



Garden Project



Alternatives to Violence
Project



Woodstown De-Mining

Our Story

In the over 300 years that Quakers have been in South Jersey, Friends contributed to the growth and development of various communities and often spoke to the injustices of the era.

2020 Today Quakers continue to serve in their communities

Throughout South Jersey, Friends serve their communities in their professional lives and as volunteers, continuing to provide “silent assistance from the nameless to the nameless.” Quote from the Nobel Peace Prize. (Link: <http://quakernobel.org/history>)

2019 Salem Tree

The famous Salem Tree – estimated to be 565 years old – falls. It once shaded the Lenni Lenape. Local lore maintains they made a treaty with John Fenwick (founder of Salem) beneath its branches upon his arrival here in 1675.

2017 Historical markers at former auction sites

Camden County Historical Society and the Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers project unveil three markers where enslaved Africans were sold during the 1700s to work on local plantations and businesses. The sites included Cooper’s Ferry, owned by a prominent Quaker.

2017–Present Climate change

Medford Friends hold a day-long Climate Change Festival at Pinelands Preservation Alliance headquarters, followed by a successful campaign to install solar panels on their meetinghouse, and educational programs on topics such as green investing and sustainable farming.

2016 De-mining

Woodstown Meeting is recognized by the US State Department for supplying over 100 detectors to assist in clearing explosives remaining from previous wars. The manufacturer provides a free detector for every one purchased. The devices are shipped to countries where the demining is most needed and not otherwise possible.

2016 Support for immigrants' rights

"Love Thy Neighbor, No Exceptions" signs from the Friends Committee on National Legislation appear across the region in response to political attacks on immigrants and immigrant rights. (Link: afsc.org/key-issues/issue/creating-inclusive-communities)

2016 Memorials to the Lost

Exhibits with t-shirts bearing the names of people who died as a result of gun violence are displayed along Quaker meetinghouse properties in 15 communities across South Jersey. The exhibits were created in cooperation with Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence. (Link: <http://www.heedinggodscall.org//memorials-to-the-lost>)

2012 "Buried Lives: Incarcerated in Early America"

A new book, co-edited by Richard Bell and Friend Michele Lise Tarter, lifts up the voices of those who lived and worked in jails, almshouses, workhouses, floating prison ships, and plantations. (Link: www.roanoke.edu/about/news/michele_tarter_unlocking_women's_words)

Early 2000s-2017 Garden Project

Residents of Garrett House – a half-way house for women released from the NJ State Prison – take part in gardening projects, educational programs, and enjoying lunch together at Newton Meeting in Camden, with volunteers from five local meetings.

1997–Present Friends' Enrichment Program

Scholarships make it possible for 400+ children in the Moorestown area to participate in overnight and day camps, sports clinics, art and music classes and other life-enhancing activities. (Link: <http://thesunpapers.org/2017/01/24/friends-enrichment-program-celebrates-20th-anniversary>)

1994 Quakers promote peaceful conflict resolution

Quakers in Medford initiate Alternatives to Violence (AVP) trainings in New Jersey state prisons; community workshops followed. (Link: <http://avpnj.org/>)

1994 Meetings in South Jersey begin to honor same-sex marriages

Haddonfield Monthly Meetings adopts a minute welcoming same-sex marriages. Seaville Meeting published a lengthy minute in 2004. The earliest minute found so far in NJ is Montclair (New York Yearly Meeting), in 1991. [University Monthly Meeting in Seattle adopts the earliest minute in 1982.]

1987 Quakers work in Prison Ministry

Friends in Salem Quarterly Meeting begin holding a Quaker Worship Group in Southern State Correctional (Leesburg).

1980s Quakers oppose taxes for War

South Jersey Quakers are very involved in War Tax resistance and Peace Tax Fund promotion. Court cases include South Jersey Quaker staff members. (Link: <http://archives.nwtrcc.org/profiles/padams97.php>)

1958 Quakers help integrate Willingboro

“Willie R. James, an African-American barred from buying in Willingboro, filed discrimination charges that summer against... Levitt & Sons Inc. James’ lawyer, Emerson Darnell, a ... Quaker from Mount Holly and future founding board member of the ACLU of NJ, argued the whites-only policy was discriminatory and illegal.” [Quote from ACLU publication.] The NAACP, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and local clergy worked together to smooth the path to integration.

1955 Delaware Valley Quakers reunite after 127 separation

After several decades of joint work on relief efforts and youth interaction, Yearly Meetings in Philadelphia and many other cities reunite. Many do not, however, resulting in a variety of “flavors” of Quakerism across the theological spectrum in the USA. (See entry for 1828)

1942 Quakers worked to free interned Japanese Americans

South Jersey Quakers lobby against the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during WW2 and – working with the AFSC - help find work for individuals at Seabrook Farms and other South Jersey family farms.

