



Summer 2021 Newsletter

Friends Meeting House and Cemetery Association of Randolph Township, NJ

An Independent Preservation Association

Preservation Updates and Plans. In June, the contract for asbestos abatement and roof replacement was signed. Work will begin sometime in early 2022 when the 36" hand-cut cedar shakes arrive from Canada. It will take about three years from funding request to completed project. The abatement and replacement work will take only about three weeks. Preservation is rewarding but requires patience!

Parking, paths and exterior restoration are next on the list. Morris County has approved funds for the exterior restoration. We are waiting to hear if the State will fund the parking and help with matching funds for the exterior work. If parking is funded by the State, we may be able to complete both projects by the end of 2022. This would put us in a position to turn to interior restoration next year.

The final step in our 2019 Preservation Plan, expanding the Annex to provide room for an ADA compliant bathroom, a new kitchenette and more meeting space, is still a few years down the road, but our funders have begun to ask questions about what we are planning. Our architects, Connolly & Hickey, proposed extending the Annex back about 20 feet, matching its basic style (see above). This plan will be reviewed at the upcoming Fall Meeting (October 16) to make sure it meets our anticipated needs and is compatible with the historic nature of the site. If you have any thoughts or suggestions relating to the proposed addition, please get in touch or plan to attend the Fall Meeting.



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Association News and Updates

January-March: Archaeological Investigation

The archaeological survey required for adding on-site parking began in late January and was completed in early March. (See the story inside)

March-April: Grant applications

The Association submitted grant applications to the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust Fund and the New Jersey Historic Trust to support exterior restoration and the installation of on-site parking and paths.

May: Pathways of History Tour



On Sunday, May 2, ca. 25 visitors toured the Meeting House and Cemetery as part of the 2021 Pathways Tour. Two self-guided tours were developed for the event. Rebecca Mears and Joanne Hughues were on site to provide additional information and answer questions.

June: Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting was held at County College of Morris on June 5th. 12 attended in person, 8 via Zoom. Minutes will be circulated with the Fall Meeting agenda.

June: Ground Penetrating Radar

Tim Horsley returned to the site in early June to complete the Ground Penetrating Radar survey. Since conducting his first survey in January 2020, he has updated his equipment and therefore wanted to survey most of the site again. The results of the new survey will be reported in the next Newsletter.



August: Change of Address

As of August 2021, the official address of the Meeting House is 2 Quaker Avenue, Randolph NJ 07869. The change was precipitated by the need to receive mail at the Meeting House, which requires the installation of a mailbox in a location that can safely and easily be reached.

Fall Meeting, October 16. Fall Meeting will be held on October 16. We will meet in person, 11:00am - 2:30pm, with a break for lunch **if** the Pandemic is sufficiently under control. Zoom will be available for those who cannot attend in person. If we cannot meet safely in person, we will meet entirely via Zoom, 10:30am-12:30pm.

A final decision on venue and times will be announced by mail or email by October 4.



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

Archaeological Investigation

Beginning in late January, a team of archaeologists from Hunter Research, Trenton NJ, investigated ten grave shafts in the Cemetery. Their objective was to assess whether parking and paths could be installed without endangering the burials or posing risks to those parking on the site.

Based on their findings they concluded that the proposed parking would not pose problems provided excavation is limited to 12" below ground level and monitored by a qualified archaeologist. This conclusion has since been reviewed and accepted by the State Historic Preservation Office, essentially clearing the way to move forward as soon as funding becomes available.

Excavation. The investigation began with a mechanical excavator removing the top layer of soil in three areas (trenches) to expose the tops of the grave shafts. Grave shafts became visible at a depth of roughly 3'



below ground level in Trench #1, the northern-most trench. In Trench #3, the southern-most, shafts

became visible at about 12". Overall, a total of 43 potential grave shafts were identified in the three trenches opened.



Once exposed, the team identified ten shafts for hand excavation to assess the depth and condition of the burials.



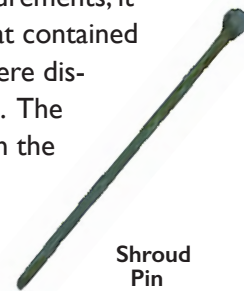
The soil removed from the shafts was sifted for human remains and artifacts. No disarticulated (separated from the skeleton) human remains and only a few artifacts were

found. The burials found at the bottom of the shafts were not moved but carefully studied and documented in place.

Findings. Due to soil conditions and age, most of the burials studied were in an advanced state of decomposition. The wooden coffins for the most part were completely decayed, leaving behind soil discoloration, nails and a few wood fragments. The soil around the human remains was completely compacted, eliminating the potential problem of hollow spaces that might collapse under the weight of parking.



