



Summer 2019 Newsletter

Friends Meeting House and Cemetery Association of Randolph Township, NJ

An Independent Preservation Association

Editor's Note. Regular FMHCA Newsletter readers may notice a change in this edition: *Association News and Updates* has been moved to the first page. Why? In part because there is more news to report and in part to highlight the different ways Association members and others can help with the preservation of this important site.

The most striking feature of the Meeting House site is undoubtedly the Meeting House itself. At a time when buildings commonly last only a generation or two, one that has survived nearly ten generations is well worth a second look and special attention. The remainder of the site is in many ways less noticeable. The flat grassy meadow in which the Meeting House sits could be any modestly cared for property in northern New Jersey. The Cemetery looks much like other old cemeteries in the area.

The feature articles (inside) in this edition set the background for a closer look at the Cemetery and the geographic location of the Meeting House site as part of the process of developing a new State and National Register nomination. Our current nomination only recognizes the Meeting House, which limits the funding we can receive to support our preservation efforts. It shapes our approach to preserving the site and the ways in which we introduce it to the public.

Broadening the scope of our nomination and preservation efforts also provides more opportunities for others with interests in genealogy, property mapping, landscape and early NJ history to get involved. We are a small organization, caring for a rich site with many stories to tell. Get in touch if you would like to lend a hand. NHS

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Association News and Updates

Meetings

Annual Meeting: Key decisions

- Grants & matching funds.** Applications to Morris County Historical Preservation Trust & New Jersey Historic Trust for roof and Cemetery work approved
- Historical recognition.** Agreement to submit new State and National Register nominations
- Tree removal.** Reluctant acceptance of the need to remove Norway spruce near the Brotherton markers to protect the Meeting House
- Family Trusts.** Approval to re-establish and grow "family trusts" within the FMHCA endowment fund to assure long-term Cemetery maintenance
- Communication.** Approval to upgrade phone service to reduce costs and improve communication

Fall Meeting

- Fall Meeting is scheduled for 11:00 am, October 12, at the Meeting House. Anyone interested in joining the Association is welcome to attend. We break for lunch at 12:30 pm and typically end at 3:00 pm.

County College of Morris Meeting

- At the invitation of County College of Morris President Anthony Iacono, a meeting is scheduled for October 14 to discuss ways CCM and the Association can collaborate on projects of mutual interest.

Projects

Roof replacement and site upgrades

- We are pleased to report that in July the **Morris County Historical Preservation Trust awarded the Association \$60,488** to develop plans for a new roof and site upgrades, including new walks, on-site parking and general improvements in the Cemetery. The total cost for the construction documents will be \$75,560, including \$15,112 in matching funds from the Association.
- This project is the first stage of a larger preservation program anticipated to cost \$640,000. *Contributions to this and future projects are vital to achieve the goals set out in our new Preservation Plan.*

Cemetery Map and Families

- Building on Richard Irwin's earlier research on the Cemetery, Association member Tom Moore is developing a new Cemetery map with links to the family history of those buried in the Cemetery.
- Get in touch to share information on your ancestry.

Mapping Mendham Meeting

- Long-time Randolph resident and librarian, Sara Weissman, and Nick Steneck are mapping (plating) the Randolph properties of the early Quakers.
- If you would like to know more about early land ownership in Randolph or have old deeds in your attic, get in touch.



Dial-in meeting participation. To enable Association members and others who live some distance from the Meeting House to participate in meetings, we will arrange dial-in participation, starting with Fall Meeting. Get in touch if you would like to be part of the trial run in October. Our current plan is to open the morning session (11:00 am-12:30 pm), with the option of staying connected until 3:00 pm.



visit us at: www.randolphmeetinghouse.org
 contact us at: information@randolphmeetinghouse.org

~ History ~

The Friend's Burying Ground

The Randolph Friends Cemetery, or “burying ground” as originally called, is historically the most important component of the Meeting House site. The Friends originally purchased the land as “a place to bury their dead in forever” (Deed #1) and conveyed it to future generations as a “trust” to maintain that purpose (Deed #2). When the Association took control of the property in 1898, it did so:

united together by the burial places of their departed Friends, bound together in memory of the mingled dust long since of their deceased. (Association Minutes, Oct. 22, 1898)

In other words, the Randolph Friends Meeting House site is a cemetery on which the Meeting House was built.

