

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF DOVER
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The Old Presbyterian Church of Dover
Cemetery

At Meeting House Square

A HISTORY

OF THE

CEMETERY

WITH

ALPHABETIC
CEMETERY BURIAL INDEX

Prepared For The Cemetery Committee

By

David R. Holland

March 2002

The Old Presbyterian Church Of Dover

Cemetery

At Meeting House Square

Located on South Governors Avenue Between West North Street And Bank Lane,
Dover, Delaware

Historical Significance
Of The Cemetery

Compiled For the Cemetery Committee, March 1, 2002, by David R. Holland
In Conformance to SECTION 1, Paragraph 8 of the CEMETERY OPERATING PLAN (#6)
Dated September 1, 1999

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A major portion of this report is compiled from,

“Bridge Across the Years,”

By Aline Noren Ehinger; Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1975;

“History of the Presbyterian Church of Dover, Delaware,”

By Rev. John Franklin Stonecipher, 1887; and

“Dover, The First Two Hundred and Fifty Years,”

By E. Sammak and D. Winslow, 1967;

And from

Presbytery, Presbyterian Historical Society, church, cemetery,

Newspaper, archive, deed and other sources.

It does not yet include cemetery records which may be contained in Trustee and Session records.

The history of this cemetery

Cannot be separated from the history of the old church, the town,

The State of Delaware or our nation.

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THIS IS A STORY ABOUT A CEMETERY

An Historic Jewel In the Diamond State Of Delaware -

Some non-church-related history is included in this chronology

To provide a broader context for the cemetery,

The church and the community which it has served for nearly 300 years.

In Compliance With The 1999 Cemetery Operating Plan (#6) Article 5: Objectives

Develop And Maintain A Written Significance Of This Remarkably Historic Cemetery

This history has been computerized on Microsoft's Office XP Word Processor software. Computerization has three particular advantages.

- First, it is an ideal *storage and retention* system.
- Second, it may *prevent further loss* of vital cemetery records, and,
- Third, it provides a *basis for continued recording* of the cemetery history.

This History Is Not Complete.

It is amazing, however, that this much has been reconstructed of nearly 300 years of cemetery history. This work should be considered a foundation or starting point for future Cemetery Committee members or other interested persons to:

- Add historic information when it is recovered, and
- Add new information as it occurs.

Some important portions of the cemetery history are not yet included, others could be expanded and new information could be added as time and personal/corporate interest permit. Examples:

- Acquisition of the land for the Cemetery: Include (1) a photocopy of the Deed for the 200-acre parcel of land sold by **William Southebee** (1694) for the planned site of Dover Towne and (2) any subsequent sale or gift of this land, if any, for use by the Presbyterian Society for this cemetery before 1743. William Southebee had previously bought an 800-acre tract (known as "*Brothers Portion*") from **John Walker** on 12-16-1684 (**Deed Book B**, Vol. I, page 27).
- Identification of dignitaries, church officers and leaders buried after 1975: These can be determined possibly from Trustee, Session and other church meeting minutes.
- Addition of biographical information in the Alphabetic Burial Index.
- Inclusion of a financial history: Several items of financial history are included. The following aspects, however, have not been addressed in this history: (1) **contributors** over and above the purchase of burial lots (memorials, bequests, trusts, etc.), (2) **growth** history of the fund, (3) **Trust Fund compliance**, (4) **rules and regulations** regarding (A) **investment philosophy** over the years (memorials, savings account, endowment fund, etc.), (B) **restrictions** placed by memorial and family Trust contributors, etc.
- Inclusion of archival photographs of the cemetery: These can be obtained from Ms. Joanna Wilson at the office of *The Dover Post* in Dover, DE.

Maintain An Historic Record Of The Cemetery

See Cemetery Guidelines And Reference File
SECTION 1 (Cemetery – General), ¶8 (Historic Significance),
for instructions for maintaining this chronology.

A History Of
The Cemetery At Meeting House Square
Dover, Delaware

PART I: PERSPECTIVE

Preface, Background And Focus

Revised by David R. Holland, 2004

PREFACE

The objectives for this cemetery history were (1) to prepare a brief history of this cemetery, (2) to include biographies of some of those buried in it and (3) to relate some of that information to the life of the community of Dover, Kent County and our nation. Major portions of this history were completed in 2002.

On March 18, 2004 (see year date 2004 for details), the State of Delaware approved funding for an historic marker for the cemetery (a project recommended by David R. Holland of the 1999 Interim Cemetery Committee). The Session approved the project without recommendation March 24, 2004. A draft text was submitted to the Delaware Public Archives (Outreach Services) which requested documentary proof of claims made in the draft text for the marker. This included the date 1714 which also appears on the cover of the church bulletin ("**Founded in 1714**"). During the ensuing research to verify the draft text **a number of resource discrepancies emerged** which should not be ignored here even though they don't pertain directly to primary objectives of this report. In order to discuss these discrepancies, and other matters, some additional history and a broader background are included through the year 1743 when the Presbyterian Church of Dover finally obtained legal title to the property it had been using for the previous 35+ years on Meeting House Square.

This report was therefore expanded to include three (3) of the major resource discrepancies concerning church history and three (3) areas of history for which sufficient information has not yet been found.

RESOURCE DISCREPENCIES:

1. **The church was "Founded 1714."** See year dates 1695, 1714 and 2004. Gillette, in his "*History of the Presbyterian Church*¹," Volume 1, reports on page 98 that "...this (Dover) congregation is **on the records** in 1714." Further, the **September 7, 1714** minutes of the **Presbytery of Philadelphia** provide this extract:²

"...the Presbytery taking into consideration the desolate condition of the people in Kent County, having appointed our brother, **Mr. James Anderson**, that he supply them with preaching, etc., one Sabbath in the month until the next Presbytery (September 20, 1715) and that there be a letter writ to the moderator, signifying the Presbytery's concern with relation to them..."

It is on this action of the Presbytery of Philadelphia that the Presbyterian Church of Dover claims and uses the phrase/trademark "**Founded 1714.**" There are, however, sufficient collateral non-church references³ to believe with reasonable certainty that a "congregation" of **Presbyterian** sympathizers

¹ Note also that James H. Lappen (in his "*Presbyterians On Delmarva - The History Of The New Castle Presbytery*," 1972), according to Ms. Carol Gumrot (July 2004, Administrative Assistant, New Castle Presbytery, reported [paraphrased]) "...does not refer to the **Dover Church**" in particular, but does report on p. 6 that the "Presbytery also noted several times the desolate conditions of the people of Kent County' and appointed various ministers to preach to the people there." No mention is made of the presence of the Presbyterian Society in Kent County, though it was no doubt present.

² Also Ehinger: Chapter 3, page 16.

³ Mostly un-documented.

(Society)⁴ pre-existed that date by as many as 10-20 years, perhaps longer. **No documentation was found** through the New Castle Presbytery or the Presbyterian Historical Society (Philadelphia) in July 2004 to confirm that the congregation was **"Founded"** in 1714."

The word **"Founded"** appears to be incorrectly applied here. The congregation was, indeed, **sanctioned, approved or recognized** in 1714 by a higher authority but was no doubt **organized** ("founded") and established (formally or otherwise) prior to 1714.

