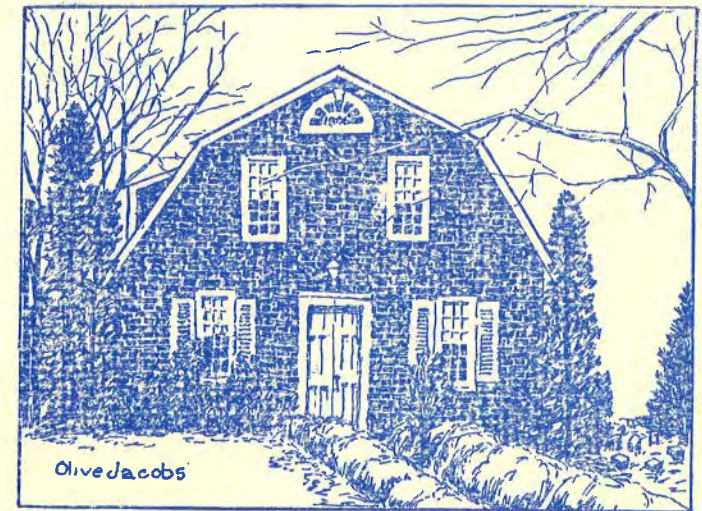


Camden Friends Meeting



Camden Friends Meeting House was built in 1805, on land donated by Jonathan and Patience Hunn. The meeting house is unique among Friends' places of worship by reason of its style of architecture. It is without porches, has a double door at the front and a single one at the rear, and is noticeable for its gambrel roof, called "hip roof" in olden times, with a couple of dormer windows on each of the east and west sides. But the windows were purposely designed for lighting the upper floor where a Friends School was kept from 1805 until about 1875 when it was discontinued. Most of the original desks and benches are still here, along with the blackboard and a famous old-fashioned ten-plate stove manufactured at Wrightstown, Pa.

An interesting dropping panel in the partition between the meeting room and the stairway leading upward to the school room was formerly used to give added audience space by use of the stairway at times of an over-filled meeting, and for the benefit of servants who attended.

On a post in the middle of the room is a case containing a diagram of the graveyard and the Book of Registration of those buried there. In a semicircular transom in the front or northern gable of the Meeting House is the date 1805, and there is one theory that this does not necessarily mark the date of the erection of the building, but rather sets the time of the establishment of the school. The Meeting House was erected facing the north instead of the customary way of old Quaker Meeting Houses facing south. The bricks from which it was built were made in 1802 from clay taken from the soil in back of where the structure now stands.

No early records of the architect or builder can be found, but the deed of conveyance is still in existence and reads as follows: "Whereas a number of persons, members of the society of the people called Quakers, for a considerable time past have had in prospect the erection of a Building to be occupied as a School-house and as a meeting-house for the members of that society; for which purpose a subscription paper hath been circulated, and the following named persons, members of the Society aforesaid, did subscribe: and have engaged to pay the several sums to their names affixed, viz, Daniel Mifflin, Jonathan Hunn, Samuel Howell, Jabez Jenkins, William Dolby, Thomas Jenkins, Thomas Berry, Warner Mifflin, Elias Jarrel, Joseph G. Rowland, Daniel Mifflin, Junr., Samuel Emerson, Samuel Mifflin, Henry Godwin, Thomas Nock, Jonathan Jenkins, John Dolby, Oliver Nock, Sarah Russel, Ann Hunn, Junr., (now Mifflin), Hannah Alston."

The oldest stone in the adjoining burial ground is that of Jonathan H. Jenkins, who died on August 11, 1837. John Hunn, Governor of Delaware from 1901 to 1905 is also buried here.

There is a memorial stone to Warner Mifflin, one of Delaware's prominent abolitionists. This stone was originally set up in Motherkill (near Magnolia) burying ground where he is buried in an unmarked grave. When Motherkill burying ground became extremely neglected the stone was moved to its present location in 1937. Warner Mifflin was a wealthy farmer who was born on the eastern shore of Virginia but later established himself near Camden where he owned about 2000 acres. He not only freed his own slaves but also did his utmost to persuade others to follow his example. It was largely due to his efforts that Kent County came to be the center in Delaware of this early abolitionist movement.

There were many other Quakers who belonged to the Underground Railroad. Jonathan Hunn had his large holding of land sold at Sheriff's sale because he refused to give up his connection with this activity. Henry Cowgill and his family were threatened with being "burned out and hung," a threat that was never carried out. Each member of that family took turns standing guard day and night, their farm at Willow Grove being one of the depots.

The first Quaker meeting in Kent County was held on December 19, 1705 in Duck Creek Meeting House in Saulsbury Town, about a mile north of where Smyrna now is. It was attended by members from all over the lower part of the county, but on account of poor roads and weather, petitions seeking permission to hold meetings in other localities were presented and granted. Little Creek Meeting was organized in 1710. Camden Meeting was organized in 1795, and the Meeting House and School were built

in 1805. In 1828 Murderkill (also sometimes known as Motherkill and Motherkiln) Meeting was united to Duck Creek and in 1830 both these were united to Camden. Under the name of "Camden Monthly Meeting" meetings were held alternately at Camden and Little Creek. Regular meetings at Little Creek ceased about 1865. Thus Camden was the last Meeting to be established, and is at present the only one currently active.

Meeting is held every Sunday from 11 to 12, with classes for children at the same time.



Acknowledgment is made to the following authors for material used in this pamphlet: J. Thomas Scharf, "History of Delaware"; T. Chalkley Matlack, "Historical Sketches of Friends' Meetings"; Conrad, "History of Delaware"; and other sources.