Conveying the historical importance of the Cemetery to visitors is a challenge for one simple and obvious reason: Friends did not mark burial sites until well into the 19th century. They believed in simplicity, equality and the importance of the spirit over the body. We estimate that there were at least 50 burials on the site before the first markers were placed in the mid-19th century, but we do not know their location. A ground penetrating radar survey commissioned by the Association in 2006 did not clearly identify any burials.

A century earlier, evidence of the early burials was still apparent. An 1878 story about the Meeting House in the *Iron Era* reported that:

The little burying plot in the rear of the old church is filled with the mounds of these worthy people, but with few exceptions we regret to say there are no monuments to record their names or their virtues. In many places the mounds have become worn to the level of the ground, and the curiosity seeker passes heedlessly over the resting places of those from whose lives might be derived useful lessons of religion and morality. (March 9, 1878)

This story confirms the information in Richard Irwin's Cemetery studies (*Time Effaces All Epitaphs Graven In Stone*, 1993 and *To Retrieve and to Record a Past*, 2013) and Tom Moore's more recent work. In 1878 there would have been about 20 markers in the Cemetery, compared to the 50 or so burials without monuments.



Mary (d. 1848) and Jane (d.1847) Dell



1906 postcard showing Brotherton (left) and Dell (right) markers

To convey the importance of the Cemetery to visitors, two stories need to be told. The first is the evolution of burial customs from 1758 to present-day practice. The second is the multi-chapter story of the individuals buried in the Cemetery.

The most significant change in burial customs was the transition from unmarked to marked graves, which took place between 1825 and 1850. There are seven markers in the Cemetery that record deaths before 1850 (2 Alward, 2 Carrell, 2 Dell and 1 Powers), but based on style most were probably erected later to recognize relatives who died earlier. There are also four known deaths after 1850 that are not marked:

*Thomas Dell, 1850; Anna Dell, 1863;
 Joseph Dennis, 1854; Mary Willson, 1871*

The four burials could have followed the early practice of unmarked graves or their markers could have been damaged or taken from the site at a later date.

Based on style, the earliest markers in the Cemetery may be those of Jane Dell (d. Feb 11, 1847) and her mother, Mary Dell (d. Dec. 31, 1848). Mary and Jane were the daughter-in-law and granddaughter of Richard Dell, possibly Mendham's best know preacher, who is said to have held meetings in his house before Mendham Meeting was officially recognized.

Finding ways to convey to visitors the stories behind both marked and unmarked burials is our second challenge.

Join us for Fall Meeting at the Meeting House on October 12, 2019 at 11:00 am

We know from Quaker records that Randolph Township's namesake, Hartshorn Fitz Randolph, was buried at the Meeting House, but there is no monument to confirm that he was. A sign relaying this information will be helpful, but it is not the same as a marker or grand monument.

There are also some intriguing questions associated with the early burials. For example, the earliest documented burials are Elizabeth French Schooley (d. Jan. 1, 1761), wife of William Schooley Sr., and Samuel Schooley (d. Feb. 8, 1761), William Schooley Sr.'s older brother. Prior to their deaths, William & Samuel Schooley were both living in the Hardwick area. Why then were Elizabeth and Samuel buried in Mendham? Could it have been because William and Elizabeth's sons, Robert and William Jr., were still living in

Mendham? Before reaching this conclusion, the full story of the Schooleys in Mendham needs to be worked out, as will be explored in future issues of the Newsletter.

Without any doubt, the most puzzling marker in the Cemetery is the small stone near the Dell markers with the apparent letters: "OOY." It has been suggested that this stone could mark the burial of a freed slave or Native American, but there is no evidence to support either suggestion. If you have other suggestions or other information about the Cemetery, send them to: editor@randolphmeetinghouse.org.



Who/what is "OOY"?

