



# **125th Anniversary Newsletter**

## **Friends Meeting House & Cemetery Association of Randolph Township, NJ**

*An Independent Preservation Association*

### **Celebrating 125 Years of Preservation**

On October 21<sup>st</sup> the Friends Meeting House and Cemetery Association of Randolph Township will celebrate its 125th anniversary. Fall meeting will begin at 11:00 am. A public program and refreshments to celebrate our anniversary will follow at 1:30 pm. There will also be an opportunity at the end of the public program to tour our ongoing preservation work.

Over the course of its 125 years, the Association has had one mission: the preservation and care of the Meeting House and Cemetery. However, the way in which it carries out this mission has changed over time. To help understand these changes and the challenges they present, as past and present presidents of the Association, we felt it was time to review and record the Association's history.

The lead story in this issue of the *Newsletter* takes a close look at the founding and early years of the Association. The years between the founding and the revitalization of the Association in the early 1970s will be explored in the Spring issue, followed in the Fall issue by a summary of the steps taken over the last 50 years to restore the Meeting House and assure the future of a historic site of local, state and national significance.

Please join us on **October 21<sup>st</sup>** to celebrate 125 years preserving our unique 1758 Friends Meeting House and Cemetery. **Peg & Nick Steneck**

### **In this issue:**

**Association History, Part I: Founding.** How the last two Quaker descendants of the original Meeting gained ownership of the property and formed an Association to assure its long-term care. (p. 2)

**Meeting House Mysteries: Windows and Shutters.** Did the Meeting House have two additional windows in 1758 and when were the interior door, shutters and panels installed? (p. 6)

**Quaker Shadows.** How CCM students used silhouettes to recreate an early meeting at the Meeting House. (p. 10)

**Preservation Plans for Fall 2023.** Updates on interior/exterior restoration, parking and paths, and restoration of the stone walls and fence. (p. 11)

**The Redesigned Newsletter.** A communication experiment. (p. 12)

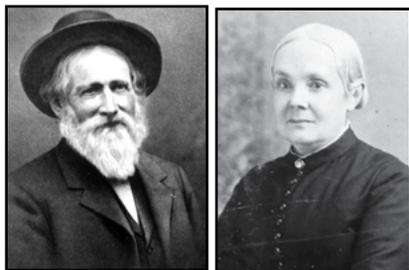
# History of the Friends Meeting House and Cemetery Association, Randolph NJ

Margaret Steneck, Past President (1984-2008)

Nicholas Steneck, President (2017 - Present)

## Part I: Founding

Randolph Preparative Meeting was laid down in 1865 following the death of Richard Brotherton. For the next 30 years, descendants in the area informally cared for the site. As they aged, two of Richard's children, Rachael B. Vail and James W. Brotherton, asked Plainfield Monthly Meeting, which formally owned the site, to transfer ownership to "Friends living at Dover." When Plainfield MM agreed, Rachael and James began the process of forming an organization to care for the Cemetery and Meeting House in perpetuity.



James Wilson Brotherton & Rachael Brotherton Vail



## Organizational Meetings

The following year, James Brotherton called a meeting of descendants to discuss forming a "board of trustees or such other organization." The meeting was held on June 28, 1898 in the Blackwell Street offices of Dover lawyer Eugene J. Cooper. The descendants who attended moved to appoint a committee:

*...to examine the title to said premises; to have the old deeds of conveyance of said premises rewritten or copied if necessary; and to employ Council learned in law, if necessary, and ascertain the nature and spirit of the trust expressed in said deeds etc., and the most feasible means of organizing a body for continuing said trust, and carrying the same into effect....(Association Minutes)*



The committee presented its report on October 22, 1898. The report confirmed the validity of the four deeds of conveyance and recommended:

**Blackwell Street, Dover NJ  
Washington's Birthday 1892**

## Committee Recommendations

- Establish an "Association of Friends convened and twined together by brotherly love, united together by the burial places of their departed Friends...;"
- Elect a board of seven Trustees to represent the organization;
- Appoint three officers to conduct the affairs of the Association; and
- Adopt Bylaws setting membership rules and governance procedures.