Without documentation to support the phrase **"Founded in 1714,"** it should not be used on a state-provided historic marker proposed in 1999. The following statement has a verifiable base: **"The Presbytery of Philadelphia recognized the Dover congregation 1714,"** or simply the congregation was **"Recognized 1714."**

2. **The New Castle Presbytery was "the first Presbytery in America."** See year dates 1706 and 1717. The **first Presbytery** (the **"Presbytery of Philadelphia"** or simply **"The Presbytery"**) in America was created in Philadelphia in 1706 and included all organized and recognized Presbyterian churches in America. The New Castle Presbytery did not hold its first meeting as a Presbytery until **March 13, 1717**, i.e., nearly 11 years after the creation of the Presbytery of Philadelphia.
3. **The log church on Meeting House Square was "erected in 1740."** See year dates 1706, 1714, 1717 and 1740. **A New Plot Plan For Dover Re-Identified "Meeting House Square:"** The 1740-1741 plot plan of Dover is a re-drawn copy of the original 1717 plot plan. The 1717 plot plan is not extant. The 1740-1741 town plot plan is filed in the Kent County Administration Building (Robert W. O'Brien Building), County Records Department, Room 218, Dover, DE, and is identified in **Plat Book 2, Page 2.**

The New Castle Presbytery in July 2004 furnished the following document which is their record as to the date for the construction of the log church on Meeting House Square in Dover: *"New Castle Presbytery History – New Castle Presbytery – First In America – The First 100 Years"* (neither attribution nor publishing date is shown). This report states on page 4 (of 5 pages): **"In 1740, its first meeting house, built of logs, was erected."** See year dates for 1706 and 1714 for evidence that this log church was already **"in use"** by 1708. The 1740 date cited here was probably a misinterpretation of the 1740-1741 re-draft of the 1717 plot plan for Dover which showed the **prior existence** of Meeting House Square.

INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION FOUND TO DATE: Substantiated information in the following three areas might possibly give insight into the early formation of this Presbyterian congregation in central Kent County, including its earlier cemeteries and burial practices, if any.

1. **Presence of the Presbyterian Society in Kent County.** See year dates 1704, 1706, 1708, 1711 and 1714. It can be said with some degree of certainty that a Presbyterian community about Kent County, Delaware, predates 1680 based on the presence of families there whose offspring were members of this then scattered Society which had been *formally recognized* in a larger sense **by 1711⁵** as evidenced by requests for trained and qualified ministers. It is also known that Presbyterian ministers were preaching regularly in New Castle and Kent Counties prior to 1703. There are numerous references to the early presence of a Presbyterian Society in Kent County but no documented evidence of it was found. (Neither the New Castle Presbytery nor the Presbyterian Historical Society⁶ in Philadelphia were able to provide documentation to confirm this presence, though its presence seems certain.) See next item regarding a Presbyterian meeting house pre-dating the log church on Meeting House Square.
2. **The possibility of a Presbyterian church/congregation pre-dating Meeting House Square.** See year dates 1704 and 1705. It is not known if the Meeting House Square congregation was (1) formed as an original and independent group, or (2) was formed from another group of Presbyterians, or (3) was the same group of Presbyterians who had established a church in 1704 1½ miles east of the St. Jones River and who might have moved their meeting place into Dover Town.

⁴ Dissenters from the Church of England.

⁵ Ehinger, p. 1: Episcopal record.

⁶ Ms. Eileen Meyer Sklar, Reference Archivist, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, in a letter to this compiler reported July 23, 2004, that "I have also checked our catalogs and databases and find no reference for a **Presbyterian Society in Kent County or records related to the cemetery** at the Old Presbyterian Church of Dover." It is not known why these records are not available.

With respect to possibility (3) above, **The First Meeting House For Presbyterians in Kent County**, Ehinger reports this on page 12: "The first and only church (building) for the people of St. Jones (at this time) was located on the east side of the St. Jones Creek about a mile and a half from the village⁷. The land upon which it was built was given (according to Scharf's "*History of Delaware 1609-1888*"⁸) in 1704 by **Colonel Robert French** (a member of the Church of England), or, (according to Rightmyer's "*The Anglican Church in Delaware*"⁹) by a then Presbyterian. "The deed (for this property which was not investigated, but identified by the above references) was drawn so that any Orthodox minister would be allowed to preach in the church". The building was completed and in use the following year (1705).¹⁰

3. **Land ownership for Meeting House Square between 1694 and 1743**. See year dates 1682, 1694 and 1743. Transactions for land acquisition from the purchase of 800 acres from First Nation Americans (Lenni Lenape) in 1682 to the purchase of 200 acres (from that parcel) for the establishment of Dover Towne in 1694 have been identified. The next land transaction found for Meeting House Square is not until 1743 when, for a price, the town of Dover deeded full and clear title to the Presbyterian Church of Dover. Neither the Kent County Records Department nor independent research found any other land transactions during this 49 year period (1694-1743). We are unable to find other land transactions during this period.

As long as there is interest in the past, history will continue to be preserved. And although considerable information (about this cemetery, those who are buried in it and those who managed it over the centuries) has been compiled, much remains to be rediscovered and many questions remain to be answered.

For example:

1. "How much **earlier than 1711** was the **Presbyterian Society**¹¹ formed in Kent County?"
2. **How long before 1714** was this Presbyterian congregation first formed in Dover or Kent County?
3. Were there **land transactions** affecting this **1½ acre lot** for the church and cemetery between **1694** (when **Richard Wilson**, acting for the County, purchased 200 acres from **William Southebee** for a County seat for Kent County), and **1743** (when the **Church acquired legal title** to this land from Dover Towne)? Or, have all the deeds been identified? And ,
4. How soon **after the 1694** land acquisition for Dover Towne and **how much earlier** than 1708, did the Presbyterians **first occupy this property** at Meeting House Square and **build their log church**?

BACKGROUND AND FOCUS

The first **permanent** settlers (Swedes and Finns) arrived in 1638 (in what became Delaware) preceding the English, Scotch and Scotch-Irish (the Presbyterian elements being referred to as Dissenters¹²) who had fled from persecution and who, **by 1695, had formalized themselves**, to some degree at least, into a religious community in central Delaware, then known as "**St. Jones Creek**" (later known as Dover Towne/Dover) where any who believed in God could live without restrictions. Soon after 1708 an Episcopal missionary, **Jacob Henderson**, for *the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, reported that a Presbyterian minister was already in residence in **Kent upon Delaware** (that portion which became known as Kent County in 1682), and in 1711 the same source reports "**a goodly number**" of Presbyterians there. So it can be assumed that by 1711 *The Presbyterian Society* had already emerged in central Delaware.

Cemeteries in the early days of settlement were sacred plots in which families buried their loved ones on their own land. As population expanded, the reality of "**neighbor**" became synonymous with

⁷ This church should not be confused with the old **Little Creek Friends Meeting House** (built 1805, Ehinger, p. 105) and cemetery on Quaker Lane (north of North Little Creek Road, being about 3 miles east of the St. Jones River). Today (2004) this **Little Creek Burial Ground** is owned and operated by the **Camden (DE) Friends Meeting**.

⁸ J. Thomas Scharf; L.J. Richards & Company, Philadelphia, 1888, Vol. II, p. 1042.

⁹ "*The Anglican Church of Delaware*," Nelson Waite Rightmyer, for the Church Historical Society; 1947, Chapter 3, p. 45.

¹⁰ Scharf; "*History of Delaware*."

¹¹ Sometimes referred to as "**The Society of Assiduous Dissenters**" by the Church of England.

¹² Episcopalians/Anglicans referred to Presbyterians in Scotland (Calvinists) as "Dissenters" for refusing to follow certain modeling by the Church

“community,” and common burial grounds become the custom. Population growth developed into villages and town centers. Not only did business, politics and government provide new perspectives, religious beliefs united the people at a grass roots level. Common burial grounds continued to expand and when the increasing numbers of worshipers necessitated a change from the “meeting house” form of worship, churches were often erected on the sites of the common burial grounds. Typically, then, the church building was often erected at the site of an existing common burial ground. So, it might be assumed that this burial ground was in use on this property before the old log church building was constructed in 1708, or before. Yet, there are no extant church or other documentation to support the claim that this cemetery preceded the building of the original log church building at Meeting House Square.

The reasoning in this case, however, leads this compiler to speculate that since tracts of land were made available to two professing faiths in the area prior to the 1717 layout of Dover Towne, that, (1) in the case of this cemetery, **land may have been provided first**, (2) the old log church **was then erected** and (3) this common burial ground **began to emerge**. It may also be assumed that there are no burials on this property pre-dating the construction of the old log church. It is also interesting to note that earliest Church records refer to the churchyard as the burial ground rather than cemetery. It may also be reasoned that if the cemetery had pre-existed the log church, references may have been made to the cemetery **and not** the churchyard. Although (1) this is an important concept in establishing the history of the cemetery and (2) is the belief of this compiler, it, too, is without documentation. The use of the word Churchyard continued in cemetery rules and regulations until changed to Cemetery by the Interim Cemetery Committee in June 1999 to eliminate confusion as there have been two church properties since 1924.

