

**Center for New England Culture**

**Heritage New Hampshire Lecture Series**

**Thursday, October 27, 2005, 12:45 p.m.**

**Memorial Union Building Theater I, University of New Hampshire, Durham**

**Laura A. Smith, "The Fabric of Shaker Women's Lives"**

Laura A. Smith will present "The Fabric of Shaker Women's Lives" on Thursday, October 27, 2005, at 12:45 in MUB Theater 1. The lecture will be followed by a reception and refreshments.

Ms. Smith's lecture surveys textile-inspired literature produced by Canterbury Shaker women writers in the mid-nineteenth century. Poems, songs, journals, letters, prophecies, and testimonies reveal how Shaker women's work with textiles crafted revised notions of true womanhood and its component domesticity. In particular, Shaker women wove together communal family relationships sustained in part by their shared, sacralized labor in weaving, dying, and laundering. She pays special attention to the work of Canterbury Shaker Hester Ann Adams who produced in 1845 an intricate, illustrated text called a "gift image." Adams's writing and work serve as a model for the ways in which textile work could define Shaker womanhood. The Shakers were a celibate communal sect that flourished in the nineteenth century, with one of the best-known villages at Canterbury, New Hampshire. Shakers are known for their revolutionary religious ideas as well as their distinctive materials culture, including architecture, furniture, and fabrics. During the 1840s, a spiritual revival produced thousands of songs, prophetic writings, and extraordinary drawings. The lecture is free and open to the public, and even those unfamiliar with Shaker life and gift images will find the subject and Smith's presentation lively, engaging, and informative.

Laura A. Smith is the recipient of the first Elder Henry C. Blinn Research Fellowship which supports research by academics, museum and library professionals, independent scholars, and doctoral candidates in the collections of Canterbury Shaker Village and in The Shaker Collection in the University of New Hampshire Library, Milne Special Collections. She has published "Negotiating Property Rights in Sapphira and the Slave Girl" in the Willa Cather Newsletter and Review and written articles on Connie Porter, Charles Lenox Remond, and Sarah Parker Remond in the Encyclopedia of African American Literature. A graduate of Grove City College and the University of New Hampshire, Ms. Smith has taught at Dover High School and Kearsarge Regional High School, and she is currently a doctoral candidate in English at the University of New Hampshire.

The Center for New England Culture's Heritage New Hampshire Lecture Series is supported by an endowment from Heritage New Hampshire. The series annually presents lectures on the images, people, and places of New England, featuring the best of contemporary scholarship on the region. For further information, contact David H. Watters, Director, Center for New England Culture, University of New Hampshire (603-862-0353; [david.watters@unh.edu](mailto:david.watters@unh.edu)).