

**The New Vrindaban Community Past and Present:
Stories of a Community through Architecture**

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The following contains transcriptions of interviews with members of the New Vrindaban community. These interviews took place at New Vrindaban in October, 2004.

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Transcript of Grounds Tour with Tapahpunja, a New Vrindaban devotee

Tape #1, Side A

Tapahpunja:

This is the area of the community called the Garden of Seven Gates. It's kind of our hope for the future for agriculture. Um, I don't know if any of you saw the small garden, my educational garden, but that provides a lot of food, but not really enough to truly stabilize the food supply for an entire community. Um, the challenge up here used to be deer, but as you can see, if you look around, a 360, there's an eight-foot high fence around here. And the way I got that fence is by giving tours in the educational garden.

The Educational Garden



An extension of New Vrindaban's organic agricultural effort, this is known as the educational garden. Planted in 1998, the community sees this garden as an integral part of their mission to make sustainable agriculture and self-sufficiency off the land a centerpiece of the Hare Krishna way of life. In addition to providing much of the community's food stores, the garden is a resource used to teach visitors about the community's belief system. Visitors can take guided, half hour tours of the garden to learn more about Hare Krishna principles concerning family health, environmental activism, and organic agriculture.

In fact, one day I was driving by, not intending to give a tour. I was all greasy from working on the tractor, and they stopped me. A group of people stopped me, and insisted

I give them a tour. So as we went along on the tour, at the end I said, ‘You know I can’t really grow anything beyond this, ‘cause the deer population is so voracious, a hundred deer per square mile.’ Then this little Indian man who hadn’t said a word the whole time said, ‘Well, what do you need?’ I said, ‘Well, I’ve got a field.’ Which is this. You know, for West Virginia this is like a majorly, um, flat field for around here. [laughter] So pretty soon, actually, I need a fence, I need a physical barrier. Not bells and whistles and horns going off, and you know, peanut butter in pie tins, and all kinds of high-tech, or you know, folk, folky ways of dealing with deer. I just need to stop ‘em so they can’t come in. He said, ‘How much would that cost?’ I said, ‘Eight thousand bucks.’ He didn’t even hesitate. He said okay, took his checkbook out, and wrote me the check. So it took a year to put this up.

The Garden of Seven Gates



This is The Garden of Seven Gates, so named for its seven entrances on the hillside overlooking the community. This garden is the result of a single visitor’s donation to the community, made after taking a tour of The Educational Garden. This garden supplements The Educational Garden with winter crops such as Swiss chard, beets, and kale to stabilize the food supply of the community.

As it, as it relates to the buildings that you see here, this is put up as a building, as kind of a shack, as an outlook. So that it makes the field a whole lot more people friendly. That’s also why there are seven gated entrances, so you can have easy access from different directions. Because I envision that someday, the um, people will settle around this field, because what their life is about and how they make their living, how they interact with each other, and most importantly, their relationship with mother earth is based upon their relationship with this field. So you want to make it people friendly.



The Garden of Seven Gates is an important part of New Vrindaban's vision for the community's future. Community leaders hope that one day the devotees, as more join the community, will settle around this garden and devote themselves to each other and the earth. They hope that a settlement with the garden at its center will reflect the community's relationship with mother nature, who is at the center of their lives. This building was constructed to make the field more "people-friendly" and accessible to community members so they can enjoy the scenery of the garden year-round.

So therefore this field, or this building here, it serves as a place to get out of the weather, and also kind of as a lookout. I've got windows on all four sides, uh, so I can kind of watch and see if there's any...the, the deer thing is solid, now it's groundhogs. [laughter] They live along that bank there and they just come in and devastate everything unless you can really watch them, you know.

Um, that building, when we go back down, we can shoot that from a different angle, or if you think you want to. But that's the barn. That was built, actually, with that red roof on it there, that was built actually as a staging area, as a temporary pole building staging area, uh, to house the building materials for when we did all this construction down here. We came up through fourteen cabins [inaudible] where people come to stay for the weekend, and if they, sometimes people stay for a whole month.

New Vrindaban Cabins



New Vrindaban has fourteen of these cabins on its property. Two cabins serve as housing for community devotees, while the other twelve are part of New Vrindaban's retreat center for Hare Krishna pilgrims. The cabins are available for rent March through November to people visiting the community. Visitors may rent the cabin for a weekend, week, or month and have easy access to the temple and Palace of Gold.

Um, and that building there, at that time served as a place to keep all the building materials to make that all happen. And then when we, after the construction was done, I, I cleaned it all out and turned it into a barn, right now, which I'm, I'm uh struggling to save from the, from the uh material nature taking, wrecking it faster than I can fix it. [laughter] I did get it painted though, which was a good thing.

Um, I don't know if you can see up, up on that hillside there, those are little shacks. That's where one of our sannyasis, our renounced monks, lives. He lives up there in that little shack. And he is an expert at taking care of oxen, and very skilled at any kind of draft animal work. Horses, especially mules and oxen. So, he stays up there.