1917 Quaker Suffragist Alice Paul imprisoned and force-fed with other protestors

Alice Paul (1885-1977) of Moorestown Meeting, drafts the original Equal Rights Amendment in 1923 and leads the National Women’s Party for many decades. Unfortunately, she also tries to minimize participation of African American suffragists and keep the efforts segregated.

1888 Walt Whitman memorializes Quaker Elias Hicks

Whitman, living in Camden, writes “Notes...on Elias Hicks” with recollections and reflections on Hicks as “the most democratic of the religionists.” [*italics original*]

1860s South Jersey Supports Lincoln (55%)

More populous North Jersey support of Lincoln at only 45% swings state majority against Lincoln in both 1860 and 1864. After the war South Jersey legislators strongly support the Reconstruction Amendments which are opposed by North Jersey Counties, delaying ratification.

1832 New Jersey Chancery Court rules on Orthodox vs Hicksite

A Crosswicks Meeting dispute between Hicksite and Orthodox parties over the ownership of a school fund, is elevated to the New Jersey Court of Chancery which rules that Orthodox is the legitimate Yearly Meeting.

1828 American Quakerism divides on theological tests and authority

Under the influence of American evangelical revivalism, visiting Quaker evangelists from England and participation in ecumenical activities such as Bible Societies, urban meetings tend to promote statements of faith. Wealthier and higher-learning in urban areas make for a socioeconomic and cultural split with rural Meetings. Long Island traveling minister Elias Hicks preaches in favor of detachment from worldly affairs, and primacy of the Inner Light, over statements of theological orthodoxy and biblical literalism.

The two groups name each other Orthodox and Hicksite. 52% – 65% of Friends in South Jersey are in Hicksite Meetings. (Burlington Quarterly Meeting is evenly split, Haddonfield leans

Orthodox, Salem leans Hicksite). Many towns build second Meeting house for the minority party.

1810s–1850s Quakers active in manumission societies

In addition to public calls for an end to slavery, some Friends quietly provide assistance to African Americans fleeing north for freedom, including safe houses in the Underground Railroad network (e.g. Goodwin family in Salem County, William Allison in Burlington City, Samuel Cooper and his sons in Camden and Waterford Township).

1794 Haddonfield Quarterly Meeting forms

Haddonfield Quarterly Meeting is located between Salem and Burlington Quarters.

1790 Lower rates of slavery in South Jersey

First United States Census shows the enslavement rate for African Americans to be 37% in the southern counties; 89% in the northern counties. In 1800 the figures are 18% in the south, 85% in the north.

1788 NJ's first State Governor, extols Quaker founder

William Livingston (1723-90) writes "George Fox alone has, without human learning, done more towards the restoration of real, primitive, unadulterated Christianity, and the extirpation of priestcraft, superstition, and ridiculous unavailing rites and ceremonies, than any reformer in protestant Christendom has with it." [italics original]

1783 Many NJ Friends sign a petition to Congress against the slave trade

This is the first such petition from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The following year Friends form the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, which petitions Congress for immediate manumission.

1780s Quakers work to help alleviate poverty among Lenape

John Hunt and Joshua Evans work to support the Lenape living in poverty at the Brotherton Reservation near Medford.

1776 Delaware Valley Quakers make slavery a disownable offense

Despite this action by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Quakers do not work to end slavery in the larger world until the 1790s. Until then their abolitionism is solely within the Quaker community. Those individuals who refused to release enslaved African Americans were "laboured with" for years to comply.

1774 John Woolman's Journal and Essays published

Following Woolman's death in 1772, publication of his writings spurs many Friends in the Delaware Valley to disengage from slavery. Chesterfield Monthly Meeting saw wholesale manumissions among its members beginning this year.

1757 Burlington Quakers establish the "NJ Society for Helping the Indians"

Samuel Smith drafts the organization's first constitution, contributes funding and performs fund-raising. In 1765 Smith publishes the first comprehensive "History of New Jersey [Nova Caesaria]," eclipsing earlier accounts contained in the promotional pamphlets of the late 1600's.

1750s Anti-slavery becomes a majority position among Quakers

John Woolman publishes against slavery, visits Native Americans and refuses to wear dyed cloth because the process was harmful to workers. Anthony Benezet (who moved from Philadelphia to Burlington in 1766) operates the publishing of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting materials during this time and also publishes his own pamphlets against slavery. Their writings are very influential in changing Quaker opinion on slavery. During this decade anti-slavery becomes a majority position among Quakers.

1703 West Jersey ends its development as an independent Province after nearly 30 years

Quaker hegemony decreases in this period. The first united legislature meets Autumn, 1703 under Queen Anne's government with a Royal Governor (shared with New York until 1738). Until the 1776 Revolution, however, governmental structures stay split in West and East "Divisions." The legislature alternates year-by-year, meeting in the old capitals of Burlington and Perth Amboy, passing laws relative to the Division in which they met.

