

The Provident FRIEND

April 2011

Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Histories of Our Past and Our Future

Meetinghouse History from Perry family

The Meeting received this history into our archives from Katherine Perry's daughters, who found it in her papers. Probably written by Tom Perry when he was clerk of the building committee, it has a directness and charm that prompted us to include much of it here. Brackets are editor's corrections/additions.

The Providence Friends Meeting House 99 Morris Avenue

The Providence Friends Meeting House opened in 1952. The previous Meeting House had been located at the junction of North Main and Meeting Streets in down town Providence. The Meeting moved because that building, though having a large meeting room, did not have adequate space for First Day School, for social occasions, or a sewing room for work on cast off clothing for the American Friends Service Committee.

In 1950 or 1951 the old Meeting House and land were sold to the City of Providence as a site for the present fire station. The Meeting received \$80,000. from the city and built the new Meeting House for \$88,000 on land owned by the New England Yearly Meeting for the use of Moses Brown School. One dollar was paid for a 100 year lease. Most of the lawn back of the Meeting House was not included in the lease, but it was agreed that the Meeting could maintain it as a visually attractive area for recreational purposes unless the school found other use for it. [cont p 6]

Moses Brown Students at Quaker Youth Conference

In February, a group of six selected Moses Brown Students went with Galen McNemar Hamann to attend a Quaker Youth Leadership Conference held at Friends Central School in Philadelphia. It started with a tour of historic Philadelphia; focusing on Revolution Era meeting houses. They then signed up for teacher and student led workshops and discussions, which included Racism/Stereotypes in Quaker Schools, Being Muslim in America, and Finding Your Calling. A goal was to show how Quaker values are seen throughout the life at Quaker schools, beyond going to meeting for worship once a week. We hope to start a club at Moses Brown that will cultivate the not so present Quaker aspect of Moses Brown School. *.(paraphrased from JBD - Excerpts from the descriptions of two of the students follow)*

"I recently found myself in Philadelphia, on a Quaker Youth Leadership Conference, with six of my Moses Brown peers. ... I only brought one pair of shoes ... and had to sleep on a gym floor, in a sleeping bag, with 180 strangers.... it was surprisingly nice to be disconnected; we didn't have internet access, we weren't really able to use our cellphones, ...we became a real, media barren community. We were forced to have face to face conversation and I was amazed at how eagerly I opened up to people that I knew so little about and that knew so little about me... (cont p 4)

Calendar:

Apr 17 Sun: 12:15 pm (p7)
Peace and Social Concerns
worship sharing, Providence
Meeting House

Apr 17 Sun: 1 pm (p4)
Smithfield Quarterly Meeting,
Worcester Meeting House.

Apr22-23: (p4)
NEYM's "Call to Worship-
Day of Discernment" –
Boston – details at:
www.neympeace.org/witness-discernment-in-april

Apr 24 Sun: (p4): Walk with
Eugenia Marks after coffee
hour, Providence Meeting
House

Apr 24 Sun: 3-6pm (p4)
Sacred Harp Singing,
Providence Meeting House.

May 7 Sat: 7-11am (p7)
May Breakfast, Providence
Meeting House

May 12 Thurs: (p3) 6pm
(potluck dinner) followed by 7
pm Meeting for Worship with
a Concern for Business,
Providence Meeting House.

May 19 Thurs: 3:45-5:15pm
(p4) Spring Tea, Providence
Meeting House.

May 21 Sat: (p4) Potluck
dinner party for Jeanne
Whitaker, Providence Meeting
House.

Providence Monthly Meeting for Business Minutes- Fourth Month 10th

Providence Friends Meeting - Meeting for Business - 10th of 4th month 2011

1. We gathered at 12:20 p.m. with seventeen Friends present. In the opening worship the clerk read the following queries on social responsibility and witness from the *Faith and Practice* of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (2002):

How does our Meeting work to overcome social, legal, economic, and political injustices, locally and in the wider world?

Does our Meeting serve the community through action on concerns for civic improvement?

What actions are we taking to assure everyone equal access to education, health care, legal services, housing, and employment as well as equal opportunities in business and in the professions?