The Garden of Seven Gates



This is a view looking down from the top of the garden. The barn at the base of the hill was built as a temporary structure to house equipment during the construction of the temple, and now serves as storage for the community. The small structure seen upon the hill in the distance, beyond the barn, is the home of one of the community's sannyasis, or holy men, who have renounced the material world. The sannyasi lives apart from the rest of the community, devoting his time to working with draft animals.

Along here are these, uh, house trailers. That's a - you know you can tell people from West Virginia 'cause they've got a [inaudible] [laughter]...I live in one. Another way to tell people from West Virginia is their house trailer doesn't have curtains but their pickup truck does. [laughter] Anyway, there used to be four of 'em along here, and they were put up kind of as, as uh, cheap housing to accommodate the growth of the community as things began kind of, uh, taking off. We had, at one time, we had seven hundred people. Right now there's about three hundred, three hundred fifty, something like that. Um, just on the note on agriculture, that is my winter stash, right there, of greens. That's all kale. Can I walk you over there?

Scott:

Yeah [inaudible]

Tapahpunja:

This is an experiment with lettuce. Uh, it was nice and kind of uniform looking, but that real heavy, when those rains came, I planted the day before those rains hit. And it just, like, scattered the seed all over the place, you know. But, that's the idea of this, is that I'll let that grow another inch or so, then I'll take that bale of hay right there and give it a blanket of hay, of mulch, for the winter, and then next spring I'll have about a thirty day jump, on the uh, on getting lettuce started. Hopefully, we'll see if that works. But that was [inaudible]

Anyway, this is all, this barren ground here is all covered with rye grass. Of all the

grasses, rye has a very extensive root system, and you let it get up to about this high in the spring and you turn it all under and you have tremendous amounts of organic matter for your farming operation. Those are winter beets, and that's all kale. Yeah, that's, that's, I supplied the community with bushels and bushels of chard last year. Uh, but that patch right there is almost all Swiss chard. Are you familiar with that vegetable? Well, well, let's go over there and I'll show it to you. It's a, it's a very unique vegetable 'cause it's uh, it's in the, it's in a family of beets, but you can cut it down, come I'll show ya. And it'll go like that about five times.

Scott:

Can you use it like lettuce?

Tapahpunja:

You can, it's not, not quite as succulent as lettuce [*inaudible*] ...lightly steamed or sautéed. See, there were like ten rows of this here, and I would, I could come up here and in about a half an hour pick like four bushels of this, and stuff about like that. Just cut it down and put it in a box and take it down. That's why you have cows. That's how I pay my debt back to mother earth, by making sure that cow manure gets on there. And in springtime I kinda work it in, and I've replenished, you know nutritionally, what I took from the year before, you know.

Um, the other parts of this field, there are five different contoured strips below us here with little grassy spots in between them for, uh, erosion control. That's kind of the future hope for developing perennial plants like blueberries and raspberries and all that kinda stuff. [*inaudible*]

Kind of the roadside, uh, extension of our agricultural effort. And about five or six years ago, as a part of the management board here, I convinced the other decision makers in the community, the elders so to speak, that if you want self-sufficiency you can't relegate it to some far distant part of a ridge way over there. Maybe if people come visit they'll see it. It has to be very much central to the life of the community. It has to be visible, easily accessible, and part of our preaching, so to speak. So, I said, 'If you give me the use of this house and this thing, seven or eight years ago was just a mud hole, this garden, I'll develop it into a nice way to bring groups of people through.' To, uh, fire them up about agriculture and organic growing and all those kinds of issues, you know.

So, this whole complex, therefore, is just for that. This is like the, this little building right here is used for, well I used to live in there, but it's got a loft in there where you can sleep. No running water or anything, but that's like the repair shop. And, actually, the history of it is, believe it or not, at one time we had an elephant in there. [*laughter*]

Brian:

Somebody said that.

Tapahpunja:

Yes, we had an elephant. It was really great. It was, her name was Malani, and it took us about three and a half years to get her here from India, through all the paperwork and red tape. And she was wonderful. She was a baby elephant, um, and that was her winter home. And, and then, actually, when she wasn't in there we had a trailer, we used to pull her down to, uh, parades and festivals, like Mardi Gras, for example, down south. And uh, she would become part of the parade. When we would stop, like in the, to get fuel, and we opened the back door so she could get some air, the whole truck stop would like, you know empty out, like, oh man, there's an elephant, you know. [laughter] That, that used to be her winter home. It had big doors, which I took out, and I put that window in, and now it serves as a kind of fix-it and repair shop.

The Repair Shop



This building is New Vrindaban's repair shop. At one time it served as the winter home for Malani, a young elephant owned by the community.

That building right there which says, 'Radha Vrindaban Chandra Goshalla,' the word Goshalla means, uh, shelter for cows. 'Go,' in Sanskrit, means cow. So the supreme spiritual planet in the spiritual world is called Goloka. It means, loka means planet, so literally it means planet of the cows. [laughter] And cows of course are very dear to Krishna. They are a, as I was explaining to the group from Grove City College yesterday, taking care of cows is like non-different than taking care of the earth. Because they are an animal that is, you can't even talk about sustainable agriculture without cows. Otherwise you don't have fertility, and you don't have a real relationship with the, with the, uh working cooperatively with the animal kingdom as well. Cows kind of embody that; their care. So, that's the milk barn, right there, which every day about six thirty and every evening about six thirty we're milking.