What remained of the burials was well below ground surface. Based on visual evidence and measurements, it was concluded that six of the nine shafts that contained burials were children. A few shroud pins were discovered along with some fragments of cloth. The nails found in the shafts dated primarily from the mid-19th century. No evidence was found that would date the burials earlier than the 1860s, when the Meeting was laid down.



Shroud Pin

With the exception of a few nails and two shroud pins kept for further study, the burials were closed without being disturbed. After a delay caused by an early February snow storm, the trenches were finally closed and the ground left to regrow naturally.



The Mystery of Grave #3. As one of the ten graves identified for study, the surface of Grave #3 looked like every other grave. It was therefore surprising when the team found that the bottom of the shaft was empty and that it appeared to have been filled twice. This led them to conclude that:

The conditions of this burial feature (multiple fill episodes, truncated coffin remains and no human remains) suggest this grave may have been historically disinterred and perhaps relocated elsewhere.

Given the proximity of Grave #3 to the Edward Dell plot, it is tempting to speculate that when Edward included his parents on his elaborate marker in 1892, provision was made to move their remains to his plot. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to support this hypothesis, but it could explain the missing body in Grave #3.

The Age of the “Burying Ground” Wall?

The stone wall that surrounds three sides of the Meeting House and Cemetery was a recognized feature of the site since well before the time of the Association (1898), but its precise age remains a mystery.

The Burying Ground was surrounded by a fence as early as 1836, but the first mention of a wall is in the will of Quaker Silas Young, who died at age 89 in 1862. In it, he bequested to...

... the [Randolph] Friends Church or Trustees or who ever have charge of said Church two hundred dollars for the purpose of erecting a stone wall around said church grave yard, [...] where I choose to be buried.

In 1862 the Preparative Meeting held its last regular meeting before the Meeting was laid down (1865). The Meeting records, therefore, provide no information on what was done with the bequest or whether the wall was begun.

Around 1870, according to Platt’s *Dover Dates*, other descendants in the area, including John Hance and Isaac Alwood Vail, provided additional funding to construct or continue construction of the wall. However, a story in the September 1881 issue of the *Iron Era* suggests the wall was probably not completed until 1881 or a little later. At that time:

Some of the descendants of the old Quaker families who formerly lived in this section are trying to make some improvement about



the old burying ground. They have employed Mr. D.Tucker to lay a stone wall in lime and sand, which he has done more than half way round the grounds.

If work essentially began anew at this time, then the wall is about 140 years old. If some of the earlier work remained, the wall might be celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, with perhaps some stones dating back to the 1860s.

Regardless of its age, a suggestion made in the *Iron Era* in 1881 remains true today:

If a few more of those who have friends buried there, or feel charitably inclined, will contribute a little of what they have it will enable ...

...the Association to assure the life of the wall and burying ground for another 150 years.

To donate to the Cemetery Endowment
randolphmeetinghouse.org/cemetery/endowment

☞ In Memory of ☞

Mary Anna Flartey Brotherton Trustee 2003-2021



On March 18, long standing Trustee Mary Brotherton passed away at her home in Tinton Falls NJ after a brief illness.

Mary often talked about her first visit to the Meeting House as a student on a school trip before World War II, not knowing that she would later marry

into one of the most important families that helped found and for over 250 years has been instrumental in the care of the site.

After the death of her husband Jim in 1999, Mary was more active in the Association, becoming a Trustee in 2003 and serving as the Newsletter editor starting in 2008. She also took over responsibility for preserving the valuable Brotherton papers and photographs and recruiting the next generation of Brothertons into the Association.

☞ In Memory of ☞

Lee Whildin, Trustee 2011-2020



On August 5, Trustee Emeritus Lee Whildin’s death was announced in the local newspapers. As a long-time resident of Randolph Township active in preserving its history and its first woman mayor, Lee began working

with the Association in the late 1990s to build ties with the Randolph community. She formally joined the Association in 2003 and was elected a Trustee in 2011.

With the help of Lee and other community members, the Association is taking steps to make the Meeting House and Cemetery more accessible to the Randolph community. Her knowledge of local government and Randolph history will be greatly missed by the Association.

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

return to:

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FMHCA Summer 2021 Newsletter

- *Preservation Updates and Plans*
- *Association News and Updates*
- *Fall Meeting, October 16*
- *Archaeological Investigation*
- *The Age of the "Burying Ground" Wall?*
- *In Memory of Mary Anna Flartey Brotherton*
- *In Memory of Lee Whildin*



2021 Archaeological Investigation

To donate to the preservation of this historic site,
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Nick Steneck, Editor

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