2. The clerk read the following announcements:

Our monthly meeting will hold a worship sharing session concerning the future directions for our Peace and Social Concerns Committee on the 17th of this month at 12:15.

Next month's meeting for worship with a concern for business will be our last at Providence until fall. To mark the change, it will be held in the middle of the week, on the 12th of 5th month, with a potluck meal at 6 p.m. and meeting at 7 p.m. It was noted that under our current pattern, the year is not evenly divided between Providence and Saylesville.

Saylesville will be holding a special meeting for the time called Easter, 24th of 4th month at 7:30 a.m. with a potluck breakfast to follow.

3. Statistical report: Meeting recorder Anne DiMase presented a report on the meeting's membership as of the end of 2010. We note the passing of meeting member Joseph Broderick on the 16th of 5th month, 2010. We had a total membership of 218 as of the end of 2010, evenly divided between males and females. This report has been sent to the Yearly Meeting office and to quarterly meeting.

4. The State of our Society Report for calendar 2010, prepared by Ministry and Counsel, was read aloud and distributed. With two minor changes, the report was approved. A copy will be attached to these minutes.

5. For the Nominating Committee, Elsie Morse presented a preliminary list of recommendations for service to the meeting in the coming year, for our information. A full report will be brought to a later meeting for decision.

6. For the Finance Committee, Bruce Carlsten presented a proposed budget for the fiscal year from 1st of 6th month 2011 through 31st of 5th month 2012. He thanked committees for diligently examining their budget requests, to bring the budget more in line with actual spending over the past few years. As requested by the meeting, the proposal has multiple budget options, with varying levels of spending and therefore expected contribution income needed to supply the needed funds. "Budget A" is the most expansive and "Budget E" is the most stringent on both spending and income. The committee is asking for guidance on which of the five options should be the basis for the final proposal which the committee will bring back next month.

In the extended discussion that ensued, Friends raised a number of questions and concerns. Solving a budget deficit by drawing down general fund reserves (as some governmental entities have done) does not seem appropriate. On the other hand, the treasurer noted that over the past decade or so the meeting's income has fluctuated quite widely, resulting in surpluses of up to \$16,000 in some years, and deficits of up to \$4,000 in others, with surplus years more often than not.

(cont. pg 3)

Providence Monthly Meeting for Business Minutes (cont. from p2)

Friends would appreciate more information going out to the entire meeting, to encourage those who have not given recently to do so and give everyone guidance on what would be each household's fair share. The Finance Committee did send such a letter in the fall, but it was distributed only electronically and may not have gotten the attention that a paper mailing would have. In any given year, about half the households in the meeting support the budget; some of the irregularity seems to be a matter of simple forgetfulness. Having a "stretch" number as our goal for contributions may encourage more generous giving. Cutting small amounts out of committee budgets may be counterproductive if it inhibits useful activity and thereby impairs the vitality of the meeting. Any meeting budget contains much guess-work, as both income and expenditures are difficult to predict.

It was noted that under our current policy, our budgeted investment income is based on a fixed percentage of a three-year rolling average of the principal value. That average still includes the low values from 2008-09. Our actual investment return has been higher, and the growth in our assets during the past two years will be reflected in higher investment income in future budgets. We do not know how much individual and family budgets are still tight as a result of the economic downturn.

Ministry and Counsel clarified that Quaker Quest expenses, should the meeting decide to proceed, can be defrayed by accumulated income from the restricted Deborah Jencks fund, and would not need to be added to the operating budget. Other special projects can be added to the budget when they are approved; committees have been encouraged not to pad their budget requests based on possible activities that are not yet in final planning.

Ministry and Counsel has recommended a significant increase in the meeting's contribution to the yearly meeting budget, and hopes that can be done. Many friends spoke to the desirability of maintaining our contributions to Quaker and community organizations; these amounts are so low that cutting them by twenty or thirty percent makes a negligible difference to the overall budget.

The meeting's fundraising can make a difference, both for the overall budget and for supporting organizations doing good work in the community.