The Goshalla



The Goshalla, which in Sanskrit means “shelter for cows,” is a small barn close to the guesthouse and temple. It houses a small number of cows. Like the nearby herb garden, the Goshalla is a representation of a larger operation at New Vrindaban. The community has 120 cows from which they harvest manure for gardens and milk for cooking. The Hare Krishnas once ran a commercial dairy at New Vrindaban with a herd of 430 cows, but the operation was running only to cover its own costs. The reason, according to a devotee, is that Hare Krishnas do not sell their cows to be slaughtered because of their spiritual practices, and most of the money made in commercial dairy is through the slaughtering of cows.

And, uh, this building right here is the uh, kind of the agricultural center. It’s where we have our town meetings. Uh, last summer, the summer before this one, I held fourteen different meetings in there, with on the average of about twenty-five different people, local people and people from the community. So, there’s a common kitchen, two guest rooms, a computer room, and a small farm library, which is like a collection of like fantastic uh, the original Mother Earth News and all those kind of, you know, sixties-seventies kind of stuff that um, you know, was really, uh, kind of part of the, the youth revolution of my generation. So that’s the function of that house. It’s also the place where, in 1974, when the founder of the Hare Krishna movement, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada came to America, he stayed in that corner room right there. That house wasn’t where you see it now. We moved it. [laughter] We built that rock foundation, picked it up, and brought it down the road about a half a mile or so, and plopped it down right there. That’s what happened. Um, what else is here?

The Agricultural Center



This is another view of the Goshalla with the green-sided Agriculture Center in the foreground. The center hosts the community's town meetings with members of surrounding communities. It also contains a common kitchen, two guest rooms, a computer room, and a small farm library of the original Mother Earth News. This is where A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada stayed during his visit to the community in 1974.

Uh, well that gazebo. That's, of course, that's the goat area where, that's the summer home for the goats. And the winter home, which I'm just fixing up, is right back beyond that white fence right there. That's where I keep 'em in the wintertime, to keep 'em warmer so they're not so windblown. But that gazebo you see there is where, in the course of the summer on any given weekend, I'm dealing with like a few hundred people who walk through the gardens, and I give 'em like this, uh, twenty minute, half hour tour of this garden and talk. And I plop 'em down right there and, you know, I address issues about family health, environmental activism, why they should, uh, if they really want to save the environment, the first thing they should do is get Bush out of the White House. [laughter] Step one. Get rid of that moron. Um, and, and, so that's the function of that. That's what that does.

While we're here, let me give you a little history on all of this. Uh, at one point, as I said, we had about seven hundred people in the community. We had massive fundraising going on. We raised, like thirteen million bucks in ten years. And, with that kind of cash flow, you know, you don't really think so deeply, with that kind of cash flow, about self-sufficiency. So, we actually put these two buildings up; the temple room where you were this morning and this guest house right here, as kind of temporary structures, in lieu of building something a little more solid, more permanent. When that cash flow stopped, kind of abruptly, uh, there we are! They're, they're like permanent structures! [laughter]

Apartments



These apartments are located near the temple and house many of the devotees.

The Temple



This picture shows the Temple at New Vrindaban. It was meant to be a temporary building in lieu of a more permanent structure. At the time of the temple's construction, the community was raising, on average, \$1.3 million per year; little thought was given to self-sufficiency. A more permanent temple made of brick or stone was to be built on the hill just behind the Palace of Gold. The new temple may become a reality, but is not currently in the works.

So the temple room originally was built as a place kind of, of temporary housing for our worship and the care of the deities on the main altar. And in the wings of it, both up and down, the second floor and the first floor wings are really for married people. And that's kind of how renounced our, at that time, the people who were married lived. They were living in one room, in a one room dwelling, and you had to go down the hallway to the bathroom. You didn't have a private bathroom or toilet facility. Um, and it was packed. I mean, there were just people all over the building at the time.



This picture shows the main temple at New Vrindaban, located just behind the palace lodge. It was built in 1981 as a place for the worship and care of the deities. The outer rooms on the first floor, and the rooms in upstairs portion of the temple, were originally used as living quarters for married devotees. Each married couple had one private room and shared a communal bathroom.



This playroom occupies part of the space formerly used as residence for married devotees. Space next to this room has been converted into an office. This room is located off of the main temple.

So that was really the original purpose of the building. And then we were planning to

build up on this hill, just behind the palace, a more permanent temple. A more, you know, built out of rock or brick or you know whatever, more solid. Which may still happen, but right now it's not in the plans.

Religion Education Room



This room, now used for children's religion classes, is located off of the main temple room. It was formerly a residence for married devotees.

This is what's called traditionally, this building that we call the palace lodge, in India is commonly called a Gosh-, er, a Dharmshalla. Shalla again means shelter, and it's a place where pilgrims on, on, uh, on trekking, or, uh, going from one holy place to another throughout India, would have wealthy people as part of their sort of spiritual duty, to build, uh, these kind of things. Not quite on that size of course, but places where travelers can stop. And, and if they can make a donation...