**The story of this cemetery not only reflects the history of the land
And some of the people buried there.
It also includes a history of its use, operation and management.**

Additional **biographical information** about persons buried in this cemetery
May be found in **PART V: ALPHABETIC BURIAL INDEX**,

The included **collateral history** is intended to edify the cemetery history,
Not to detract from what might be otherwise a simplistic record of the cemetery.

Prior to 1680, when area residents petitioned the colonial governor for their own local court, the land (which is now [1999] known as “**The Old Presbyterian Church of Dover Cemetery at Meeting House Square**”) was in the possession of local Native American Indians. Ownership of the property which is now a cemetery changed hands several times before a legal Deed was procured by the Trustees of the church in 1743. **Elizabeth Walker Kimberly** (1819-1909), who married **Rev. Thomas Grier Murphey** (who nurtured and ministered to this congregation from 1843 to 1860), is purportedly¹³ of the same **WALKER** family who made the original land acquisition of an 800-acre tract from local Indians who were the **holders of the land** on which this cemetery would become a reality. This 800-acre tract, known as “**Brothers Portion**,” was purchased/bartered December 12, 1682 (in the same year but prior to William Penn’s warrant for the survey for a town to be the county seat) by brothers **John and Richard Walker** from the Indian **Petequoque**,¹⁴ Chief Sachem of the **Lenni Lenape**. In 1684, John Walker sold the entire 800-acre tract to **William Southebee**, from whom the 200-acre town site would be purchased in 1694 or 1695. (See the entry under the 1743 date concerning church title to the land.)

The **Elizabeth W. Murphey School** (incorporated under the laws of Delaware October 23, 1922) on King’s Highway (Division Street, Dover) was given as “**a fostering home for children**” in honor of **Mrs. Elizabeth Walker Murphey** by her son, **Sanford Sayre Murphey** of Denver, Colorado. Sanford Sayre Murphey in the same year also provided funds for a new brick church (dedicated as **Murphey Memorial Presbyterian Church**) at State and Reed Streets, Dover, in honor of his father, **Rev. Thomas Grier Murphey**. Elizabeth Walker Murphey, a member of this church, not only connects us to the origin of our cemetery through her ancestors’ land acquisition but also to our present church edifice through a gift from her son. Rev. and Mrs. Murphey are both buried in this cemetery as are some or all of their children. See year date 1843 in the chronology.

¹³ The purported family link between (1) Elizabeth Walker Kimberly and (2) John and Richard Walker was not investigated. There is only one known Walker (a John Walker [1811-1849]) buried in the cemetery and we know nothing about him, yet.

¹⁴ He was known to the settlers as “Christian;” Ehinger, p. 11.

This Cemetery Is Worthy Of Public Recognition

*The Site Is Listed In The National Register Of Historic Places
NRHP #72000278, Dated 02-02-1972*

The historic significance of the cemetery should consider more than (1) just the history of the land chosen for it. It properly should reflect (2) some of the contributions to the betterment of society and the positive growth of the community and state by some of the people buried in it. It should also include (3) some collateral and related events in the lives of some of them as well as (4) rules and regulations plus zoning and ordinance compliance.

For example, among those buried here are: the last **President of Delaware**; four **governors** including the first; four **U.S. Senators**; four **U.S. Representative**; three **Chief Justices** of the State; a **Chancellor**; a **U.S. Secretary of State**; the first **Surgeon General of the U.S.**; eight **judges**; nine **Presbyterian ministers**; builders and owners of some of Dover's historic residences; an **author**; a **tutor** of Statesman **John Dickinson** (who drafted both the federal Articles of Confederation [1776] and Delaware's Second [1792] and Third State Constitutions [1831]); at least eight **veterans of the War for American Independence**; veterans of the Civil War and all subsequent wars; the **benefactors** for both the 1880 Chapel building at Meeting House Square and the new 1924 church building at Reed and South State Streets; etc. Further, the old church building was used as the **meeting place** for two of the four state constitutional conventions. Others buried in the cemetery (1999) include at least the following: 21 **Elders**; 39 **Trustees**; 5 **Deacons**; 1 **Organist**; 7 **Superintendents**; 2 **Youth Group Leaders**; 4 **Presidents of the Pastoral Aid Society**; 1 **President of the Elyne Circle** and 3 **Presidents of the Women's Association**. And there is one instance of intrigue with the death of two sisters in the infamous "**The Poisoned Candy Case**" in 1898. See also **PART III** of this report: **DIGNITARIES AND CHURCH LEADERS BURIED IN THE CEMETERY** and **PART V: ALPHABETIC BURIAL INDEX**.

And so,

It is appropriate to acknowledge with grateful thanks and appreciation
The faithful and tireless work of Trustees
And Cemetery Committee members
Through the years in taking care of this remarkably historic cemetery.

One challenge of the **Interim Cemetery Committee of 1999** was to identify, to the extent possible, those persons buried in the cemetery. The results of that effort may be found in **PART V: ALPHABETIC BURIAL INDEX**. Based on a headstone count and other records, **473** burial spaces have been identified in this cemetery. Burial lot locations have been identified for **411** identified individuals. However, several of these are believed to be **cenotaph markers** for persons actually buried elsewhere. Burial locations may also be found on the **CEMETERY PLOT PLAN** in the church office **CEMETERY** file folder named **PLOT PLAN**. It was estimated in 2000 that the cemetery contains about **950 burial lots**.

Even as far back as the earliest extant "**RULES AND REGULATIONS**" of 1908 governing the use, operation and management of the cemetery, there were stated needs (1) that "**a list of burials be kept**" and (2) that "**gravestones should be placed on all graves**." If a list of burials was ever kept (we must assume it was) there was no such record in the **CEMETERY** or church files in 1999. Without that record, it is probably no longer possible to know the names of all persons buried here. This declared need (1908) for a burial record and gravestones comes 165 years after the Deed to the cemetery property (1743) and 200 years after the earliest existing record referencing the old Churchyard (1708). Some graves probably had no gravestones. Some gravestone inscriptions are no longer readable. Some stones were damaged and not replaced. There is the usual problem of record keeping, or the absence thereof. And, to further complicate matters, what group(s) of people were authorized to be buried here? So it becomes increasingly important that sufficient effort be taken now (from 1999), to the best of our corporate ability, to reconstruct a **history** of the cemetery and an **index** of persons buried in it. To date we have identified only 18 of the burials during the 1700's; 236 during the 1800's and 190 during the 1900's. Burials without dates were added to the respective century based on collateral information.

A history of rules, regulations and guidelines governing the use, operation and management of the cemetery may be found under the year dates below of 1908, 1966, 1967, 1990, 1998 and 1999 when major revisions occurred as the Cemetery Committee sought to keep pace with the changing needs of the church community, governmental regulations and cemetery technology. Management of cemeteries has grown from the most basic need of burying the dead to sophisticated electronic database control. One objective of the Interim Cemetery Committee of 1999 was to modernize the techniques for managing this remarkably historic cemetery by improving operating efficiency, record keeping and better managing its endowment fund. The results of that study may be found in "**CEMETERY OPERATING PLAN (#6) – Guidelines And Reference File For The Use, Operation And Management Of The Cemetery**," September 1999, retained in the church office **CEMETERY** file folder named **GUIDELINES**.

A Chronology Of The Cemetery
And Relating History

The problems associated with reconstructing this history are appropriately explained by Rev. John Franklin Stonecipher (installed minister 1883-1894) over a hundred years ago, to his congregation during the October 23, 1887 church re-dedication service when he reviewed the meager church history: "...let me say that this review must necessarily be very far from complete for the data from which it is made up are incomplete – several of the periods being even without any kind of records... As might be expected with a church as old as ours, its beginnings are very difficult to trace in the absence of authentic information. To name the exact date of the first organization would indeed be impossible...from a few known facts." Rev. Stonecipher's remarks seem well founded from the perspective of history based on church records, i.e., from the view of an "Inside Out" history. Realizing that dilemma over a hundred years later, this compiler elected a perspective of trying to understand the cemetery history from collateral events and records external to the church as well, i.e., from the view of an "Outside In" history. I should like to view the cemetery in terms of the lives of some of the people buried in it and let that determine what external history it might be appropriate to include.

