



Summer 2022 Newsletter

Friends Meeting House and Cemetery Association of Randolph Township, NJ

An Independent Preservation Association



Preservation Report

① During a late January thaw, Alden Bailey Restoration removed the old shingles and asbestos from the Meeting House and installed a new roof. It took 8 months to get the special order, 36" shingles but only two weeks to install them along with the new copper gutters and downspouts. The roof and gutters look new, but they will age with time.

② We are pleased to report that funding for exterior restoration has been secured from the NJ Historic Trust and the Morris County Preservation Trust Fund. Siding and window repair/replacement will begin in the Fall or early Spring.

③ The Cemetery/parking project is moving ahead. NJHT has funded 50% of the project. Due to tight budgets and the need to support bricks and mortar preservation projects, MCHPTF did not support our request for matching funds. We are working with our architects, Connelly and Hickey, to reduce costs and find other sources of funding. We hope to have an affordable plan in place by the end of the year so work can start early next year. *Improved parking is a priority!*

④ We are pleased to report that the MCHPTF awarded us half the cost of the interior restoration project. NJHT decisions are announced in September. If matching funds are awarded, restoration of the plaster walls and wood finishes, the addition of indirect lighting in the loft and installation of invisible interior storm windows to reduce noise, dust and cold drafts will begin in late 2023.

Budget. Restoration of the Meeting House and adding parking will cost about \$1,025,000. Thanks to generous support from MCHPTF and NJHT, we should have the funds needed to complete this work by the end of the year.

➔ Once the work on the Meeting House and the parking are completed, I hope we have the energy to turn our attention to one final task: upgrading and expanding the Annex. The bathroom, kitchen and heating system must be upgraded if we are to welcome back local school groups and other visitors. Additional space is needed to greet visitors, mount displays and for storage.

It will be a major accomplishment to complete restoration of the Meeting House and Cemetery, but there is still more work to do to gain the recognition and support this unique site deserves. *Nick Steneck, FMHCA President*



Possible design for
Annex expansion

Salem Oak Seedling

In collaboration with Randolph Township, on June 11th the Association planted an oak seedling in the meadow to the west of the Meeting House. The seedling came from New Jersey's oldest oak tree—a 550+-year-old oak that had grown in the Salem NJ Quaker cemetery until it was tragically blown down in June 2019. The NJ Department of Environmental Protection propagated seedlings from the Salem Oak to celebrate its 50th anniversary and 50 years of Earth Day, with the plan to give one seedling to each of NJ's



Geoff Lenat and daughter Riley composting the newly planted "Salem Oak" seedling.

565 municipalities.
(Continued inside)

NJEA Documentary Interviews

In late July, a team from the New Jersey Education Association assembled at the Meeting House to tape interviews for a documentary on the importance of racial, social and economic justice in NJ public schools. Two individuals from each of New Jersey's 21 counties were interviewed at an appropriate site. The Meeting House was recommended to project organizer Angel Boose as an ideal site in Morris County for both its historical importance and the role of the Quakers in supporting social justice. Look for a note in a future Newsletter when the documentary is available.



NJEA Documentary Team in front of the Meeting House, July 29.



Visit us at: www.randolphmeetinghouse.org

Contact us at: information@randolphmeetinghouse.org

In Memory of Richard T. Irwin

On the last day of July, Association historiographer emeritus and Trustee emeritus Richard T. Irwin (1944-2022) passed away in Florida due to COVID complications and other health problems.

Richard first encountered the Association through his membership in the Morris County Historical Society in 1972. In preparation for the 1976 National Bicentennial, he was asked to recruit other organizations to join the celebration effort. One contact, Harriet Meeker, invited him to a meeting of the Roxbury Historical Society held at the Randolph Meeting House. At that meeting, he met Randolph historian James Anderson, who encouraged him to do research on the history of Randolph Township. The result was his pioneering *A History: The Religious Society of Friends in Randolph Township* (1973), his edited *A History of Randolph Township* (1976), and over 40 years of research and writing on New Jersey history.

Along with research, writing and a full-time day job as a risk and insurance manager for Chemical Bank in NYC, Richard found the time in 1975 to help revitalize the Asso-



ciation, which by then had dwindled to three active members. At the November 2, 1975 meeting, Richard's recruiting efforts led to 9 Friends and 4 descendants being elected as Association members. Then, after adding a clause to the By-laws opening membership to active preservationists living in Morris County, Richard was also elected to membership and immediately appointed Association Secretary. He was at the time Chair of Randolph Landmarks and organized the application that led to the recognition of the Meeting House as a State and National Register site.

Although generally recognized as a "historian" for the many historical books and articles he wrote, he was at heart a "historiographer" dedicated to explaining how historical views changed and too often failed to properly understand the past. He was also passionate about documenting and preserving the Meeting House Cemetery, where his and wife Linda's ashes will be interred.