Dharmshalla



The palace lodge, traditionally known as the Dharmshalla, is the other main component of New Vrindaban's retreat center. It is a place for pilgrims to rest on their journey from one holy place to another. Many visitors to the community choose to rent rooms in the palace lodge because it is located directly across from the temple.

Tape #1, Side B

Tapahpunja:

I think over forty rooms in it or something like that. And in the bottom of it where the snack bar is, just past that snack bar, is a giant area for whatever; weddings, or parties, or get-togethers like that, where you can have a few hundred people and we have actually a lot of conferences out here. Okay? Any questions about this here area?

Dharmshalla



The palace lodge contains 38 guest rooms that range in size from four to eight beds. Modest accommodations include linens and air conditioning with unattached, individual bathrooms located near the guest rooms.

Brian:

Is this the main place where the cattle are kept...the cows?

Tapahpunja:

The ca- well that's just where we keep five of them. Uh, we have 120 cows.

Brian:

Really? [*inaudible*]

Tapahpunja:

Uh, well no, that's, that's, we can go down there if you want. That's the big barn, where, you know, one time we ran a commercial dairy here. We had over 430 cows in our herd. We were milking about 130 cows a day. Because of our spiritual practices, we don't cull our herd, which means we don't sort out the weak ones or the ones that are unproductive and slaughter them, send them off to be slaughtered. And when you don't do that it doesn't make a whole lot of sense being in the dairy industry, because commercial dairy farmers don't make much money on milk. They make it on slaughtering their cows. That's where it really comes from.

Um, they keep their cows pregnant continuously for six years. Every time a cow gives birth to a calf, immediately they artificially impregnate her, inseminate artificially. So she's pregnant again right away. And they do that six continuous times until she gets exhausted and her milk production goes down and they show their gratitude by slaughtering her. That's the culture we live in, huh? Worship dogs and kill cows. [laughter] Um, so, because we don't do any of that stuff, when we tried to kind of jump into the commercial dairy, um, world, it doesn't work financially. You just end up paying your overhead for the milk itself.

The other problem we had is that we were growing 125 acres of corn, which were right at – we can go down there if you like – that big farming operation was [inaudible]. And when you grow 125 acres of corn on this kind of terrain, it's like life threatening. Um, tractors turning over, one thing. West Virginia leads the country in its tractor deaths, [laughter] because of the terrain. You know, you're pulling seven tons of corn silage on a tractor on an angle like this, and your front wheel hits a groundhog hole, and the whole thing just goes over. It's really dangerous. So for that reason, and also, uh, the fact that the deer were eating about eighty percent of our corn, because, again, there's 100 deer per square mile here, we, we kind of dried up the herd. We stopped breeding cows, and stopped our milk production on a large scale. Like that.

So this little barn serves more as a, uh, kind of a sample of how, how important cows are to agriculture. Like under that gray tarp, for example, that's just all beautiful black, composted cow manure. It's just like...gold. Um, and I take that and I spread it on this garden [inaudible] ...there are forty-two growing beds in this garden [inaudible] ... maintaining the fertility and just constantly feeding it like that.

So, I'm getting to the point where I don't have to use any equipment on it anymore. It's so soft and loamy. The till of it is so nice. You can, like, stick your hand in it, which is the way soil is supposed to be. It's not, like, stiff and hard and you know. And that's because the cow manure is supplying the microorganisms in that soil with the food they need. Good farming means feeding the biotic life of the soil, not the plants. That'll come automatically by taking care of all the microorganisms and [inaudible] all that live in the soil. So, without cow manure, how are you going to do that? In the, in, you know, if you buy organic produce from Trader Joe's or Whole Foods or all those kinds of places that are now emerging, and you ask them, 'Where do you' – if you go directly to the farmer himself, who's growing for them, I mean they have a contract – and you ask 'How do you, you know, you don't have cows and you can't use, uh, chemical fertilizer, how do you keep your fertility up?' They'll say, 'Well we use this bagged, dehy-, uh, dehydrated organic fertilizer.' So, I asked the guy to see it, and when I looked on the bag it was blood meal, bone meal, fish emulsion. It was all the byproducts of the slaughterhouse. When they slaughter a cow forty percent of that cow goes for food, for humans, and sixty percent goes for all kinds of stuff like that. All the stuff they can't think of what to do with, they grind it up, uh, dry it, powder it, and sell it as fertilizer.

Alicia:

Which would be where we get beef from?

Tapahpunja:

That's what you're eating.

Alicia:

Oh, which is where you get Mad Cow's Disease?

Tapahpunja:

Oh yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Which is, you know, I mean they're lying through their teeth. The USDA, you know, is headed by Ann Veneman, who's a former Monsanto lobbyist, you know, and, and uh, her chief of staff is a former head of the American Cattleman's Association. You know, it's like a joke. Bu-Bush has basically put in charge of the regulatory agencies all the people who used to be corporate lobbyists, who are anti-environmentalists. They're in charge of the regula- the EPA, all the secretariats [*inaudible*]. This guy goes in there four more years and you can kiss the environment goodbye. He'll, he'll etch in stone. They'll completely deregulate everything that used to be the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and all that stuff it will be gone. You know?