Regardless of what this compiled cemetery history might show, several points about the health of the church can be made: (1) Ministers at times were difficult to obtain as evidenced by the fact that during the first 130 years there were only two installed ministers.¹⁵ From 1844 to present (155 years), however, there has been a full slate of installed ministers, except for interim supply following resignations, deaths, transfers, etc., of ministers. (2) There were significant periods of economic hardship; some ministers could not be paid their agreed salaries. (3) There were periods of deep stress at both the local and Presbytery levels regarding religious philosophy and interpretation. (4) Membership/attendance fluctuated widely and the church facilities lay essentially idle, dormant and sometimes closed for years at a time. (5) There were periods of severe illness and disease. (6) And yet, some parishioners had belief and trust in the purpose for their lives and retained a spark of their convictions which prevailed during those "dark times" thereby laying the groundwork for the strong and viable congregation we recognize today. Though many of their names have disappeared, the results of their Christian love and labor, our legacy of infrastructure, commitment and clearly defined purpose, remains in clear evidence for our corporate benefit. In spite of the activity, or lack of it in the church across much of the 19th century, death remained a reality with at least 236 burials during the 1800's.

This presentation is **not intended** to be another history of the church. That's been done. The perspective of this history is one of standing in the cemetery and looking out into the community, into the state and nation and trying to invasion who these people were and wanting to know something of the experiences they brought with them to this place. It's an account (1) of the land, (2) of the principal history of the cemetery as it relates to the church and the town of Dover from early times with a focus on the chronological events and some of the people buried in the cemetery and their relating histories, and (3) of an investigation of our trademark, "Founded 1714" to determine (A) what led to that event and (B) the possibility of burials in this cemetery or an earlier cemetery prior to that date.

This is not a "Who's Who" of the congregation. Many members of this congregation have made significant contributions to our general and broader well-being. This report focuses primarily on those who are buried in this remarkably historic cemetery.

This review of the cemetery and its associated histories are as accurate as source data.

Several errors in the works of Ehinger, Dill, the Federal Writers Project, Sammak and Winslow, Stonecipher and others were corrected where possible.

And apologetically, I regret any undetected errors, including text, I may have made in this compilation.

**A CEMETERY MAY BE DEFINED
BY
THE HISTORIC BIOGRAPHIES
OF THE PEOPLE BURIED IN IT.**

**THIS CEMETERY IS FULLY ALIVE
IN ITS OWN EXTRAORDINARY HISTORY
WITH ITS DISTINGUISHING CHARACTER BEING
THE
HIGH LEVEL OF CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS
ATTAINED BY THOSE BURIED IN IT.**

¹⁵Based on the "founding" date of 1714.

A History Of
The Cemetery At Meeting House Square
Dover, Delaware

PART II: CHRONOLOGY

(A Brief History With Appendix)

Prepared by David R. Holland, March 2002

A comment on the numerical identification of Delaware Governors in this chronology
and in the Alphabetical Burial Index:

Delaware has had 80 heads of State from John McKinly (1777-1777; 7 months) to Ruth Ann Minner (2001 in office). Some records list them consecutively from #1 to #80. However, since the first 10 were actually **Presidents** under the State Constitution, they are shown herein as #1 to #10. Consequently, the **Governors** are shown as #1 to #70.

APPENDIX A: A BRIEF HISTORY OF "THE CEMETERY ENDOWMENT FUND."

APPENDIX B: "THE POISON CANDY MURDER CASE"

- 1640:** **The First Organized Presbyterian Church In North America:** Please permit this personal note. Known simply as "**The First Church,**" this Presbyterian church was organized October 21, 1640, at Southold, Suffolk County at the eastern end of Long Island, NY,¹⁶ by **Rev. John Youngs** and a small group of immigrants, mostly from Suffolk County, England. Among the founding members was **Barnabas Horton** (1600-1680) who is a direct ancestor of **Mrs. Emily Moody (Johnson) Holland** who is a current member of this congregation (2004) and wife of this compiler. Mrs. Holland declares to be buried in this cemetery as a descendant of a family who were founding members of the first Presbyterian church in America (more than 350 years ago).
- 1670:** **Early Land Grants:** The first settlers were reported in the St. Jones Creek area of Kent upon Delaware circa 1670. Early land grants in the region date from 1671 and bear the family names of Hodges, **Jones**, Humphrey, Bedwell, Brinkloe, **Morgan**, Webb, Claypoole, **Young**, Whittler and **Walker**, all familiar names to us today. Joneses, Morgans, Youngs and Walkers are buried in this cemetery; Morgans and Walkers acquired land from the First Nation Americans and merit mention later in this chronology.
- 1680:** **Area Residents Petition For Their Own Court:**¹⁷ Land records show there were **26 Families** with a total of 72 persons in the region about (what later became known as) **St. Jones Creek** (and ultimately Kent County in 1682) from St. Jones Neck on the bay, as far north as Duck Creek and to the east and south perhaps as far as Murther Creek,¹⁸ living on large tracts of open and fertile tidewater plantations some containing 500 to 1,000 or more acres.¹⁹ **John Walker** was one of the first settlers to receive a grant for his land from the newly-appointed court at its session, November 17, 1680. The settlers petitioned colonial **Governor Andros**,²⁰ the representative of the Duke of York (then residing in the New York colony), for a "court to be held in St. Jones²¹ Creek"²² because of the great difficulty of reaching "**the Whorekill Court**" at Lewes Towne. One of these petitioners, **John Walker**, would play an important role in the sale of land (1684) on which the cemetery and town of Dover would be later be established. The first/original court had been held at the home of Justice **Edward Park** in **Towne Point**, near the mouth of St. Jones Creek, east of

¹⁶ What we now know as New York State was, in 1640, part of the Connecticut Colony and was governed under the "*Connecticut Sea-to-Sea Charter.*"

¹⁷ *Delaware Small Wonder:* Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

¹⁸ See year date 1684. The land deed from John Walker to William Southebee mentions **Murther Creek** as English for the Dutch word Murther-kill which became colloquially known as Murderkill Creek.

¹⁹ Ehinger, p. 12.

²⁰ **Sir Edmund Andros** (1637-1714): Governor of several northern colonies under King James II (1633-1701), Duke of York, a key figure in the legend of the famous tree in Hartford, CT, the "**Charter Oak**" in which the Connecticut Charter was hidden.

²¹ The origin of "St. Jones:" The Jones family owned property on a creek (river), which, in written documents was referred to as "the Said Jones creek" and abbreviated as "the Sd. Jones' Creek" and phonetically became known by oral tradition as "St. Jones' Creek" or commonly as the St. Jones River ("St." is a corruption of "Said")

²² An area broadly defined as what is now known as central Kent County.

Dover, for probably several years. Two significant events resulted from this petition: (1) their petition was granted with the establishment of a new court district and (2) the new county of **St. Jones Creek** was created in June the following year, being separated from Whorekill (now Sussex County). Meanwhile, court was being held at **James Maxwell's Tavern** on land adjoining the site for the county seat. A new official court building was completed in 1691 on King's Highway in what ultimately became Dover Towne.

- 1681: The Pennsylvania Colony Is Chartered To William Penn:** Charles II of England on March 4, 1681 gave a charter to **William Penn** (1644-1718) for the territory west of the Delaware River between New York and Maryland (then known as *Sylvania*, meaning "woods") as a settlement of a personal debt by the Crown to Penn's father (physician to the King) who had died. The area became known as "**Penn's Sylvania**" (or "**Penn's Woods**") and finally as "Pennsylvania."
- 1682: James, Duke of York, Deeds The Land To William Penn:** This three-county area was (1) originally claimed by James, Duke of York, (2) was then known as Kent Upon Delaware and (3) was transferred to **William Penn** August 24th (while Penn was yet in England), thus providing the **Territories of Pennsylvania** with an over-land access to the Atlantic ocean at Lewes Towne. Penn immediately declared that **religious freedom was to be enjoyed by all settlers.**²³ It was not until October 1682 that William Penn first arrived in Pennsylvania.