With the adoption of these recommendations, October 22, 1898 became the founding date of the Friends Meeting House and Cemetery Association of Randolph Township. Immediately following this meeting, the new Trustees met and began conducting business by electing officers and formally approving the Bylaws.

Twelve people attended the organizational meetings in person, two in spirit. Rachael Brotherton Vail's ill-health prevented her from attending these and other meetings. William H. Baker was named a Trustee and Officer in 1898 but could not attend. The Association frequently met in his Dover office in subsequent years.

| Founding Members                 | Occupation   | Residence  | Family           |
|----------------------------------|--------------|------------|------------------|
| Henry W. Alward (1861-1944)      | Farmer       | Succasunna | Hance            |
| William H. Baker (1851-1918)***  | Merchant     | Dover      | Dell             |
| James W. Brotherton (1835-1910)* | Farmer       | Randolph   | Brotherton       |
| Cornelius D. Burg (1847-1925)    | Mill Forman  | Kenvil     | Hance            |
| Eugene A. Carrell (1852-1942)    | Pharmacist   | Morristown | Carrell, Young   |
| Eugene J. Cooper (1861-1940)     | Lawyer       | Dover      |                  |
| Phebe Corwin (1844-1929)         | Housewife    | Kenvil     | Dell             |
| M. Wheeler Corwin (1853-1937)    | Farmer       | Kenvil     | Dell             |
| Charles M. Hance (1854-1910)     | Hotel Keeper | Wharton    | Hance            |
| Edward S. Hance ((1851-1914)**   | Merchant     | Dover      | Hance            |
| Alexander L. Mott (1836-1919)    | Machinist    | Rockaway   | Mott             |
| Elias B. Mott (1843-1918)        | County Clerk | Rockaway   | Mott, Hance      |
| Martin V.B. Searing (1833-1902)  | Businessman  | Wharton    | Searing          |
| Rachael B. Vail (1827-1910)      | Housewife    | Randolph   | Brotherton, Vail |

■ = Trustees \* President \*\* Secretary \*\*\* Treasurer

## Care of the Cemetery

Although most of the founders of the Association were not Quakers, they were only one or two generations (parents or grandparents) removed from members of the Friends Meeting laid down in 1865. The care and management of the Cemetery was for them, therefore, not only a responsibility (trust) that stretched back to the original 1758 deeds but the result of a personal connection to the site and their families buried in the Cemetery.

Attention to the Cemetery began with agreement to pay James Brotherton, to maintain the grounds. Next, in 1901, when Wheeler Corwin “made application for a lot” in the Cemetery, the Trustees took up the issue of new burials, referring the matter to the Executive Committee to “lay out and sell lots.” The following year they confronted the issue of “improper use,” presumably in response to un-authorized burials. They also voted to post signs in and outside the Meeting House “requesting that no damage or defacing be done” and in 1905 purchased a lock to secure the gate in the iron fence that provided access to the property. With these steps, the Association defined its Cemetery responsibilities and policies.

### *Management and Finances*

In addition to their family ties to the original meeting, the founding members of the Association were respected members of the community. All of the families represented in the Association had large farm homesteads in their background. Henry Alward, James Brotherton and Wheeler Corwin were still active farmers. Others had left the farm to pursue other professions.

- Wheeler Corwin continued to farm but was also engaged in real estate.
- Cornelius Burg and Alexander Mott were skilled craftsmen.
- Eugene Carrell studied pharmacy and practiced in Morristown. He was the first president of the New Jersey Pharmaceutical Association.
- Elias Briant Mott was Morris County Clerk from 1888 to 1898.

- William Baker, Charles Hance and Martin Searing were successful merchants. William Baker had extensive real estate holdings in the Dover area, owned the largest dry goods store in town and was responsible for the construction of the Baker Theater.

The founding members were also active in their churches and social groups. Several served on the boards of the local banks.