Alicia:

So, can I ask on that note, um, if you guys don't want Bush in office, do you think Kerry is going to do a good job?

[*break in taping*]

Tapahpunja:

You know, to develop a community, th- the need to have a place where you keep all your heavy equipment, like bulldozers and dump trucks and all that, where you can pull in out of the weather and repair it all. This became that place. And, uh, when we kind of started downsizing in terms of our expansion, you know, more buildings and all that, we then sold this building to a, one of the members of the community who has a very successful jewelry business, silver jewelry. He sells mostly in Japan, but he hired him a whole work force here of about ten people from the community here who do the design work and do the engraving of that jewelry in that building.

[*break in taping*]

Tapahpunja:

A land-locked old log cabin that we fixed up and renovated, uh...

Tori:

What year was that?

Tapahpunja:

1969, I believe. '68 or '69.

Tori:

What year was the new temple built?

Tapahpunja:

The one where you were this morning?

Brian:

Uh-huh.

Tapahpunja:

That was built about '81. These are all houses owned by devotees. This, uh, this building to your right here, is owned by a devotee who runs a business where they make, um, it's like vegetarian jerky. It's little strips of soy jerky called pri- the name of the company is called Primal Spirits. He hires about ten to twelve people who do the whole business right out of there.

[*break in taping*]

Tapahpunja: [*inaudible*] ...500 on the flat part of it and a little bit of bottomland. It's not very ideal farmland. That's why smart people just kept on going further west into Ohio and Indiana, where there was flat land, you know, easier to work.

[*break in taping*]

Tapahpunja:

...coming down these in the winter. It gets icy. [*inaudible*] They, they do a fairly good job. They, they don't use salt here, which is good. They use, uh, it's a byproduct of the, um, coal industry called fly ash. It's like little kind of cinders. And they do a pretty decent job of trying to keep it up this time, but three or four days at a time you're, like, stuck. [*inaudible*]

[*break in taping*]

Tapahpunja:

...room schoolhouse. And the, you know, original farm families who settled here, that's where they went to school. I mean, I know some of those people actually. Um, we put that little front porch on it to kind of enclose it, turned it into a, uh, sculpting studio.

The Oakdale Schoolhouse



The Oakdale Schoolhouse was used as a one-room schoolhouse for the pioneer farm families in the area. The Hare Krishnas added the porch-like structure onto the front in the early 1980s for use as a sculpture studio.

Tori:

When was that? Do you know when that was?

Tapahpunja:

Yeah, in like '83, '84; right in that area. I mean, we have some really talented people here. You know, most of the palace, the work that you see on the palace [*inaudible*]

[*break in taping*]

Tapahpunja:

On the back there, that long addition is where we had a foundry, where we were doing, you know, metal casting and things like that. There are really, really talented people here. Uh, as I was saying, most of the work you see on the palace, all that real amazing, what you might call gingerbread hanging on the palace was originally done in clay. We went to India, we took photographs of temples throughout India, and using that photograph, we had a couple people who were really good with their hands and clay, molded clay work, making, uh, clay models. So, from a clay model, of a, of a photograph, we then made a mold and casted that mold duplicate times. It's really what the palace is. It's a cement block building with all that stuff pinned and anchored on it, [*laughter*] you know. And a lot of that work was done in here.

Um, this used to be called the Oakdale Schoolhouse, which, as I said, the pioneering families, the early farm families in this area, this was their one room schoolhouse. And, uh, from, as I said, we turned it into a molding shop and a metal foundry in the back.

The Oakdale Schoolhouse



This picture shows the long addition that was built onto the back of the schoolhouse. The addition was used as a molding shop and a metal foundry during the construction of the Palace at New Vrindaban.

Scott:

Does it still have the bells on it?

Tapahpunja:

Yeah. Yeah, it's the original bell. We're actually, the, the future use of this building; we're turning it into kind of a community center. So the, a few of the people in the community kind of organized themselves into a, like a neighborhood association, and they're going to renovate that and make it like a, uh, a place for entertainment; tea, and you know, light entertainment like that. So, kind of trying to work out the parking arrangement now. It used to be part of a – just on the other side of this bank right here there's a lagoon, and as we developed the community up there, which was where we originally were, um, that lagoon became for legal [*inaudible*]. It's kind of crazy to put it next to this, but we had to. We didn't really have a choice. In order to continue expanding the community, we had to have some kind of a septic system that worked, that was acceptable to state authorities, you know. Department of Environmental Regulations, or whatever it's called. So, that's Oakdale Schoolhouse. Let's uh...

The Oakdale Schoolhouse



A group of community residents has organized themselves into a neighborhood association and plan to renovate the Oakdale Schoolhouse for use as a community center. The original bell used when the building operated as a schoolhouse still hangs in the cupola.

[break in taping]

[inaudible]

[break in taping]

Tapahpunja:

As I said, the original community was 113 acres. And that was this landlocked farm way up that road; forty five minute walk up that road. It was unapproachable by, uh, car or truck even. Just horse and ox team could get up there and that was it. So we'd take all our supplies up there that way. The second piece of property became this, which is called Bahulaban. And Bahulaban is, uh, named after one of the twelve sacred forests of Vrindaban, India. When Krishna appeared 5,000 years ago, in the village of Vrindaban, it, it was a part of a whole, um, wooded area, like jungle and whatnot. And there were twelve sacred areas, one of which was called Bahulaban. So we, we named this Bahulaban. And this was purchased in about 1970.