St. Jones County Is Renamed Kent County: It was renamed by William Penn on Christmas Day.²⁴

- 1683: William Penn Warrants The Survey Of Dover:** In May 1683 **William Penn** visited Kent County and approved a plan to survey and lay out a town as the county seat (i.e., as the center of a court district). Historians say Penn selected the name for the town because of his happy childhood association with Dover,²⁵ an ancient port city in County Kent, England. A petition by county citizens to name the county seat **Canterbury** was over-ruled by Penn.

The delay in surveying and laying out the town (to 1717; 34 years later), despite the evident need, was no doubt due to more pressing business and **scarcity of persons to do the work**, not neglect or irresponsibility. Even though a log courthouse was in operation **before** 1691, no important settlement had yet formed, as shown by a petition from the residents of the county in 1699 requesting that the town be established at the identified site. Lots were to be 1½ acres in size with annual ground rent of one bushel of winter wheat or four shillings. This survey was authorized **within a year after** Penn's arrival in America. The actual survey was not made until 1717 (34 years later), **within a year before** his death.

Walker Brothers Acquire Land On Which The Cemetery And Dover Towne Would Be Built: **John and Richard Walker** bartered an 800-acre tract from Indian **Petequoque**, Chief Sachem of the **Lenni Lenape** Indian tribe²⁶ and named the parcel "**Brothers Portion.**" The Indian's rights had cost the Walkers three match-coats, twelve bottles of drink and four (or three) handfuls of powder and shot seven days after William Penn's law prohibiting the sale of liquor to the Indians. It is a matter of historical record that the area south of Duck Creek and north of Murtherkill²⁷ Creek was ruled over by Petequoque. Between 1676 and 1684, Petequoque sold/bartered most of his **kingdom of Missawokett** to English settlers, many of whom had emigrated from Maryland. Although he did not live in Missawokett, Petequoque considered this his private hunting ground, which he would occasionally visit from his village in West Jersey (now New Jersey).²⁸ "**Bridge Across The Years**" gives this transaction date probably incorrectly as 1692.

- 1684: William Southebee Bought "Brothers Portion" From John Walker:** John Walker sold the 800-acre tract on December 16, 1684 for 13,000 pounds of tobacco to **William Southebee**, from whom a 200-acre parcel would be purchased some 10 years later for the site of **Dover Towne** where **this cemetery would be established.** This Deed to William Southebee is identified in **Deed Book B, Vol. 1, page 47** which may be found in the Kent County Administration Building (the Robert W. O'Brien Building), County Records Department, Room 218, Dover, DE.

²³ Ehinger, p. 13-14.

²⁴ Ehinger gives the year as 1683 which is essentially correct.

²⁵ Today the corporate seal of the City of Dover is in part emblazoned with the arms of Dover, England.

²⁶ One of two Algonquian tribes in the region. The Lenni Lenape were considered bay shore Indians. The other was the inland river Nanticokes.

²⁷ Now known as Murderkill.

²⁸ "*Delaware – A Guide to the First State*," a Federal Writers' Project, edited by Jeanette Eckman & others; Viking Press, New York City, 1938; p. 395.

- 1691: **A New Courthouse Was Built:** This public building replaced the court held in the residence of Justice **Edward Park** in St. Jones Creek (later known as **Towne Point, Dover Towne and finally Dover**) since June 1680, probably earlier. This court building was erected on King's Highway, the only north-south road between Philadelphia and sea port at Lewes for many decades to come.
- 1694: **A Settlement Begins:** Although William Penn had given specific instructions in 1683, it was not until 11 years later (1694) that **Richard Wilson**, acting on behalf of Kent County, **purchased 200 acres** from **William Southebee** for the establishment of a **County seat** and a more formal settlement for the loosely organized inhabitants of Kent County.
- 1695: **A 200-Acre Tract Was Conveyed For The Establishment Of Dover Towne:** But it was not until 1717²⁹ (another 22 years later) that streets were actually laid out and the land divided into lots.³⁰ **The Presbyterian Church and its cemetery would become part of this tract.**
(Note: The Presbyterian Church of Dover traditionally claims the church was "Founded in 1714," 3 years before the town was officially laid out in accord with Penn's plan.)
- 1699: **A Petition To Establish Dover Towne:** 5 years later (1699), a petition from the residents of the county requested that the town be established at the identified site. **Lots were to be one and one-half acres** in size with annual ground rent of one bushel of winter wheat or four shillings. Remember that, **within a year after he had arrival in America (1683), William Penn** had authorized a survey in Kent County for a county seat. The actual survey was not made until 1717 (34 years later), **within a year before Penn's death.**
- 1701: **William Penn Offers Conditional Independence To The Three Lower Counties:** Leaders in the three lower counties of Pennsylvania had agitated for sovereignty and separate rule from the Commonwealth. In 1701, Governor Penn agreed to extend temporary and conditional independence if, after three years, the three lower counties had proved they could manage their own affairs.
- 1704: **Delaware's First General Assembly Met At New Castle:** By 1704 the three Lower Counties of the Territories of Pennsylvania had been granted a separate Assembly with minimal control exercised by Penn's Governors. On May 27, 1704 Delaware convened its first independent meeting of its newly appointed Legislative Assembly in New Castle.³¹ Over the next seventy years (up to the War of Independence), a tradition of self-government had been firmly implanted. Nevertheless, there were strong cultural and sentimental ties with the mother country, particularly in Kent and Sussex Counties which were populated predominately of English stock.

It is typical of this period in the country's history, that a list of Dover residents whose name and influence extended beyond our state's borders and beyond their own lifetime includes more men than in all its history, before or since. Of that list; John Haslet, Caesar Rodney³² and John Dickinson, derive from a period when the town's population was about 500 (1775). **Haslet, Dickinson** and numerous others bring to life the history and heritage of this most historic cemetery and Meeting House Square. Col. John Haslet is buried in the cemetery. John Dickinson is not.

The First Meeting House For Presbyterians in Kent County:³³ **Ehinger:** The first and only church (building) for the people of St. Jones (at this time) was located on the east side of the St. Jones Creek about a mile and a half from the village³⁴. The land upon which it was built was given (according to Scharf's "*History of Delaware 1609-1888*"³⁵) in 1704 by **Colonel Robert French** (a member of the Church of England), or, (according to Rightmyer's "*The Anglican Church in Delaware*"³⁶) by a then Presbyterian. The deed for this property (which was not investigated, but found by reference) was drawn so that any Orthodox minister would be allowed to preach in it. The building was completed and in use the following year (1705).

²⁹ "City Of Dover, Delaware, Report To Citizens & Customers, For Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2001."

³⁰ Ehinger, p. 14: only about 125 acres of the original acres purchased from "Brothers Portion" were used for the town of Dover.

³¹ Originally known as New Amstel (Dutch).

³² Sometimes referred to as "The Paul Revere of Dover."

³³ Ehinger: p. 12.

³⁴ This church should not be confused with the old **Little Creek Friends Meeting House** (built 1805, Ehinger, p. 105) and cemetery on Quaker Lane (north of North Little Creek Road, being about 3 miles east of the St. Jones River). Today (2004) this **Little Creek Burial Ground** is owned and operated by the **Camden (DE) Friends Meeting**.

³⁵ J. Thomas Schraf, L.J. Richards & Company, Philadelphia, 1888, Vol. II, p. 1042.

³⁶ "*The Anglican Church of Delaware*," Nelson Waite Rightmyer, The Church Historical Society; 1947, Chapter 3, p. 45.³⁶ What we know today as New York State at that time was part of the Connecticut Colony and operated under the "*Connecticut Sea-to-Sea-Charter*."