The clerk summarized that there seem to be two strands, one leaning toward a more realistic income figure such as Budget D, and one leaning towards spending what is needed and hoping that income will grow to fill that need, with surpluses and deficits evening out over time. Although some Friends are nervous about approving a budget based on "wild optimism," the meeting as a whole encouraged Finance Committee to work within the range reflected in Budgets A and B.

7. Recorder Anne DiMase brought recommendations to discontinue three people as members of the meeting, all of whom have been contacted: Stephen Mason, Catherine Jaques, and Marjorie Lederer. The last two have found spiritual homes in other denominations. Friends approved.

8. Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Peter Swaszek noted that he expects to pay the remaining contributions, including the final payment to New England Yearly Meeting, within this month, which will absorb the apparent surplus on hand. Given the expected additional expenses and contributions, he expects we will end this year with a deficit of \$3-4,000.

9. We closed with worship (enhanced by a choral group rehearsing "By the Waters of Babylon" on the lower level), intending to meet next at the Providence meeting house at 7 p.m. on 5th mo. 12th 2011, God willing.

Mark Conley, presiding clerk

Elizabeth Cazden, recording clerk

NEXT MEETING FOR BUSINESS IS *THURSDAY* MAY 12

There will be a potluck dinner at 6pm, and the meeting will start at 7pm. This is the last Meeting For Business to be held in Providence for this winter-spring season. The following Meeting For Business will be in Saylesville.

Around the Meeting

Peace And Social Concerns April 17

April 17, starting at 12:15 PM, there will be a worship sharing at the Providence Meetinghouse to consider future directions of our Peace and Social Concerns Committee (see page 7).

Smithfield Quarterly Meeting April 17

RI Smithfield Quarterly Meeting will take place at the Worcester Meetinghouse at 1 PM on Sunday, April 17. Nancy and David Haines will talk about the FGC Gathering which will take place in RI in 2012.

NEYM Event

Apr22-23: NEYM's "Call to Worship - Day of Discernment" is scheduled

to take place in Boston April 22-23. Involving a variety of events, details can be found at: www.neympeace.org/witness-discernment-in-april

Walk with Eugenia Marks April 24

Walk in the afternoon of April 24 after social time to a destination to be determined by the time participants have to be together, whether out of city or on the margins. Questions? See Eugenia Marks.

Sacred Harp Singing April 24 (4th Sundays)

Shape Note Singing takes place on the 4th Sunday of each month, at the Providence Meetinghouse from 3:00 to 6:00 PM. Join us and make a joyful noise.

See Bob Elliott for details.

Read a story Apr 25-29

Friends have been invited to read stories which reflect Friends' testimonies to Moses Brown lower school students during Literacy Week. The librarian at the school has several books to choose from and readings take place in the mornings and afternoons. Dates are Monday, April 25, to Friday, April 29. Please see Thia Lord if you'd like to participate.

Spring Tea May 19

Save the date for the annual Spring Tea on Thursday, May 14th, 3:45-5:15pm at the Meetinghouse. This is an opportunity to celebrate the season and to express our thanks to the faculty and staff of Moses Brown

School. Please join us!

Thanks,

Thia

Party for Jeanne Whitaker May 21

Jeanne will be leaving us at the end of July and heading off to a Quaker Life Care Community in Pennsylvania. We and the RI community want to send her off in style. Plans are for a festive potluck dinner at Providence Monthly Meeting with music provided by all our musical friends (capital and little F). Plan on joining us and being part of this event. If you'd like to help in plans, set up, etc please contact Dede Carlsten at dcarlsten@fullchannel.net or Carol Bragg at Cbragg1@aol.com

Moses Brown Students (cont. from p1)

...I met some of the most incredible people I've ever had the pleasure of knowing – I was humbled by their warmth, their kindness, and their lack of judgment and was so refreshed in hearing their stories that they so freely shared. It really is so amazing how, when ... taken out of their element, and .. deprived of today's technology – no Facebook, no twitter, no texting – ... [people] are at their true best. I guess the moral of the story, is that when people are without what we all render we can't *live* without, is when we are all at our purest and loveliest self. (D. P.)"