Bahulaban



The original temple, Bahulaban, was the center of the community in the 1970s. It was a divisional farmhouse with two extensions. When it was in use, there was an average attendance of 40-50 people per service. It is named Bahulaban after one of the 12 sacred forests of Vrindaban, India.

Originally it was a, this is the original Caufield farmhouse. The Caufields are a local family who are, like, you know, like there's like millions of them. [laughter] Every other house you see down here is owned by a Caufield. This is the old Caufield farmhouse, built like maybe 1900 or so. Um, and it became kind of the center of the community for about 15 years. That's where the worship of Rhada Vrindaban Chandra, our deities, was inside there. In fact, if you go this way,

[break in taping]

Tapahpunja:

...farmhouse is this thing here. As the community grew we put one and then two extensions on it. [laughter] You see the difference in the siding here? And, in fact, let's go inside there. I'll, I'll show you. It's kind of neat.

[break in taping]

Tapahpunja:

This has been abandoned now for about fifteen years. [inaudible] Um, when I came here, when I was your age, this is where kind of, I like, grew up. The, the deities that you see now, on the main altar in the, in the main temple building down there, um, used to be here. And the whole, the entire temple room was this area right here, where the marble is.

That was it. Period. That was our temple. And there were about, you know, at – when I came there were about forty or fifty people here, and every morning, without fail, we would rise at, you know, two thirty, three in the morning, come to the temple, and the men would be on the left side, women would be on the right side. And the altar was, it was small but very gorgeously decorated like that. And right here, there was the, the dias, or the, what we call in Sanskrit the dias asan. Asan means seat, seat for dias. Um, dias is the literary incarnation of Krishna, who put the Vedic Scriptures into writing 5,000 years ago.

Bahulaban



The deities were placed on the center altar. Women worshipped on the right side, and the men on the left side of the temple room. The floor is made of marble. Near the altar was the dias asan, which is a seat for the guru or spiritual master to use while giving class. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada came in 1972, 1974, and 1976 and sat in the dias asan in this temple.

So one's guru, or spiritual master, sits on that seat to give class. So, when, when A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada came here in 1972, '74, and '76, this is where he sat; right here. And this was just a wall with a big stained glass window in it. Right here. That was the whole temple. And then, uh, as the community grew, we built this extension on the back here. Like that with the wood burning stove. Right, it used to go right where that hole in the wall is there. You'll notice that these glass, the stained glass is all around except for this one window here, and that's because, in 1973, um, some of our devotees were at a rock...

Bahulaban



One of the walls of the extension used to be a stained glass window, but was broken when a motorcycle gang smashed the window in a search for a missing girl.

[break in taping]

Tape #2 Side A

Tapahpunja:

Her father, or somebody, was under the impression that she had been like kidnapped. It was totally ridiculous. She came totally on her own volition. But he was a member of the highway men, which is like this notoriously evil and crazy motorcycle gang. So, one morning, I came a year after this, but I can kind of describe it to you, the community leader, Kirtanananda, was sitting on a pillow right up here giving class. And there were probably twenty people in here sitting, and at 6:30 am in rolls the highway men, like twenty guys on motorcycles with shotguns demanding to know where this girl was. She wasn't even here. I think she stayed for a day or two and went off somewhere else. We said, 'We don't know. We didn't tell her to come here, she came on her own.' They said, 'Who's your leader?' like that, and you know they were armed, they had shotguns and handguns like that, and so everybody was silent. Then they kinda figured it out by seeing his demeanor, and the fact that he was sitting on that little cushion. So they took him up a hill with a shovel and they told him to dig his own grave. Then they came in here, there used to be a door right here, now it's drywall, they went on the altar and pushed the deities off the altar, then fired and wounded four people. There was seriously blood like all over the floor here. And the noise of all that scared the guys up the hill and they all ran down and got on their motorcycles and took off.

And that was a real turning point for the community. Some people left because they kinda thought it was too heavy to try to be a Hare Krishna in the hills of West Virginia, it was just too strange. But it wasn't local people. These guys came from Kentucky, but same kind of mentality, kind of redneck-ish mentality. And other people became very strong in their spiritual commitment. And those four people were seriously wounded and

the local law enforcement looked the other way. They did absolutely nothing. We even knew who they were. We eventually, we found out their names and where they lived and all that stuff, but they did absolutely nothing.

So, as I was mentioning, you know, within martial arts, which like most everything comes from India, was developed because the monks were being, were being attacked by ruffians and the criminal element which is always there in society, so you can't take, artificially take this kinda pacifist position of, 'Just come in and wreck everything and kill people; we're just pacifists.' You can't do that, and that was why martial arts was developed. It was developed in India from the monks, actually to protect their temples and whatnot and the monasteries, and eventually went to India, to Nepal, Nepal to Tibet, Tibet to China and Japan like that, and it actually all originated from India.