- 1705: The First Recorded Presbyterian Minister To Preach in Kent County:** The first recorded clergy minister to use this building was the Anglican missionary **Rev. Thomas Crawford**³⁷, (who arrived in 1705, and whose daughter **Elizabeth Crawford** married **Arthur Medston** [see year date 1711]). Crawford also preached, as he wrote, "...in two or three other places," as did other ministers, as a "circuit rider."
- 1706: First Presbytery Is Formed In America:** **Francis Makemie**, an eastern-shore Maryland Presbyterian, and five or six other ministers joined forces in Philadelphia in late 1705 or early 1706 to begin the formation of the first collective body of Presbyterians and **created there the first Presbytery in America**³⁸ (known as "**The Presbytery**" in short form or "**The Presbytery of Philadelphia**"). It can be said with some degree of certainty that a Presbyterian community about Kent County Delaware predates 1680 based on the presence of families there (as noted above) whose offspring were members of this then scattered Society which had been formally recognized in a larger sense by 1711³⁹ as evidenced by requests for trained and qualified ministers c1708⁴⁰. It is also known that Presbyterian ministers were preaching regularly in New Castle and Kent Counties prior to 1703 and that the Lewes Towne congregation dates formally from 1692 (and could have functioned prior to that time).

Establishment Of The New Castle Presbytery:⁴¹

- 1706: The **first Presbytery** (the "**Presbytery of Philadelphia**" or simply "**The Presbytery**") in America was created in Philadelphia in 1706⁴² and included all organized and recognized Presbyterian churches (note: this was 66 years after the first established and recognized Presbyterian church⁴³ in America [at Southold, Suffolk County, Long Island, NY,⁴⁴ in 1640]).
- 1716: "That these measures, as well as the Grace of God, led to the growth of Presbyterianism is seen in **the decision** of the **Presbytery (of Philadelphia)** in 1716 to **divide into four Presbyteries** and to be **united into a Synod**" to meet annually in Philadelphia (**New Castle, New York, Philadelphia and Snow Hill, MD**).⁴⁵
- 1717: The next year (1717) Presbyterian delegates met at Philadelphia and **united to organize** the **Synod of Philadelphia** which then officially recognized these four separate Presbyteries (named above).

The **New Castle Presbytery** held its **first meeting** on March 13, 1717 in New Castle, Delaware following the formation of this Synod earlier in the year.

- 1708: A Log Church Existed:** "As early as 1708, a wooden church existed in charge of a missionary of the **English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel**, (sometimes known locally as the **Presbyterian Society**), and soon afterwards a Presbyterian clergyman was in residence"⁴⁶ in Kent County. This record pre-dates all extant church records reviewed but does not identify the minister (who might have been Anglican, **Rev. Thomas Crawford**, who returned to England in 1710).

(Note: The "**New Castle Presbytery History – New Castle Presbytery – First In America – The First 100 Years**," provided to this compiler July 2004 by the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA, un-dated, p. 4 of 5, makes these statements which need clarification: "**By 1711** the greatest number of people of Dover, Delaware, were Presbyterian but the **Church of England** opposed the establishment of a Presbyterian Church. (at Dover).⁴⁷ In spite of that opposition, the Presbyterian Church of Dover came into being in 1714."⁴⁸

³⁷ Ehinger, "*Bridge Across The Years*," p. 1.

³⁸ (1) "*The Life Story of Rev. Francis Makemie*," I. Marshall Page, Grand Rapids, MI, William B. Erdman Publishing Company, 1938. (2) "*The First Presbytery in America-1706*," Philadelphia, PA, Presbyterian Historical Society, Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. And, (3) "*Presbyterians On Delmarva – The History Of The New Castle Presbytery*," James H. Lappen, 1972, p.6.

³⁹ Ehinger, p. 1: Episcopal record.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ "*New Castle Presbytery History – New Castle Presbytery – First in America: The First 100 Years*," no publishing date, p. 1 of 5.

⁴² "**The First Presbytery In America, 1706**" (Philadelphia); Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁴³ Recognized by the Colony of Connecticut.

⁴⁴ What we know today as New York State at that time was part of the Connecticut Colony and operated under the "*Connecticut Sea-to-Sea-Charter*."

⁴⁵ "*Presbyterians On Delmarva – The History Of The New Castle Presbytery*," James H. Lappen, 1972; p. 7.

⁴⁶ "*Delaware – a Guide to the First State*," a Delaware Federal Writers' Project, edited by Jeannette Eckman & others; Viking Press, New York City, 1938.

⁴⁷ This opposition is a clear admission by the Church of England of (1) the presence of an active and organized interest by the "Dissenters" in Kent County, DE. to have their congregation recognized by a higher authority (even the Church of England) and (2) of its unwillingness to officially sanction a splinter congregation from within its own fold. The Dover congregation must then have turned to the "Presbytery of Philadelphia" (not the New Castle Presbytery) and was sanctioned/ accepted/ recognized (not "Founded") by it in 1714.

⁴⁸ The Presbyterian Church of Dover uses the slogan "**Founded in 1714**" which may have provided a clear generic date for its organized

And, "In 1740, its first meeting house, built of logs, was erected." See year date 1740 for clarification. This date appears to be a misinterpretation of the 1740 re-draft of the 1717 Dover plot plan.)

- 1711: **The Presbyterian Society Was Established Probably Well Before 1711 In Kent County:** The Easter Sunday church bulletin commemorating the April 4, 1924, dedication of the new Presbyterian church building (State and Reed Streets) records that the congregation had been formed "by 1711," (based on the Rev. John Franklin Stonecipher history of the church dated 10-23-1887⁴⁹).

Unanswered questions remain today: (1) "How much earlier than 1711 was the Presbyterian Society⁵⁰ formed in Kent County?" (2) Was there a land transaction affecting the 1½ acre lot for the church and cemetery between 1694 (when Richard Wilson, acting for the County, purchased 200 acres from William Southebee for a County seat for Kent County), and 1743 (when the Church acquired legal title to it from Dover Towne)? And (3), how soon after the 1694 land acquisition for Dover Towne and how much earlier than 1708, did the Presbyterians first occupy this property at Meeting House Square?

Rev. Stonecipher reported essentially that at one time Arthur Medston claimed that the greatest number of the people here (Kent upon Delaware) were Presbyterians who were referred to as "assiduous Dissenters"⁵¹ by local Episcopalians. The organization was known as the Church at Kent upon Delaware. Presbytery records relating to the ordination of Archibald McCook in 1727 report that although the names of the 1727 elders of this church are now unknown, it is known that Arthur Medston, who also participated in McCook's ordination in 1727, had been an ardent Presbyterian leader in this church as early as 1711. In the absence of documentation, claims that Medston was a leader in the Society⁵² at this time should be held as speculation.

- 1714: **A Log⁵³ Church Was "In Use in 1714:"** See also year dates 1708, 1717 and 1740. The Easter Sunday church bulletin commemorating the April 4, 1924, dedication of the new church building (State and Reed Streets), records that the log church was "in use in 1714" and served the Presbyterian community until replaced in 1791. The log church stood in the southeast corner of the lot (approx. 1½ acres) which is now (2004) part of the cemetery facing South Governors Avenue (then known as High Street) at Bank Lane (then known as Courthouse Street). The log building (1) stood for about a year after the June 1790 groundbreaking for a new brick church erected about 100 feet to the north, (2) had at some time prior to 1740 been refurbished with the log timbers being covered with wood plank siding, (3) was still standing at the time the new brick church was completed and (4) was demolished before the July 22, 1791, death of Rev. John Miller. As an honor to him, Rev. Miller (and his wife and son John [the army surgeon]) "was buried in the churchyard 113 feet south of the new brick church"⁵⁴ at the spot in the cemetery where the pulpit of the log church is said to have once stood.

First Recorded Request for a Trained Minister: That same year the Presbyterian Society⁵⁵ in Kent County petitioned the Presbytery of Philadelphia⁵⁶ for a minister and on September 8, 1714 the Rev. James Anderson was supplied to preach (1714-1715) one Sabbath a month in the log sanctuary, which was located on High Street⁵⁷ (later known as South Governors Avenue). This is regarded by some as the "organized beginning" of the Presbyterian Church of Dover. Prior to this time, however, and at least as far back as 1695, a Presbyterian Society (in some unknown degree of organization) worshipped in the manner of the Meeting House, i.e., they had no formal leadership but worshipped as did Quakers, Amish

beginning. This claim, though it satisfies one objective, is not historically sound.