### *Iron Era, 1898*

The practical experience of the early members is apparent in the way they went about developing the organization. In 1899, they established a committee to assess the repairs needed at the Meeting House, began raising funds and instructed the Secretary to purchase a minute book. The Trustees also authorized the Treasurer to procure a \$500 bond to establish the Association on a sound financial base. The following year they agreed to carry \$500 of insurance on the Meeting House. As noted, they also authorized the Executive Officers to sell lots in the Cemetery, although there is no record of any sales. However, it is possible

that they were selling photographs taken by Clara B. Cook, accounting for the “two pictures” James Brotherton reported he sold for \$1.40 in 1901.

The funds for caring for the Meeting House and Cemetery came entirely from the membership. In 1901 they raised \$206 and paid out \$192 for repairs to the Meeting House. James Brotherton generally charged between \$2.50 and \$3.50 a year for the care of the grounds and then donated this amount to the Association. Through Phebe Dell Corwin, the Association also regularly received about \$18/year in interest from the fund Edward Dell established in 1896 to care for the Dell monument in the Cemetery. When funds were needed, the Association found a way to raise them, but apart from the Dell fund, the financial well-being of the Association depended on the participation and contributions of its active members.

### *Transition from the Founding Members*

With the organization of the Association in hand, the Trustees began looking ahead to the future, setting up a committee in 1903 to plan for the 150th anniversary in 1908. Four years later, after sitting unused for over 40 years, the Meeting House was opened for a gathering hosted by New York Yearly Meeting Committee on the Advancement of Friends Principles. The gathering drew “twice as many people to the little old meeting-house on the hill as could either stand or sit inside.”

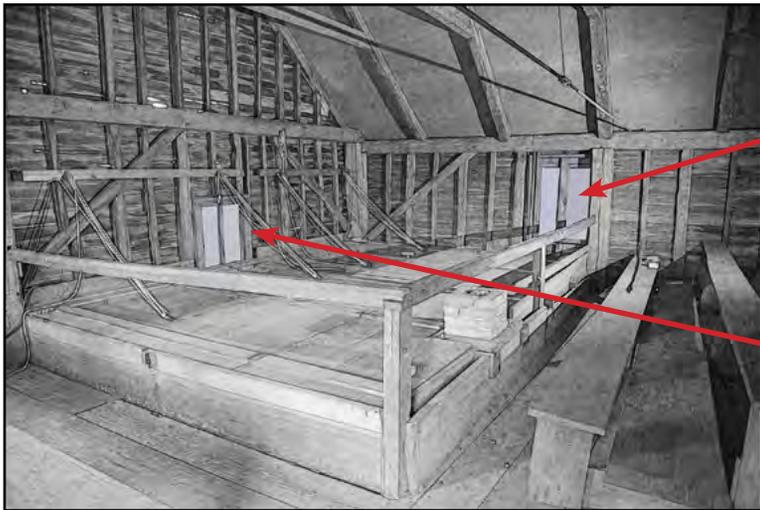


One of two unidentified photos most likely taken during the August 11, 1907 NYM gathering at the Meeting House

The fate of the 150th anniversary celebration the following year is unfortunately not known. The Association did not meet or did not keep minutes between 1906 and 1912. During this time, James Brotherton and Rachael Vail, passed away. Four more of the founders (William Baker, Edward Hance, Elias Mott and Alexander Mott) passed away before 1920. With the aging and deaths of the founders, the Association gradually moved one more generation away from the original meeting and the personal ties that motivated and bound the founding group together.

## Windows and Shutters

The mystery in this issue is actually a double mystery involving windows and the interior door, shutters and panels. It begins with the puzzle of two boarded-over window frames on the second floor of the Meeting House. One is in the north wall and may have been designed to provide light to both the first and second floors. The other is on the west wall, awkwardly placed just above the first-floor header. The framing for the north window is similar in size and shape to the other windows in the Meeting House and could accommodate their six-by-six, double-hung windows. The upper portion of the west window frame is of similar construction. The lower portion is currently hidden by the loft-opening cover and first-floor header.



