



Fall 2022 Newsletter

Friends Meeting House and Cemetery Association of Randolph Township, NJ

An Independent Preservation Association

President's Note. Despite some ups and downs, 2022 has been a good year financially for the Association. Matching grants from the Morris County Historic Preservation Trust Fund and the New Jersey Historical Trust will fund interior restoration. Our two public events (see below) were supported by a grant from the Morris County Heritage Commission. In addition, we received help with operating expenses from the Morris County Small Business Grant Program, and long term the Cemetery will benefit from the newly established Richard T. Irwin Endowment. Our major donors have continued to contribute generously, although our smaller donor base has declined.

The one dark cloud hanging over this otherwise brighter financial picture is inflation. Fortunately, we were able to complete work on the roof before inflation set in. Less fortunately, the grants we have received for exterior restoration, parking, paths and interior restoration are based on pre-inflation estimates and are yet to be completed. The cost of these projects will reflect today's inflated prices for materials and labor, not the original estimates.

The granting agencies have no provision for inflation adjustments. We are in discussion with our architectural contractor, Connolly & Hickey, to find ways to cut costs without scaling back the projects. If costs cannot be reduced, the Association will have to raise additional funds to complete these projects.

Reflecting on this situation, I thought it would be interesting to look back at how the Association managed expenses a century ago (next page) as we prepare to mark our 125th anniversary next year. The annual budget was simpler a century ago and some expenses were proportionally higher. The one constant is the importance of individual donations in times of need. Due to inflation, *we are in a time of need!*

Nick Steneck, FMHCA President

Association News and Updates

Public events

- **Salem Oak Seedling.** The Salem Oak Seedling planted in May survived the summer, thanks to regular watering by the Friends. It is now ready for its next challenge: winter in NJ.
- **FitzRandolph Day.** On October 29, archaeologist Jim Lee presented an online talk on the 2021 archaeological investigation in the Cemetery. 35 of 54 registrants attended the event live. An edited version of the talk will be posted on YouTube in mid-December. Check the Association webpage for the link to this and other videos the Association has produced.



Grants

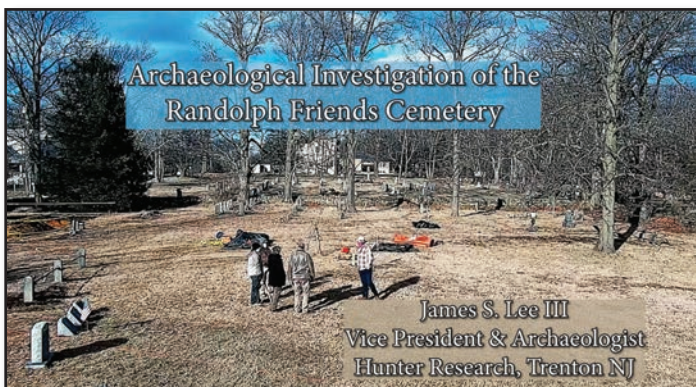
- **2022 New Jersey Historic Trust Grant.** This grant, awarded in October, will provide \$74,525 for interior restoration. A similar award earlier this year from the Morris County Historical Preservation Trust Fund will make it possible to move forward with interior restoration, provided a way can be found to cover the added costs due to inflation.
- **2022 Morris County Small Business Grant.** Early in the COVID-19 Pandemic, Morris County established a grant program to help small businesses and non-profits through the period of economic downturn. The Association has used its \$8,072 award for operating expenses and upgrades to the water and heating systems in the Annex.

Historical research

- **Digital Initiative.** Changing FitzRandolph Day to an online event left enough funds in our Morris County Heritage Commission grant to purchase a book scanner. The new scanner will be used to digitize the early Association records, the Brotherton materials recently donated to the Association and the Mott family papers. If you have historical materials that should be digitized for preservation purposes, please get in touch.

Upcoming events

- **Pathways of History 2023.** The Meeting House will be open on May 7, 12:00-5:00 pm for the 2023 Pathways Tour.