So this was the center of the community here. This whole divisional farmhouse and this was all built on as an extension. Let's go take a look down there. Watch the floor there, where you step.

There was a wall right there. And this was the original temple. This little thing right here and we built, as I mentioned, the extension right here.

Scott:

What kind of [*inaudible*]

Tapahpunja:

We're so absorbed trying to maintain what we have down there that we don't have the funds to try to restore this building. It's really just too much. It is a maintenance nightmare. Well not just this, but all that down there. It's all wood and it's falling apart faster than we can fix it, because we don't have money to do it, you know. The overhead to run the community doesn't allow for a budget to hire and supply a maintenance crew of four or five people, which you really need for something this size with this much acreage and building.

Bahulaban



This picture shows the entryway into the old temple. It was originally a farmhouse owned by the Caufield family. It was built in the early 1900s, and purchased by the Hare Krishna community of New Vrindaban in 1970.

[break in taping]

Tape #2, Side B

Tapahpunja:

This was built in 1970, '71. It was our essential headquarters for the whole community, as far as town meetings. [inaudible] Is somebody up there? Town meetings, we're waiting for you to come out and give a speech or something. You got a fire goin' in there? You need a stove?

Ya know, we'd have meetings and decision making process like that. Now the first buildings for married people were those structures back there, you see. Those are, those were uh really something. And there'd be like four families living in one of those, with one room and a common bathroom and a [inaudible] kitchen. Something like that; really, really simple.



This building was the first housing used for married couples. As the community grew up to four families would live together in one room with a common bathroom and kitchen. It eventually became the guesthouse. The bottom floor was the kitchen and laundromat, and all the marble used in the palace was cut and polished in the workshops in this building. The second floor was the main dining hall, known as the Prashadam Room. The third and fourth floors were the living quarters, but a chimney fire destroyed the fourth floor, and the community has not been able to rebuild it due to a lack of funding.

Um, but, as I said, as we begin growing, this building here became our guesthouse. There's four stories. It was absolutely gorgeous, and a fire started, uh, in the, uh, chimney, a chimney fire and burnt the fourth floor up.

Scott:

Whoa!

Tapapunja:

And we've never been able to repair it. But that's a really solid building. All right, let's take a walk and I'll show ya some of the parts up here. *[Inaudible]*

[break in taping]

Tapahunja:

-ake ya in there, because, uh, I don't think it's safe anymore. It'd been, it's been getting rained on for, like, four or five years now. We could never afford to put a roof back on that third floor.

But that, this, uh, this bottom floor, that was the kitchen, the main kitchen. This was the laundromat, you know, we had an actual washing machine, and you see that plywood boarding up the window? That's where all the marble that you see at the palace was cut and polished in there. So that was kind of the bottom level. The second floor right there,

that was like the main dining hall, or what we call the prashadam room. The third floor and the fourth floor was all living quarters. So, you could actually invite people to come, and they would have nice little cozy rooms to stay in, like that room up, like those rooms up there at the top, and that little addition on the back, that was the planning department where we did like, you know, master planning. [*inaudible*]

That was part of the original farm, that building there. That was their milk processing building when the Caufields had this as their farm, but we used it as a kitchen for awhile. Okay, so let's check back in and go that way and we just have a few more buildings.

The Caufield Milk Processing House



*This building was used by the Caufield's to process milk when they owned the property.
The Krishna community used the building as a temporary kitchen.*

Brian:

Did you get any pictures of those?

Alicia:

Yeah, alright

Tapahpunja:

I don't have a key to get in there, but it's where we kinda added it on to this building. And this building is where many of the people lived on the second floor, in kinda individual rooms, mostly for families, and the bottom was for the casting and molding shop. Also, at the top were the workshops of the- where we did stained glass, chandelier making, sewing, all kinds of, all the kinds of arts and crafts things that went into making the palace and the temple as you see it now. This building up here, where the silo is, we built that in about 1974 as a second barn.

Housing and Workshop Building



This building was used as housing and included a manufacturing facility. The second floor housed individuals and families in single rooms. The top floor housed shops for stained glass, chandelier making, sewing, and various other crafts. The ground floor contained the casting and molding shop. These workshops were used to make various components of the Palace.

1974 Barn



This barn was built by the Hare Krishna community in 1974, next to the cattle grazing field.

Alicia:

Do you mind if I pop out really quick and get a picture?

Tapahpunja:

Yeah, go ahead. Actually I can drive up there, hang on.

Alicia:

Okay.

Tapahpunja:

Behind us, or to the left up here, is the main pasture ground for the palace; about 400 acres up there. [*inaudible*] This is an orchard that I planted about 25 years ago, which is still bearing. It needs a lot of work such as pruning and other care, but it is still productive. The fields across the street were, are where we graze our cows, and our main pasturing grounds are all this behind you. It goes back about 400 acres that way.

The Silo



This silo stands next to the second barn. The apple orchard was planted next the silo, and needs heavy pruning and other care to return it to top production. It does still bear, however, and is still used by devotees.

Tapahpunja:

We have a system called rotational grazing. Anybody know what that is?

Brian:

No.