In recognition of Richard's work and contributions, the Association is establishing the Richard T. Irwin Endowment to assure long-term care and maintenance of the Cemetery.

Salem Oak continued

The location of the Salem Oak in a Quaker cemetery prompted Randolph Township to ask the Association if it would be interested in planting Randolph's seedling on the Meeting House grounds. We were pleased to agree.

The meadow where the seedling was planted is not part



Planting Delegation (left to right)
Randolph Township: Darren Carney,
Mark Forstenhausler, Mayor Marie Potter, Jim Loveys;
Association: Peg Steneck, Nick Steneck

of the Cemetery. The recent Ground Penetrating Radar study identified only four possible burials in this area. However, this area played a special role in the history of the Meeting House for another reason.

In his recollections published in the August 9th issue of the *Iron Era* in 1901, Civil War veteran Alonzo Searing (1844-1932) described how at the outbreak of the War Millbrook teacher Benjamin Price assembled:

...the older boys of his school upon the green in front of the Quaker Meeting House and there, with the martial music of a bass drum, instruct[ed] them in military exercises.

30 of Millbrook's 33 men "capable of bearing arms" went to war. Seven died in the war. Six of those who "drilled on the green" are buried in the Cemetery.

Thanks to this Township-Association collaboration, their training ground will hereafter be overseen and protected by a seedling from the stately Salem Oak.

Join us for Fall Meeting at the Meeting House on September 24, 2022 at 10:30 am
(in person or by Zoom)

❧ Meeting House Mysteries ❧
More on Paths, Walls and Fences

The orientation of the Meeting House property today is heavily influenced by the present stone wall, which was probably started in the 1870s and completed in the 1880s (Newsletter, Summer 2021). By enclosing the west, north and east sides of the property, it essentially defined the front/south side of the property as the entrance to the site.

Evidence suggests, however, that prior to the 1880s, most visitors entered the property from the west. The Ground Penetrating Radar study conducted in 2020 found evidence of a path wide enough for wagons leading from the west side of the property to the back of the Meeting House. The development of a path from the west had to be before the 1880s, when the wall blocked access. Since use of the Meeting House overall declined after the 1820s, the tradition of entering the site from the west probably extended back to the 18th century.

For most of the years between 1758 and the construction of the wall, the land to the west of the Meeting House was woods and farmland owned initially by Robert Schooley and later sold to the Brothertons and other families. This changed in 1869, when a new road, Quaker Ave., was built. The new road started in the outskirts of Dover and traveled south to a point on the:

*...Rockaway to Succasunna Plain road near the **stone fence** on the North side of said road supposed to be the southwest corner of the said Meeting House lot. (MC Road Survey D-115)*



View from the southwest corner showing the “green” where Price’s boys trained. (Photo taken 1910)

Twelve years earlier when James Cooper bought the land to the west of the Meeting House, one property line described in the deed ran “...along the **stone wall** on the west side of the Grave Yard.” (MC Deeds, O-5, pp. 215-216.)



The stone wall or fence mentioned in these sources may have been no more than the rocks piled up around the edge of the field when it was cleared for burials. It could well have existed along with the “fence of the burying ground” William Mott and Silas Dell repaired in 1836. (PM, p. 47) Whatever they were and whenever they were constructed, the earlier fence and stone walls apparently did not restrict access to the site from the west, as did the new 1880s wall.

Thinking of the Meeting House landscape in terms of western rather than southern (front) access may be historically more accurate. The land in front of the Meeting House slopes down rapidly and does not provide easy access. This is why the Association decided to change its address to 2 Quaker Ave., for a safer mailbox location. It may also be why Alonzo Searing described the boys marching “in front” of the Meeting House when the only practical drill space is the grass meadow or “green” to the west.

It is the western orientation of the site that the Association plans to restore by opening the wall and adding parking behind the Meeting House. After over a century of awkward and today dangerous access from the front, visitors will again be able to drive and park their ‘wagons’ comfortably behind the Meeting House.

Association News

Special Program, Saturday, October 29, 3 pm

On the afternoon of the 29th, archaeologist Jim Lee will give an illustrated talk on the recent excavations in the Cemetery. Refreshments and tours of the Meeting House will be available after the talk.

Endowments Initiative

The Association is establishing new endowments to assure the long-term maintenance and support of the Meeting House and Cemetery. Please get in touch if you would like to consider including one of those endowments in your charitable giving plans.

Message: treasurer@randolphmeetinghouse.org.

Friends Meeting House and Cemetery Association
of Randolph Township, New Jersey

return to:

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Visit us at:

www.randolphmeetinghouse.org

FMHCA Summer 2022 *Newsletter*

- Preservation Report
- Salem Oak Seedling
- NJEA Documentary Interviews
- In Memory of Richard T. Irwin
- More on Paths, Walls and Fences
- Association News



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www.randolphmeetinghouse.org

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Nick Steneck, Editor
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