⁴⁹ One focus of that sermon was to review for the parishioners a brief history of the church on High Street (on Meeting House Square) on the occasion of its re-opening after a major five-month restoration, the first of its kind since the church was opened for services some 96 years before, in 1791.

⁵⁰ Sometimes referred to as "The Society of Assiduous Dissenters" by the Church of England.

⁵¹ Even so, it was common practice for Episcopalians to worship with the Presbyterians when they were without clergy, and visa versa.

⁵² I found no extant documented record of an organized Presbyterian Society in Kent County during this period. The presence of Societies in eastern shore Maryland, New Castle and Sussex Counties, DE, in PA and NJ, etc., at that time would also indicate presence in Kent County as well. Unfortunately, many church, county, Presbytery and Synod records have been lost.

⁵³ Several later sources refer to a "wooden building;" probably "boarded" over the log exterior of the c1708 building. See also the 1740 year date re: the Dover plot plan. The "New Castle Presbytery History – First In America – The First 100 Years," no date shown, provided to this compiler by the New Castle Presbytery in July 2004, in speaking of Dover's first meeting house, says on p. 4: "In 1740, its first meeting house, built of logs, was erected." Based on my research, the record should read: "The 1740-1741 plot plan of Dover (being a re-draft of the original 1717 plot plan) identifies the first official meeting house of the Presbyterian Church of Dover, a log/wooden structure, built before 1714 (probably c1708), located at the southeast corner of the cemetery along South Governors Avenue at Bank Lane."

⁵⁴ Ehinger: Chapter 8, p. 73.

⁵⁵ Or a group of Dissenters acting with, or apart from the Society.

⁵⁶ According to Rev. John Franklin Stonecipher in his re-dedication sermon of October 23, 1887, this "...was then the only Presbytery in our church..." Note year date 1708.

⁵⁷ The first evidence found for the street name location for the log church (and its attendant cemetery) was on the 1717 (and 1740-1741) plot plan for the town.

and other religious organizations by meeting in the homes of parishioners and providing leadership from among themselves or circuit ministers (which is considered by some as the “un-organized beginning” of Presbyterianism in this region). Funding for the early ministers was generally provided by their parishioners, relatives and friends back in Scotland and England.

The Presbyterian Congregation Of Dover Was RECOGNIZED By The Presbytery Of Philadelphia in 1714: See year dates 1695, 1714 and 2004. The spark behind this recognition was no doubt the petition of elders for a permanent minister to support its growing congregation at Dover. Gillette, in his “*History of the Presbyterian Church,*” Volume 1, reports on page 98 that “...this (Dover) congregation is on the records⁵⁸ in 1714.” Further, the **September 7, 1714** minutes of the **Presbytery of Philadelphia** provide this extract:⁵⁹

“...the Presbytery taking into consideration the desolate condition of the people in Kent County, having appointed our brother, **Mr. James Anderson**, that he supply them with preaching, etc., one Sabbath in the month until the next Presbytery (September 20, 1715) and that there be a letter writ to the moderator, signifying the Presbytery’s concern with relation to them...”

It is on this action of the **Presbytery of Philadelphia** that the Presbyterian Church of Dover claims and uses the phrase/trademark “*Founded 1714.*” There are, however, sufficient collateral non-church references⁶⁰ to believe with reasonable certainty that a “congregation” of **Presbyterian sympathizers (Society)**⁶¹ pre-existed that date by as many as 10-20 years, perhaps longer. **No documentation was found** through the New Castle Presbytery or the Presbyterian Historical Society (Philadelphia) in July 2004 to confirm (1) that the congregation was “*Founded*” in 1714 or (2) that this congregation was sanctioned/recognized/approved by the New Castle Presbytery in 1714 (as the New Castle Presbytery did not hold its first meeting as a Presbytery until March 13, 1717 [see year date 1717]) after the establishment of the **Synod of Philadelphia** earlier in that year.

The word “*Founded*” appears to be incorrectly applied here. The congregation was, indeed, **sanctioned, approved or recognized** in 1714 **by a higher authority** but was no doubt **organized** (“founded”) and established (formally or otherwise) prior to 1714.

Without documentation to support the phrase “*Founded 1714,*” it should not be used on a state-provided historic marker proposed in 1999. The following statement has a verifiable base: “**The Presbytery of Philadelphia recognized the Dover congregation in 1714,**” or simply the congregation was “*Recognized 1714.*”

1716: Dover’s Population: About three hundred souls, according to historian **Henry C. Conrad**. This number reflects Dover-area population as the town limits were not established until the following year.

1717: The Town Was Finally Laid Out: Dover Towne became a reality. Streets were formally named and laid out and the land divided into 1½ acre lots just one year before the death of William Penn who had authorized the survey some 34 years before in **1683**. The work was completed March 10, 1718. Near the center of the original tract the “**Public Square**” was established in 1723 (having been moved north one block to its present location) and was used “as a place for livestock, militia drills, announcements of election results from the balcony of the Courthouse and public events.” It was here that the **First Delaware Regiment** mustered before marching north to join Washington’s army. It was here that the Declaration of Independence was read and a portrait of **King George III** was burned at a public ceremony. It was near here, in the jail yard behind (and east of) the courthouse, that the infamous “**Red Hannah,**” or Delaware Whipping post,⁶² was located. On January 31, 1800, **John Vining** delivered a eulogium on the death of **George Washington**.

The “Public Square” was landscaped with grass and trees **c1850** (thus “**The Green**”) in the form of a Victorian park which still serves (in 2004) as a gathering place for public events such as summer concerts and the Maypole Dance during “*Old Dover Days*” held annually on May Day. Many of the

⁵⁸ This phrase leaves room for speculation that this congregation might actually have been “on the records” prior to 1714. More study may be warranted on this point.

⁵⁹ Also Ehinger: Chapter 3, page 16.

⁶⁰ Mostly un-documented.

⁶¹ Dissenters from the Church of England.

⁶² Corporal punishment was legally introduced into Delaware in 1717, in forms including the “whipping post, under the control of local governments, according to Mr. Leon deValinger, Jr., Archivist, by letter to Dr. Walter O. Stark, dated 10-27-1936. General Reference #781.

buildings on "*The Green*" (mostly residences originally) are listed on the **National Register of Historical Places**. The families of some of these original homes were members of this church and some of their family members are buried in this cemetery providing unique historical connections to the cemetery through their lives and tireless contributions to local, state and national affairs. See the Alphabetical Burial Index for details.

A Plot Plan For Dover Identifies "Meeting House Square:" A plot plan of Dover Towne (now in the Recorder's office, made in 1740-1741 [**Plat Book 2, Page 2**]), claims to be a "copy⁶³ of an **earlier plot**" (which is now non-existent) and identifies two marked-off squares of ground **being used** by two religious groups. One is called "**Church Square**" where the Episcopalian church and cemetery now stand. The other is "**Meeting House Square**" where the old Presbyterian Church and its cemetery now stand.

Reference to an "**earlier plot**" would seem to relate to the 1717 survey. However, it seems certain that the Presbyterians were already using this land as a log church "**was in use in 1708;**" some records say "**as early as 1708.**" This leads this compiler to believe (1) that these two parcels had been used for church purposes **before the original 1717 survey** and were identified as "**Squares**" in that survey, (2) that the 1740-1741 plot of the town simply reflected the previous designations of the two "**Squares,**" being in existence in 1717 and (3) that the log church probably predates the cemetery. Unfortunately, no documentation was found to support these speculations.

The Synod of Philadelphia Is Established: Presbyterian delegates met at Philadelphia and united to form a Synod (the **Synod of Philadelphia**) which then recognized four separate Presbyteries (among them, the New Castle Presbytery).