Mark your calendar: Annual Meeting: June 10, 2023, at the Meeting House and by Zoom.



Webpage: www.randolphmeetinghouse.org
 Contact us at: information@randolphmeetinghouse.org

To donate →



The Changing Challenges of Historic Preservation

Throughout its nearly 125 year history, the mission of the Friends Meeting House and Cemetery Association has remained the same: the preservation and maintenance of the 1758 Randolph Friends Meeting House and Cemetery. However, the challenges faced in carrying out this mission have changed significantly!

1920s vs. 2020s

The most significant challenge the Association faces today is the increasing cost of preserving a historic site. Annual expenses in the 2020s have been much greater than comparable expenses in the 1920s, even taking inflation into account. Income has increased significantly as well.

Item	1920s	2020s	Increase
Inflation	\$1.00	\$17.00	17x
Annual Income	\$40.00	\$19,000.00	475x
Annual Expenses	\$60.00	\$14,000.00	233x



Chatham Courier
1922

Inflation affects different sectors of the economy in different ways. For many items, food costs are about the same today as they were in the 1920s. 35¢ x 17 will still purchase a dozen eggs (\$5.95). Before the recent spike in prices, gasoline was actually less expensive than in the 1920s. Cars, on the other hand, are much more expensive. Ford sold its basic car for \$285 in 1922, which would be just under \$5,000 in 2022 dollars.

Changing Priorities

The disproportionately large increase in the Association's expenses can be attributed to three factors:

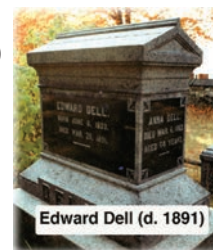
1) **Aging.** In the early 20th century, the Association spent more dollars caring for the Cemetery than for the Meeting House. They treated the latter as simply an old building that occasionally needed a coat of paint and minor repairs, mostly done by members of the Association. By the late 20th century, the Meeting House was in need of major repairs (new roof, foundation sills and siding) whereas the Cemetery only required regular mowing and the repair of a few markers. The Association currently spends about 90% of its annual budget preserving the Meeting House, compared to about 20% in the 1920s.

2) **Historical significance.** State and National Register listing in 1973 afforded the colonial Meeting House the attention it deserves but also raised the standards for and cost of its preservation. In 1925, the Association paid \$75 (\$1,275 in 2022 \$s) for "Sharp and Brotherton painting Meeting House, two coats." In 2020, the Association paid \$75,600 (\$4,447 in 1922 \$s) just for the plans for roof and exterior restoration. Preserving a historic site is far more expensive than caring for an unlisted, older property.

3) **Public Access.** As a privately owned but publicly supported historic site, the Association spends more today to encourage public access than in the past. In the 1920s, insurance was the only significant operating expense. Heat was provided by a wood stove. Water and electricity had not been installed. Today, besides insurance, the Association pays for heat, electricity, water and security. It is also planning to install parking and accessible paths. Providing public access is important but expensive.

Support for Historic Preservation

The changes in the way in which the Association has raised funds over the last 100 years has been as significant as the changes in expenses. During the Roaring 20s, roughly 70% of the Association's income came from interest on its bank account and endowments. Nearly half of that amount (\$25/year) came from a \$500 endowment established by Edward Dell in 1891. Today, most of the Association's operating income comes from annual donations and most of its preservation work is supported by grants.



The role of the individual donation has also changed significantly. In the 1920s, a \$15 contribution covered 25% of the Association's annual expenses. Today's inflation-adjusted equivalent, \$255, would cover less than 2% of operating expenses, with nothing left to pay for more costly preservation work.

In today's economy, asking for larger donations may not be realistic. Asking more individuals to contribute to support a major historic site should be possible.

A donation in any amount will help ensure the future of the Meeting House and Cemetery. [Thanks for donating.](#)

Nick Steneck, Association President