North window frame

West window frame

### Why additional windows?

While there are no plans for the Meeting House or accounts of its construction, it is easy to understand why the designers might have wanted to bring more light into the second-floor or gallery, as this area is sometimes called. The tiered benches in the gallery, which can seat 50 or more people, were traditionally where children and visitors sat during meetings for worship. They would also have been used during weddings and talks by visiting preachers. Anyone who has tried to take a seat on one of the top benches can understand why some extra light would be useful, particularly on a cloudy day. With only two windows on the south wall, the second floor of the Meeting House is dark, unwelcoming and hazardous to move around.

Apart from the need to accommodate large crowds, there is a second reason why the early Meeting House may have had additional windows in the gallery. In the 18th and 19th centuries, men and women often met separately to discuss matters of business. This is why the first floor of the Meeting House as it exists today has a door in the middle of the room, drop-down shutters and removable panels that can be used to create two separate meeting spaces.

However, physical evidence suggests that the door, shutters and panels used to divide the rooms were not part of the original structure. Based on this fact, it has long been assumed that before the main meeting room was divided, separate meetings for business were held on separate floors, providing yet another reason for having more light on the second floor when the Meeting House was built.

This second explanation for the boarded-over windows brings us to our second mystery, the date Mendham Preparative Meeting began holding separate meetings for business.

Drop-down shutter

Doorway

Removable panel



### Date of the interior door, shutters and panels?

Separate meetings were established practice at some meetings by 1758, including Rahway-Plainfield Monthly Meeting. However, Mendham apparently did not initially follow this practice. It was not until 1792 that the Meeting considered “holding men’s and women’s meetings separate....” After due consideration, they agreed that they should do so and referred the matter to Rahway-Plainfield MM. The latter approved the change, reporting back that:

*A minute from Mendham Preparative Meeting imports that they think it may be useful for men and women Friends to be separate in transacting the affairs of said Meeting, which this Meeting concurs with.*

If 1792 is the date when men and women began meeting separately, this most likely is when the door, shutters and panels were installed on the first floor. If so, this undermines the argument that the boarded-over windows were initially installed to provide light for separate meetings for business in the gallery. Nonetheless, additional windows still would have greatly improved lighting during normal meetings for worship and special events.

*If installed, why were the windows boarded over?*

By 1800, the harsh frontier conditions that the initial settlers accepted were giving way to a more comfortable way of life. In 1791, the year before men and women began meeting separately, Isaac Hance and Jacob Simcock were authorized to purchase a stove to heat the Meeting House. A few years later the door and shutters were presumably installed. Further improvements were made in 1808 when William Mott was “appointed to keep the Meeting House in repair and [to] fix the stove so as to work both rooms.”

The introduction of heat into the Meeting House may explain why the second-floor windows, if they had initially been installed, were boarded over. During the early years, when room to accommodate a young and expanding Meeting was the primary concern, providing adequate light on the second floor would have been essential. As membership declined, the need for space was replaced by the need to provide a more comfortable meeting environment, especially as more modern churches were built in the area and the children of the original Quaker settlers began marrying out of the faith. In the early 19th century, one easy way to stop heat loss through the windows would have been to board them over, particularly windows in an area of the Meeting House that was no longer actively used.

**Computer edited photos showing how the Meeting House would look if the boarded-over windows were restored.**



*Second thoughts*

Does this explanation solve our mystery? Did the Meeting House originally have two additional windows on the second floor to let in more light? Perhaps, but there is another plausible explanation for the boarded-over frames.

There are no original plans for the Meeting House. There is evidence to suggest that some of the design may have been developed throughout the building process, during which mistakes were made. For example, the east wall header appears to have been mis-cut the first time, so it was turned and re-cut. Moreover, some of those involved in the planning, design and construction of the Meeting House lived in Plainfield and therefore could not follow construction on a day to day basis. In 1761, the Monthly Meeting appointed Hartshorn Fitz Randolph to report on the work undertaken by “the friends that were appointed for building the Meeting House at Mendham.” It is possible that Fitz Randolph, or someone else such as John (Preacher) Vail involved in design and construction, decided that two windows planned to bring more light to the second floor were not needed or were too expensive. Then, rather than taking out the framing, they simply boarded over the space and went on with construction.