1687 Province Line first surveyed

The two Quaker governors of West and East Jersey (Edward Byllynge and Robert Barclay) agreed to survey the Province Line in such a way as "to make as equal a Division... as they can." In doing so they varied significantly from the line specified in the 1676 Quintipartite Deed, which caused considerable legal difficulties later. The line surveyed in 1686 was used to establish County lines, and may still be seen in the Hunterdon-Somerset border and in the longest part of the Burlington-Ocean border.

1682 Scottish Quakers buy much of East Jersey

George Carteret died in 1680, and in 1682 his widow auctioned his East Jersey holdings. Most of the Carteret estate was purchased by wealthy Quakers, primarily in Scotland, who established Perth Amboy as the Capital. They appointed Quaker theologian Robert Barclay as the Governor of East Jersey. Quakers never become prominent in the East Jersey legislature, which is dominated by Puritans who settled in the late 1660's primarily in Newark and Elizabethtown.

1681 First Quaker annual business gathering held in Burlington

The beginning of institutional Quakerism in South Jersey. Later becomes Burlington and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, alternating meeting locations. Quakers in New Jersey develop two "Quarterly Meetings" (4 times a year) in Salem and Burlington.

1680 Establishment of West Jersey Laws and Court System

The first entry in the Burlington Court Book is dated June 14, 1680 and the Quaker-led Assembly first met in November 1681 to establish laws more formally than the Concessions and Agreements had. The laws and the court records illustrate the relative mildness of Quaker jurisprudence. The West Jersey laws included no mandatory death penalty statutes, while the 1668 laws of Carteret and Berkeley's united New Jersey had about 1 dozen capital punishments.

1677 Capital of West Jersey established in Burlington

First ships arrive to Burlington City, straddling the Yorkshire and London land divisions known as "Tenths." The borders of the Tenths were revised and later replaced by the County system in the 1680s. Land is purchased from the Lenape owners.

1676 Quaker Constitution created

Byllynge and Penn create the "Concession and Agreements" as a constitution and by-laws. The document establishes many freedoms, liberties, and rights.

- "That no men, nor number of men upon earth, hath power or authority to rule over men's consciences..."
- "...being intended and resolved ... that all and every person and persons inhabiting in the said province, shall as far as in us lies, be free from oppression and slavery." [As lofty as this resolution sounds, it would be another 100 years before Quakers would disown enslavers]
- Provided for Native American representation on juries

1676 Deed establishes West Jersey border

The three Trustees, Byllynge and Carteret sign the Quintipartite Deed to divide New Jersey into West and East Provinces, establishing a Provincial division line along a north-northwest line from the southern tip of Long Beach Island to a specific latitude (41.66 degrees) on the upper Delaware River.

Beginning 1675 Relationships with the Lenape

Quakers build relationships with the Lenapes and other European colonists. The Lenapes live primarily along the Delaware River and the ocean; their socio-political structure is democratic, egalitarian and based on matrilineal kinship groups, with descent through the mother's line. Sachems (leaders) assign fields for planting, and make decisions on hunting, trade, diplomacy and war. Colonists engage with the sachems when needing food and other assistance.

Beginning 1675 Quaker women's role

Unlike other Protestant groups in South Jersey, Quaker women play a substantial role in providing relief to the poor, supervising marriages, guiding women on Quaker rules of modesty and marrying within the faith. They also discipline women for misconduct when guidance fails.

1675 First Quaker settlers in West Jersey

Fenwick, not waiting for Byllynge's and Penn's West Jersey planning, brings first Quaker colonists to found Salem, purchasing land from the original owners, the Lenape.

1674 Quakers buy half of NJ

London Quaker Edward Byllynge, with financial help from his initial bankruptcy trustee, John Fenwick, purchases half of NJ from John, Lord Berkeley. After difficulties develop between them, William Penn and two other Trustees are appointed for Byllynge. The Trustees come to an agreement with John Fenwick, giving him one tenth of Byllynge's purchase. Penn and Byllynge work on establishing West Jersey as the first Quaker colony in the Delaware Valley.

1672 Quaker founder George Fox visits first Quaker Groups in NJ

While visiting congregations from Barbados to North Carolina, to Rhode Island and back to Maryland, Fox travels on the Burlington Path, receiving help from the Lenape people. He also visits Quakers in Shrewsbury and Middletown, Monmouth County.

1664 New Jersey Formed

English fleet, under Lord High Admiral, James, the Duke of York, names region New York. King Charles II grants the land between the Hudson and the Delaware to two allies: John, Lord Berkeley, and Sir George Carteret, former governor of the Isle of Jersey in the English Channel.

1660 Quaker context in England

The "Restoration" of monarchy in England follows compromises between King Charles II and the Puritan-led Parliament. Quakers periodically suffer severe persecutions due to their continued religious dissent.

1658 Early Quakers travel through New Jersey

Josiah Cole and Thomas Thurston cross what later becomes NJ (then part of New Netherland), on the indigenous trail later known as the "Burlington Path." They find the Lenape people friendly and helpful.

***With Special Thanks to
Bob Barnett for creating "Our Story"
For SouthJerseyQuakers.org***