Geography

Life on the Northwest NJ Frontier

Our modern road systems make it difficult to imagine life in the Mendham/Randolph area 300 years ago when the first Quaker settlers arrived. The Meeting House would have been only 33 miles as the crow flies from Woodbridge Monthly Meeting, 35-40 miles if you take into account detours to get around the Great Swamp south of Morristown and over the Watchung Mountains. When roads were improved in the 19th century, it still took a day for a family loaded on a horse and wagon to make the trip. Quarterly meetings in Shrewsbury would have added another 30 miles; the trip to Philadelphia for Yearly Meeting over 75 miles.

Two 1743 marriages— John Shotwell to Elizabeth Jackson and Michael Liken to Sarah Schooley— confirm how difficult travel was in the mid-18th century. John and Michael lived near Woodbridge; Elizabeth and Sarah were from Morris County. In accordance with Quaker custom, their marriages were first approved in July, with the stipulation that they return in a month to confirm their intent.

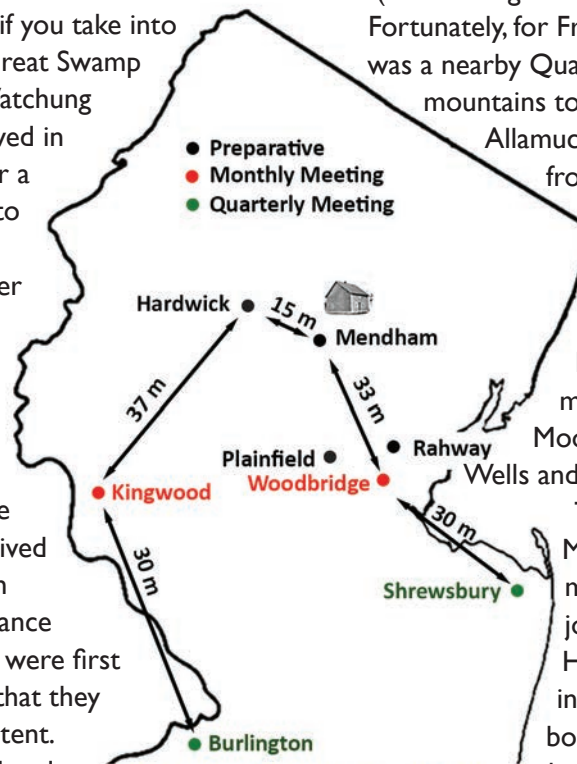
The following month they returned and their marriages approved with the understanding that they would be carried

out later under the watchful eye of Friends appointed by the Meeting. However, rather than wait, which would have required yet another trip, John and Michael "requested that they might be married at the close of this meeting... in regard of the distance of the way that some of them came." After consideration, MM "condesended (sic.) to it at this time." (Woodbridge MM, Aug. 20, 1743)

Fortunately, for Friends in the Mendham area, there was a nearby Quaker community just over the mountains toward the west in Hardwick (today Allamuchy), which was similarly distant

from its monthly and quarterly meetings. Although the records from both meetings are sparse, it is clear from marriages and transfers that the social and religious lives of the families in these communities (Adams, Brotherton, Lundy, Moore, Simcock, Schooley, Shotwell, Wells and Willson) were closely intertwined.

The close relationship between Mendham and Hardwick was formalized in 1797 when the two were joined as Hardwick-Mendham MM. However, historically, the families in the two meetings were socially bound together much earlier by their close proximity and the challenges of living on the very edge of the northwest NJ frontier.

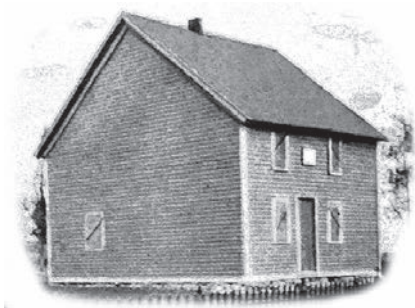


Hardwick-Mendham travel distances ca. 1760: Monthly, Quarterly & Yearly Meetings

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of Randolph Township, New Jersey

return to:

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Visit us at:

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To donate to the preservation of this historic site,
please visit our webpage
www.randolphmeetinghouse.org

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Nick Steneck, Editor

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