Tori:

Moving them [*inaudible*]

Tapahpunja:

That's the pit we're all in and we pump it all out of there in our manure spreaders and go up on these hillsides and take care of all our farm land.

[*break in taping*]

Sankirtana:

...with the other buildings down the road. All of this was built and designed by the residents of our community. There's no professional architects, no professional craftspeople. It was all done just by the devotees that live here, and actually they began with no previous training or experience in this type of construction. So all of the work you see around us is all done by the devotees; this stain glass work, the, uh, marble work on the floor.

The Palace of Gold



These are the front steps to the palace entrance. The palace was originally designed to be a second home for the founder of ISKCON, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, but after his death it was converted into a memorial. Construction of the palace began in 1974 and was completed in 1979.

There's marble here from 17 countries from around the world, and the, uh, chandeliers, all the crystals are imported from Austria and Czechoslovakia by a few of the ladies. They designed and put these chandeliers together. So the palace was all built by the

residents here, and, uh, besides building the palace, they also had to build all of the arts and crafts shops that went into building the palace. So it was quite an undertaking. It started in about 1974 or so, and it was completed in 1979.

So the building itself is a memorial for A.C. Bhaktivendanta Swami Prabhupada, and, uh, like I mentioned the other day, he presented this ancient tradition from India to the West in the last ten years of his life, ahem. He traveled around the world 14 times to make this available. Excuse me, I'm losing my voice here, ahem. But he made this available to people all over the world.

The Palace of Gold



Seen here is the front entryway to the palace. All of the Palace's design was done by Krishna devotees who had no prior architectural or construction experience.

But anyways, the palace, it took about six years to build at a cost of about four hundred thousand dollars, and it's referred to as the Palace of Gold, because all of this work inside, the work, and on the roof of this building, it's all finished off in gold leaf. So the gold leaf, it's really hard to work with. It comes in booklets. The booklets are about the size of a square, and each sheet of gold is resting on a separate page, so it's so thin that you can't even pick it up. It'll just deteriorate right in your fingers.

Wherever you see the gold, then they had to put on a very thin glue. It's called a sizing. And then they take a piece of page with a gold leaf on it, slap it onto the surface, and then peel that back and the gold leaf is stuck to the sizing. And then they take a brush and they brush it into the form that you see over here. So it's pretty extensive. I think there's about sixty, I mean eighty ounces of gold on the whole building. So just the price of the gold leaf, back in 1979 when the palace was built, was about sixteen thousand dollars. I think the gold leaf is about three or four times as expensive today. So, let me bring you down this way.

The Palace of Gold



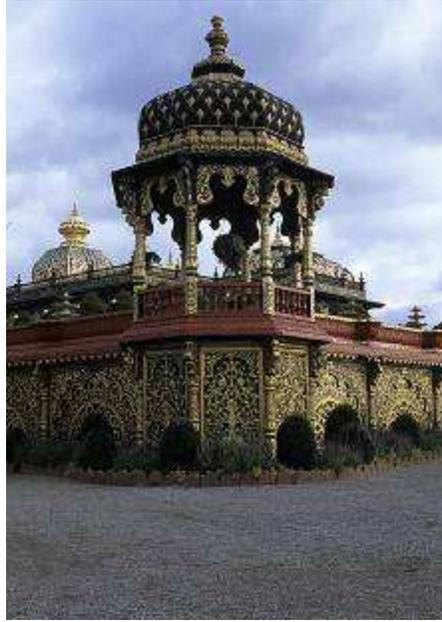
This picture was taken from the side of the palace, and shows the gold leaf-covered dome atop the palace. The total cost for the palace was about \$400,000. The gold-work alone cost approximately \$16,000.

A lot of them are adorned with the symbol of the peacock. The peacock is a symbol of royalty and good fortune. Now this one over here, this has about, uh, six hundred pieces of stain glass embedded into the work over here. And, uh, there's a lot of different symbols around the palace. For instance, the elephant is the symbol of wealth and strength, and the cow is a symbol of mother.

So there are several different types of mothers. The cow, the earth, the nurse, and the king's wife is considered our mother. And of course there's our own mother, and I think all together the Vedas explain that there are seven mothers. So the cow is given grass, and from that grass it makes, uh, the milk and the manure, and it's very important in rural life in India. The cow is a very integral part of the whole ecological system in India. Let me bring you over here, I want to show you this picture. You can step down a little further.

[end of tape]

The Palace of Gold



This gazebo sits on the corner of the palace. Over 80 ounces of gold leaf cover the palace.

How have the ideas, goals, and interests of the community evolved?

I think it would be important to say the ideas, goals, and interests have not changed at all because they are based on eternal, spiritual principals. We're moving in directions to try and apply those goals, and those things are changing. Prabhupāda came and gave us these books and spent time in New Vrindaban in 1969, and he gave a lot of goals for the community and ideas. And those things have not changed at all. But throughout the years trying to apply those goals. So, I think throughout the years how we've tried to reach those goals are changing.

I think it would be important to say the goals themselves have not changed. The goals are not... You don't have one board of directors and those are the goals for the next five years, and then a new board of directors comes in and changes them. It's not like that. The goals are set and based on eternal principals. The goals don't change, but maybe how we're working to change them does.