The New Castle Presbytery Held Its First Meeting On March 13, 1717:⁶⁴ See year date 1706. The New Castle Presbytery held its first meeting following the formation of this Synod earlier in the year.

- 1722: **A Courthouse Was Erected On The Site Of The Old State House.**
- 1727: **First Installed Pastor:** Rev. Archibald McCook, a licentiate, was stated supply minister from 1726 to June 7, 1727 when he was ordained by the New Castle Presbytery and installed the next day as **the first installed minister to this congregation** (referred to in some sources as "St. Jones"⁶⁵). Rev. McCook simultaneously served the congregations at Duck Creek and in Murtherkill Hundred to his death mid-1729.
- 1728: **Caesar Rodney Was Born:** See year date 1776; orphaned at age 17.
- 1729: **Indians Left The Area:** By the time Rev. Archibald McCook "died in office in 1729," the vestiges of the Nanticoke⁶⁶ Lenni Lenape Indians community had withdrawn from the region of central Kent County.
- 1730: **Presbyterial Records From 1730 To 1758 Were Destroyed.** Per Rev. John Franklin Stonecipher, 1887. Ehinger, p. 39, says: "...as the minutes of 1730 to 1750 are lost or at least the church headquarters do not know their whereabouts."
- 1733 **Population of Dover:**⁶⁷ 15-16 families within town limits, according to a letter written by Rev. George Frazer, Episcopal minister. The majority of families were living outside the town limits. By comparison, in 1736 Wilmington's population occupied 33 houses.
- 1740: **A New Plot Plan For Dover Re-Identified "Meeting House Square:"** Refer to the 1717 year entry, above. The 1717 plot plan for Dover was copied or re-drawn in 1740-1741. The 1717 plot plan is not extant. The 1740-1741 town plot plan is filed in the Kent County Administration Building (Robert W. O'Brien Building), County Records Department, Room 218, Dover, DE, and is identified in **Plat Book 2, Page 2**.

The New Castle Presbytery in July 2004 furnished the following document which is their record as to the date for the construction of the log church on **Meeting Houses Square in Dover:** "*New Castle Presbytery History – New Castle Presbytery – First In America – The First 100 Years*" (neither attribution

⁶³ A re-drawing of the 1717 plot plan.

⁶⁴ "*A History of the Presbytery of New Castle From Its Organization. March 13, 1717 to 1888,*" by James Laird Vallandigham and Samuel A. Gayley; Presbyterian Publishing Company, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶⁵ Gillette's "*History of the Presbyterian Church,*" Vol. 1, page 98, reports that "Dover, St. Jones and 'People of Kent' are all the same congregation – Dover." And, a footnote, same Volume, page 42, says "St. Jones is now Dover, on Jones's, anciently St. Jones Creek, in St. Jones', now Kent County, Delaware."

⁶⁶ The Inland River group.

⁶⁷ "*Historical Collections of the American Colonial Church,*" printed for subscribers, 1878; p. 70.

nor publishing date is shown). This report states on page 4 (of 5 pages): “In 1740, its first meeting house, built of logs, was erected.” See year dates for 1706 and 1714 for evidence that this log church was already “in use” by 1708. The 1740 date cited here was probably a misinterpretation of the 1740-1741 re-draft of the 1717 plot plan for Dover which showed the existence of Meeting House Square.

1741: An Act Of Assembly Provided For The Establishment And Regulation Of A Market Square.

1742: “Division Occurred In Dover:” Dr. Heaton says, in a paper read by him in Baltimore that “...division occurred in Dover in 1742.” This reference related to much contention throughout the Presbytery and Synod beginning perhaps as early as 1737 (and persisting through the mid-1740’s) over qualifications and credentials required for ministerial ordination by the Presbyterian Church. Many would minister. Few met the rigid educational qualifications of the Presbytery. Many congregations were without “pulpits” for years at a time. This entry is included as representative of several issues which had devastating results on church membership. In spite of such emotional circumstances, the love of God prevailed and the church healed and went on to serve its people.

Population Of Kent County: 1,005 families by a rough census privately taken by an Episcopalian clergyman.⁶⁸

1743: The Town Deeds Property To The “Church”⁶⁹ County records show that Rev. Robert Jamison⁷⁰ was a stated supply minister in 1743, when on May 12th, the “Town Commissioners”⁷¹ deeded one acre and 5 perches⁷² on what was then known as “Meeting House Square” to Rev. Robert Jamison and to Magistrate John Caton⁷³ and to Robert Bohanan (Caton and Bohanan were Elders of the Presbyterian congregation; neither Jamison nor the two elders are buried in this Cemetery) “to obviate all difficulty as to title.” The price was £2, 16 Shillings for the parcel. The problem with title to the property (including its cemetery) was that prior to this transaction the church was a legal “non-entity” and without rights to ownership (the congregation was not incorporated until 1863,⁷⁴ 120 years later). This Deed is made to the three named individuals (not to the church), as a “Deed in Trust” (though not so specified) for it named future beneficiaries as “...to the succeeding Ministers and Elders of the Said Presbyterian Congregation and to Such...as forever..., etc.” The Deed conveys “all that lott or parcel of ground whereon the Presbyterian Meeting House now stands...”

The church office CEMETERY file folder named DOCUMENTS contains a clear and true copy of this Deed, the original of which may be found in the Kent County Administration Building (the Robert W. O’Brien Building), County Records Department, Room 218, in **Book M, Vol. 1, page 216** (also known as Deed M216). As of this date (1999), this Deed is the oldest extant documented church record. Most other historical information about the church and its cemetery are gleaned from external records.⁷⁵ See also year dates 1947 and 1949 for property-size particulars at 1.32 and 1.08 acres respectively.

The deed says in part: (street names have been capitalized)

...John Holliday, James Gorrell and Thomas Skidmore, Jr., by virtue of the power and authoritys wherewith they are invested by the said act of assembly for and in consideration of the sum of 2 pounds 16 shillings...do grant bargain sell and confirm unto the said Robert Jamison Misister, John Caton and Robert Bohanan elders of the Presbyterian congregation aforesaid and to the succeeding ministers and elders of the said Presbyterian congregation...all that lott or parcel of ground within the town of Dover in Kent County aforesaid. Whereon the Presbyterian Meeting house now stands. BEGINNING at a corner on the south side (of) North Street wherein

⁶⁸ “Dover Heritage Trail” pamphlet: Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, no date.

⁶⁹ For more detail see “*Bridge Across The Years*,” Ehinger, 1975, Chapter 4, p 27ff.

⁷⁰ Stated supply for the Dover and Smyrna congregations from 1734 to his death in 1744. Rev. Stonecipher suggests Rev. Jamison may have had charge of all the Presbyterian churches in the county for the decade before his death, for in the spring of the year after his death, Rev. Mr. Morris, the Episcopalian minister in Dover, wrote that the Dissenters had no teacher in either Kent or Sussex counties and were obliged to attend his church.

⁷¹ John Holliday, James Gorrell and Thomas Skidmore, Jr., for the town of Dover, Court of Common Pleas.

⁷² Slightly less than the original 1½ acres, having made a right-of-way allowance. A “perch” equals one “rod” or 16 ½ linear feet; one square perches = 272.25 square feet.

⁷³ In 1747 and 1748 the three “lower counties” were kept in a great state of excitement by the attacks of privateers. Small companies were organized for defense and a number of commissions were issued to officers in the counties; one was to John Caton who served to the end of the French and Indian War in 1763.

⁷⁴ The corporate seal of the church following the “Act of Incorporation” in 1863 reads “The Trustees of the Presbyterian Church of Dover, reincorporated, March 20, 1863,” per “*Bridge Across The Years*,” page 176, confirms that the church was incorporated prior to 1863.

⁷⁵ Gillette’s “*History of the Presbyterian Church*,” Volume 1, is one such source, in which the author reports on page 98 that “...this congregation is on the records in 1714.” It is on this reference that the Presbyterian Church of Dover claims and uses the phrase “**Founded in 1714**.” There is sufficient collateral non-church circumstantial evidence to believe with reasonable certainty that a “congregation” of the Presbyterian Society pre-existed that date by as many as 8-10 years, or more.