"The most distinctive and enjoyable memory that I will remember for years to come, among many others, is the QYLC "Coffeehouse" event. This was in essence a talent show in which students attending the conference performed ... the event represented the openness, as well as overall welcoming and comfortable atmosphere that engulfed the modest cafeteria, which that night, acted as our temporary auditorium. The name "coffeehouse" as opposed to a "talent show" ... symbolized the relaxed environment ... everyone was so inviting I was able to walk up to any person at the conference and strike up a friendly conversation over just about anything, whether it was the current performer or the previous night's lecture ... I learned what it means to be a student and a contributing member of the community at a Friends School. (A K.)"



State of the Society Report

Providence Monthly Meeting - State of the Society 2010

Providence Monthly Meeting consists of three worship communities, those worshipping at the Providence Meetinghouse, the Saylesville Meetinghouse, and the Conanicut (Jamestown) Meetinghouse. Two of the challenges we have recognized in the last year are the need to maintain and strengthen the relationships among the three worship groups and the need to fulfill our shared responsibility for stewardship of our three buildings, both for our own effective use and for the use of future generations of Friends. Much of our attention this last year (and the previous year, also) has been focused on the maintenance and improvement of the physical spaces in which we worship and carry out the activities associated with that worship. Engaging in the joys and challenges of that work has in many ways energized us, brought us together as a community, and stimulated us to examine how we work together and what we are trying to accomplish.

We began the year with a newly renovated Providence Meetinghouse and we have been continuing to explore the many ways our space better serves our needs. We have shifted much attention to the extensive needs of the meetinghouse in Saylesville, and we have begun to address those needs little by little, recognizing that the challenges and expenses of maintaining a 300 year old building will be ongoing for some time to come. Two threshing sessions helped to replace a sense of foreboding and frustration in the face of a seemingly insurmountable task with a sense of optimism that we have collectively begun the work on a difficult task. This work has brought us together and strengthened our ties.

In Providence the use of our meetinghouse has increased. We host a regular Music for Children program, a Shape-note singing group, and potentially two Community Supported Agriculture programs. There has been increased use of our meetinghouse by committees of the New England Yearly Meeting and for the first time in many years we hosted a Junior Yearly Meeting retreat. Our coffee hour has become more vibrant (with more food contributions), enriching the relationships among us and welcoming newcomers and visitors. We hosted our first May Breakfast, an effective outreach effort which we hope to continue, and on the same day hosted the Quarterly Meeting for a day of extended worship.

Other notable events and activities in the life of the Meeting in the last year have been our Christmas Gathering, where the adults and the children of the Meeting come together for music, storytelling, worship and fellowship. Attendance at the Saylesville candlelight Christmas Eve continues to grow with many coming annually for this meaningful time of worship. In the spring an adult study group began the study of what the Bible has to say about migration and its relation to the issue of immigration in the U.S. today, but did not continue in the fall. There was a sense that the quality of Meeting for Worship improved in the last year, with perhaps fewer messages, but deeper reflection between messages. We continued to work to discern our relationship with Friends United Meeting. Many Friends expressed dissatisfaction with FUM's hiring policy, which seems to treat gay and lesbian Friends unfairly. We reached a decision to allow Friends to withhold their personal financial contributions to the Meeting from going to FUM. At the same time, we found our time with Joyce Ajlouny, Head of Ramallah Friends School, to be thought provoking and inspirational, leading us to recognize the important work that FUM does. We continue to wrestle with this issue. We hosted a Quaker Quest workshop day to experience and learn about the Quaker Quest program. Friends felt uplifted by the chance to hear other people's experiences of Quaker life and worship, and a committee has been established to discern whether the Meeting is led to continue with the full Quaker Quest program.

