

## London Britain Meeting House

The book, *Quaker Roots*, records:

“The Meeting House in London Britain township stands on Route 896, a fourth of a mile north of Strickersville, PA and very close to the point where Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland meet. It was built in 1834 on land sold by Evan and Sarah Garrett to Daniel Thompson of New Castle County, Delaware; Charles Paxson of New London and George Sharpless of London Britain. Orthodox Friends who were members of West Grove Meeting had received permission to hold Meeting for Worship in the home of Richard Chambers, just over the state line in Delaware.”

“At one period there seem to have been as many as 100 members of London Britain Meeting, but membership declined and in 1905 it was recorded that “usual attendance numbers from 4 to 8 – occasionally only 2 present, and sometimes not held at all.” There were then 27 members recorded, but many were young people who had moved away from this very rural area. Certainly contributing to the decline was the fact that London Britain was one of only two Meetings in Western Quarter (Fallowfield being the other) where a group of Friends for whom even Orthodox Quakerism was not sufficiently true to tradition left and established a Meeting of Primitive Friends. They are said to have owned, or used, a small brick building not far from the present Meeting House. London Britain Particular Meeting was in existence only from 1866 to 1893, when it was laid down because it had only one surviving member.”

“The burial ground at London Britain, unlike most others in the Quarter, seems to have been used only by Friends. The names mentioned above are found on gravestones here, and also Passmore, Hopkins, Watson, Rowley, Sharp, Sherer and Drinker.” (1) Jane Hopkins, the last surviving member of London Britain MM, is buried in the cemetery.

After London Britain Meeting House was laid down, it was placed under the care of West Grove Monthly Meeting. In the 1980’s it was turned over to Western Quarter and members of Newark MM became involved in the care of the Meeting House as members of the Quarter Committee. The Quarter offered ownership of London Britain Meeting House to Newark MM, but members declined owning the property, but dedicated themselves under the leadership of architect Bob Johnson to improving the building and the grounds. In the 1990s they had a fence erected, a pump drilled, a composting toilet installed, and a solar powered fan set up to help keep the basement dry. Members of Newark MM continue to serve on the Quarter Committee which takes care of basic upkeep and grass cutting from dedicated funds in Friends Fiduciary. Work parties from Newark Friends look after cleaning and do some landscape work. They have planted native trees and shrubs, in honor of young people in Newark Monthly Meeting who have completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade and of members and attenders who have turned 70. During the 1990s London Britain Meeting House was open for public worship on the third Sunday of the month at 2 pm during the months of June, July, and August. After the August worship service, Chester County historian Paul Rodebaugh would speak about local Quaker history. Newark MM began worshipping at London Britain during the month of July in the late 1990s and since 2004 has been meeting here for worship from the first Sunday of June – the Sunday before Labor Day at 10:30 am. Beginning in 2008 there has been an annual Easter Sunrise Service and there is now Wednesday night worship from Spring until it is too cold. (The meeting has no electricity or heat.) For many years in August there has been an Art Show of local artists organized by Ruth Thompson. London Britain Meeting House has played a significant role in the social and spiritual life of Newark MM. It has been the site of picnics, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Newark MM on September 30, 2012, weddings, memorial services, and even a Catholic Funeral Mass for the mother of one of our attenders which was concelebrated by two priests who were the brothers of the deceased.

We invite you to become a part of life of London Britain Meeting House by attending worship or by stopping to meditate in the stillness of the grave yard. For more information, call Shelley Hastings at 302-547-9228.

1.Norma Jacob, Editor, *Quaker Roots: The Story of Western Quarterly Meeting of Philadelphia Yearly meeting of the Religious society of Friends*, Western Quarterly Meeting, Kennett Square, PA, 1980, p. 45.