. However, the land was stony and only marginally productive and lacked a source of waterpower to run their anticipated industries.

The Shakers built their first mill in 1797, a combination gristmill/sawmill, on the west side of Shaker Road. The mill was powered by four horses turning a ‘sweep,’ or heavy wooden arm. The Meadow Pond Trail highlights the Shakers’ early efforts at self-sufficiency: a brick manufactory, a hog house, and an attempt to create waterpower on an ultimately inadequate site.

The craftsmanship of the remaining artifacts—gateposts, stone culverts, stone and earth dams and spillways—reflect the beginning of what would in time become a two-mile-long water-powered mill complex on the east side of Shaker Road: a marvel for a valley that previously had no running stream.

1 Millstone

Just off the trail is the upper rotating stone or ‘runner’ of a gristmill, almost certainly from the 1797 horse-powered mill that stood nearby.

2 Meadow Pond Brick Works

In 1824, discovering the clay under Meadow Pond could be made into bricks, the Shakers dammed the east end of this Pond and laid out a brickyard. They moved a building to the north end of the pond for workmen, and for several years made 150,000–250,000 bricks annually. The bricks were utilized for the present-day Trustee’s Office, which displays exceptional quality in its precisely formed ‘pressed’ bricks and smoothly hammered granite.

3 Meadow Pond Inlet

The Shakers channeled the water into Meadow Pond by digging and maintaining ditches. Needing a way to get from their house to the brickyard, the brick workers built bridges over Meadow Brook to not impede the water flow.

4 Stone Box Culvert

The West Family [1806-1819], built their mill complex near this site, raising a combined sawmill and turning mill. In 1850 the community’s Second Family repaired the dam and revived the turning mill. This stone box culvert was part of their water control structure.

Turning Mill Pond Network

By 1800 the Canterbury Shakers had decided to create a water-powered mill system on the east side of Shaker Road to ensure the long-term viability of their society. Beginning with a natural water source two miles north of their Village, the Shakers dug a canal southward. This ‘Long Ditch’ took 16 years to complete and had eight ponds connected by aqueducts which by 1850 powered nine mills.

This elaborate system of water transfer and power generation supported many successful Shaker industries. The Turning Mill Pond Network explores this cultural landscape, filled with reminders of how the Shakers sustained their community.

5 Botanical Garden

This acre and a half terraced medicinal herb garden was established in 1816 by Thomas Corbett, the community’s first physician. While the original contents of this garden are unknown, Canterbury’s medicinal herb catalogs (1835–1854) offered 150 varieties of herbs for sale to the public.

6 Pump Mill

The Pump Mill (1905) propelled water from Factory Pond to four large cisterns in the North Orchard Field. From there, the water was piped to the Village.



7 Factory Pond

Factory Pond was the most intensely used of all the mill ponds. The Shakers impounded the pond in 1802 and built a series of mills here: a Fulling Mill, Tannery, Clothier’s Mill, Pump Mill, Wood Mills, Threshing Mill, and Ice House.

8 Boys Island

This peninsula was devoted to gardens for the Shaker boys, ‘where each youngster cultivates his little patch according to his own sweet will, raising melons, cucumbers, strawberries or whatever his fancy dictates.’

9 Turning Mill Pond, Mill and Dam

Turning Mill Pond was impounded in 1817 with stone and earthen dams. A three-story Turning Mill with an overshot wheel ran machinery to turn stock for beds and chairs, tubs and pails, large wooden screws and metalworking machines. The present earth embankment dam was built in 2020 to stabilize the site, while leaving the breached remnants of the historic double stone wall dam preserved nearby.

10 Sawmill Pond

In 1800 the Shakers dammed their first pond on the east side of the road. Despite its small size, Sawmill Pond has provided waterpower to a long succession of gristmills and sawmills.

11 Sawmill Foundation

Three sawmills have stood here. The first two were combination sawmill/gristmills. The second, built in 1832 on this stone foundation, had a 33-foot overshot wheel which ran four pairs of stones to grind flour, grain and malt. Both an upright saw and circular saw cut staves for pails and measures.

Carding Mill Pond Trail

In 1810, the importation of Merino Sheep began the Great Sheep Boom in New Hampshire, lasting until around 1840. Land was cleared, stone walls constructed, and large woolen mills built. The Shakers had large flocks of sheep and processed their own wool.

12 Stone Walls

The stone walls on either side of Shaker Road were built in 1793. The west wall was rebuilt in 1851 and the east wall was re-laid in 1858. The maple trees and horse chestnut trees that line the road were planted in 1870.

13 Watering Trough

This granite watering trough was made in 1831 by Brother Micajah Tucker and filled with water pumped from the Ox Pasture across the road. With a direction sign, or ‘guide-board’ nearby, this area was a natural stopping place for travelers.

14 Gate Posts

An imposing gateway with sturdy granite posts and easily imagined wooden gate speaks of the volume of traffic to this mill site and the Shakers’ pride in their millworks... but why are there three posts?

15 The South Factory

This factory complex had a Trip Hammer Mill which also contained metal lathes, and perhaps a foundry for casting stoves. By 1836 the Trip Hammer Mill was no longer usable and a Firewood Mill took its place.

16 Carding Mill

The Shakers purchased wool carding machinery from another Shaker community in Mt. Lebanon, New York. This Mill housed two carding machines, a picker and a shearing machine. After having powered eight mills, the water was released to flow to the Merrimack River. The Shakers had a saying: that by the time the water left Carding Mill, it was all worn out.

17 Carding Mill Pond

The eighth and final pond of the mill system, its 1811 dam was one of the highest in the Shaker mill system, rising 14 feet above the outlet. The mill was powered with an overshot wheel.

18 Firewood Sawmill

Impressive stonework and a penstock pipe are all that remain of the sawmill that processed almost 500 cords of firewood annually. The Mill held a dining room and fireplace for workers. The seventh, unnamed pond is now a marsh.

19 Stone Culvert

This granite culvert provided a dry passage to the mill site for animals and equipment. At the same time, it sped the waterflow velocity into the pond – ultimately increasing the torque at the mill waterwheel downstream.

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TRAIL MAP