For now, only one of our mysteries can be solved, the mystery of the interior dividers, which were most likely installed when the Meeting began holding separate meetings for business. The solution to the mystery of the boarded-over windows has to wait until we gather more evidence when we have had a chance to take a closer look during the restoration of the north and west walls.



## Quaker Shadows

### *A Visit to a Colonial Quaker Gathering through Silhouette Art*

Morris County's Pathways of History program chose "art" for its 2023 theme, creating a challenge for the Association. The Quaker belief in leading a simple life left little room for art, music or theatre. As William Mott of Mott Hollow admonished his grandson Alexander in 1854:

*... do not run to shows and other gatherings  
that is of no use to thee for it is all vanity.*

However, while rejecting elaborate portraits, some Quakers embraced the simplicity of silhouettes as a way to remember family and friends.

Picking up on the acceptance of silhouettes, County College of Morris students Wanda Perez and Taylor Wagner, with the help of their advisor Kelly Whelan, created an exhibit featuring "Quaker Shadows" for our May 7, 2023 Pathways open house. Nine life-size silhouettes were positioned throughout the Meeting House to re-create a colonial gathering of Friends.

Attendance was good this year, with visitors appreciating the warmth and life the silhouettes brought to the Meeting House. For now, they have become a welcome addition and may still be around the next time you visit.



1. CCM students Taylor Wagner and Wanda Perez with their life-sized silhouettes.
2. Two women Friends along the west wall participating in the gathering.
3. A male Friend entering the Meeting House from the east doorway.
4. Recognizing CCM's contribution, right to left: Kelly Whalen, Chair, Art and Design; Taylor Wagner and Wanda Perez, students; Nick Steneck, FMHCA President.

## Fall 2023 Preservation Work

In the Spring of 2019, the Association successfully applied for a grant to fund the development of a new preservation plan. Over the next three to four months, thanks to generous support from the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust Fund and the New Jersey Historic Trust, all but one of the goals set out in the new plan will be realized. Our #1 priority, roof replacement, was completed last year. Most of the remaining work was bundled into one contract signed the end of August.

As this Newsletter goes to press, our main contractor, Paragon Restoration, is preparing to:

- Create two openings in the west wall and install environmentally friendly parking in the northwest corner of the cemetery;
- Lay new ADA compliant gravel paths leading from the parking area to the Meeting House and Annex;
- Replace and treat the siding and make other needed repairs to the exterior;
- Restore the interior, upgrade the electric and security systems, install new interior storm windows and improve the interior lighting;
- Begin restoration of the stone wall and iron fence surrounding the property; and
- Trim or cut down trees, plant new trees and restore the grass meadow that would have covered the property in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

For a first-hand look at the changes to the interior, join us on **October 21 at 1:30 pm** for a detailed look at how the Meeting House was built over 200 years ago and how it is now being restored.



Artistic depiction of the new parking and restored exterior

## Redesigned Newsletter

With all of the changes in the way information is communicated today, it has been suggested that our *Newsletter* is either obsolete or at least in need of some redesign. Before giving up our paper edition entirely, however, I decided to try a new format as a first step toward transitioning to new ways of communication.

The large, full-page format used in the past can be a challenge to design. The smaller pamphlet format adopted in this issue is easier to design and more efficient. Sending the pamphlet in an envelop should also eliminate mail damage.

More importantly, the way the stories are formatted in this issue makes them easier to post online, as either one issue of the *Newsletter* or a series of stories that could be turned into a blog. Publishing the stories online also reduces costs and makes it possible to link the stories to additional information and photos. The individual stories posted on line can then be grouped together making it easier for someone just learning about the Association to get to know us.

I know that we have readers who either need or prefer the paper edition, but I have no idea how many fall into this category. It is tempting, given our limited budget, to give up the paper edition, which costs roughly \$2.00 per copy. But reading on a computer or a tablet is not the same as having a paper copy, and computer versions cannot be placed on a table in the Meeting House for visitors to pick up.

If you have any thoughts about paper vs. online or format, I would like to hear from you. Drop me a line, go to our web page and click the link “Newsletter Survey.” or message me at [news@randolphmeetinghouse.org](mailto:news@randolphmeetinghouse.org).

**Nick Steneck, Editor**

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