At Saylesville, Friends gather every week and relish their time together as the most important time of the week. For those of us who worship there, worship is central to what we do. Our feeling of community has led to expanded talk after Meeting, making deeper connections with each other. Our Meeting is small, but we feel much life within the smallness. The outreach of the Book Swap continues to grow, fostering a community of its own. Historical societies have also noted our beloved meetinghouse. Friends at Saylesville are more willing to play a part in the business of Providence Monthly Meeting, which has helped the growth of our community. Our numbers at Saylesville are not growing, but our spirit is. Feeding the volunteers working on a home for Habitat for Humanity was an important outreach project. It has been an energizing gift of hospitality. We rejoiced in the work on the outside of the meetinghouse, and our participation with Partners for Sacred Places has enlightened us and educated us to possibilities and opportunities. We are happy with the quality of our worship, but we at Saylesville have concerns over attendance and accommodations for children. We want to make others aware of the value of silence.

Quaker Education Support from Elsie Morse

The Quaker Education Support Committee grants modest scholarships to active members' families for Quaker tuition fees where such grants can make the difference in allowing their children to attend a Quaker school. The Scholarship Committee was renamed the Quaker Education Support Committee in 2005 in order to better represent a mission which includes as much "outreach" support of Quaker education programs as it does "in-reach" support for elementary and secondary aged children of members' families who need financial help to participate in such programs.

The Committee may choose to reserve approximately a quarter of its annual budget to support families' participation in other Quaker programs such as Quaker camps or Quaker service trips. As it is with school scholarships, our goal here is to provide support when it makes the difference in the ability of active members' families to participate in such programs.

Members of the meeting who would like to apply for a scholarship should write to the committee stating the names of their child or children and the Quaker school or program whose tuition needs to be supported. Specific granting levels will vary from year to year depending on need and availability.

Funds may be reserved in years of less need to be able to continue support in years of greater need. In addition to regular budgeted amounts, the meeting will accept special contributions designated for this committee. We encourage families who have received our scholarship aide in the past to repay these funds according to their ability in the future so that the fund will be available to assist other families in need.

MEETING HOUSE HISTORY (continued from P 1)

In the construction of the present Meeting House a Quaker committee worked with the [architectural] firm of Harkness and Geddes. The builder was Frank Gustafson and Sons. Inc.

Albert Harkness took great personal interest in the new Meeting House and tried to preserve some remembrance of the old. The three tiered windows in the Meetingroom are modeled after the old. The benches were brought up from North Main Street but were altered slightly to [accommodate] the increased stature of Americans. There is a board on each bench which raises the height 3/4" and the depth of the seat 1 & 1/2". The moldings on the footings of the benches conceals a shim which tips them back slightly and makes them much more comfortable.

[P3] Mr. Harkness was distressed that he seemed to be designing a Meetingroom that was too much of a box. This he solved by arching the ceiling. He took great pride in his lighting fixtures and designed several for the Meetingroom before the present one suited him. He needed convincing to accept the need for wide aisles in the Meetingroom for he felt this was waste space. Friends told him of the need for room for conversation after Meeting. This astonished him as he thought everyone would leave as quickly as possible.

The removable panels between the Meetingroom and library were Mr. Harkness's idea to get us a larger space for special occasions. However, he would have nothing to do with the color scheme which was turned over to Donald Reid, the heating engineer. Mr Harkness hinted that there would be unpleasant disagreement among Meeting members on colors, but five years later everyone would be satisfied. He was right on both counts.

May Breakfast, Saturday May 7.

Our May Breakfast will take place on Saturday, May 7, from 7am to 11am. In the Providence Meeting House, it will be a traditional breakfast of eggs, home fries, bacon or sausage, pancakes and an assortment of muffins. OJ, coffee and tea will also be provided. Open to all!

Peace and Social Concerns Requests Worship Sharing - Sunday April 17

From Dan Lederer

I'm writing on behalf of Ministry and Counsel. Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee has asked for some guidance to determine what its mission should be going forward. If the committee is to continue the important work that it has accomplished over the years, we need to help it think about how its mission might be structured so that it can best serve Providence Meeting and so that the Meeting can, in turn, support Peace and Social Concerns projects. In order to accomplish this, there will be a Worship Sharing at 12:15 pm following coffee hour this coming Sunday, April 17th. Our collective outreach is important to all of us, so we hope that you will plan to attend this session. At the worship sharing we will consider the following queries:

- How does our Meeting work to overcome social, legal, economic, and political injustices, locally and in the wider world?
- To what degree should Peace and Social Concerns organize its projects with an expectation that the larger Meeting will, in some numbers, actively participate? What specific projects might lend themselves to this approach?
- How can Peace and Social Concerns strike a balance among (1) its own projects, (2) projects organized for the larger Meeting, and (3) publicizing upcoming events organized by other local and national groups?

Providence Monthly Meeting - Contacts

Providence Meeting (401) 331-4218 <http://providencefriends.org>
99 Morris Avenue, Providence, RI 02906

Presiding Clerk: Mark Conley clerk@providencefriends.org
Assistant Presiding Clerk: Debbie Block assistclerk@providencefriends.org
Recording Clerk: Betsy Cazden recordingclerk@providencefriends.org
Treasurer: Peter Swazek treasurer@providencefriends.org
Ministry & Counsel: Dan Lederer ministryandcounsel@providencefriends.org
Pastoral Care Committee: Dieter Gomes pastoralcare@providencefriends.org
Finance: Bruce Carlsten finance@providencefriends.org
Peace & Social Concerns: Dede Carlsten peaceandsocial@providencefriends.org
Social & Hospitality: socialandhospitality@providencefriends.org
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Communications: Debbie Block communications@providencefriends.org
Program Committee: Sarah Baily program@providencefriends.org
Marriage Clearness: Erin Hazlett marriage@providencefriends.org
Library: Sarah Morenon library@providencefriends.org
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Property: Bob Elliott and Lee Jaspers property@providencefriends.org
Funeral & Burial: Matt Hackman funeralandburial@providencefriends.org
Newsletter: Steve Schwartz providentfriend@providencefriends.org
Email list moderator: Dan Lederer list@providencefriends.org
Website: Dave McNab webclerk@providencefriends.org
Moses Brown School Liaison: Thia Lord liaison@providencefriends.org
Young Adult Friends: Stephen Higa yaf@providencefriends.org
To schedule the Meetinghouse: Bruce Shaw scheduling@providencefriends.org
AFSC SENE: Martha Yager (508) 399-6699 or myager@afsc.org or www.afsc.org/sene
Adult Education: Dave McNab adult_ed@providencefriends.org



Elizabeth Bonner Zimmerman

Newsletter of
Providence Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of
Friends
(401) 331-4218 or <http://providencefriends.org>

Meeting for Worship each Sunday

Providence: 10:00 am Saylesville: 10:30 am
Jamestown: 10:30 am

First Day School, Providence - Sunday. Children join Meeting for Worship from 10:00-10:15 am and then proceed to First Day School from 10:15-11:00 am.

Other Meetings for Worship (All welcome):

Monday - 12:30pm - Moses Brown Upper School

Tuesday - 7pm - Young Adult Friends at
116 Waterman St. (yaf@providencefriends.org)

Wednesday - 8:25am - Moses Brown Lower School

Wednesday - 9:40am - Moses Brown Middle School

Thursday - Noon-12:45 pm Brown University in
J. Walter Wilson room 411

Potluck, Providence - each First Sunday

Meeting for Business

Providence: Second Sunday each month at 12:15pm
Saylesville: Last Sunday of each month

AFSC SENE Support Committee - Second Tuesday, 6:30-9:00 pm
Volunteers needed and welcome.
Call (508) 399-6699

PEACEKEEPING TRAINING

As Quakers are known for their commitment to peace-making, AFSC sometimes gets requests to help keep the peace at public events, such as a recent request to provide peacekeepers at the Governor's public hearings on "Secure Communities". I asked help for that from the Meeting, and several of you volunteered. In conversations since, it appears that there is an interest in having a training to enable some who would then feel more comfortable offering to help. I would be happy to offer such a training, which takes about three hours. It involves a refresher on nonviolence as a tool in managing conflict, thinking through different situations, and doing some role plays.

Please send an email to Steve Schwartz at:
providentfriend@providencefriends.org

indicating your interest and he will help arrange a time for us to get together. And thanks!

Martha Yager, AFSC-SENE

The Provident FRIEND

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