

Haddonfield Friends Meeting

Graveyard

300 Years of Legacy and History

"As it exists today, Haddonfield Meeting's graveyard is an unusual hybrid. It is essentially in the center of a busy population center, but its appearance is that of a garden cemetery, with a rolling landscape shaded by trees. (It has often been described as an 'oasis' of peace and tranquility.)"
– Robert Brookes, Quaker Historian

Before the Graveyard was a Graveyard

In 1701, 19-year-old Elizabeth Haddon traveled to the province of West Jersey to manage her father's extensive holdings. She married John Estaugh and, in 1721, formally established the first Quaker Meeting in what would become Haddonfield.

However, well before the graveyard (or even the Meeting itself) was officially established, a particular acre of Haddon's land along the bridle path that would eventually become Haddon Avenue was already being used as a local burial ground.

The earliest recorded grave is that of Anthony Sharp, who was interred there on November 1, 1694. He was followed by William and Jane Evans in 1697 and 1698 respectively, and members of the Lord and Kay families in 1712-1713, among others.

Of course, in accordance with Friendly custom at the time, all were buried without markers, so the exact locations of their graves remain unknown.

One may safely speculate that, in 1721, when Elizabeth Haddon partnered with prominent Newton Quaker and surveyor Thomas Sharp (younger brother of Anthony Sharp) to choose a site for Haddonfield's first meetinghouse and graveyard, the existing burial ground must have seemed particularly appropriate.

A Graveyard—Small but Growing

For the next hundred years, Friends were interred (mostly without markers) on this patch of land. These included Ebenezer Hopkins (1757), Elizabeth's adopted son, his wife Sarah Lord (1796), and at least some of their seven children, all of whom married into local Quaker families, firmly establishing both the graveyard and Elizabeth's legacy.



Elizabeth herself passed away in 1762. A plaque commemorating her is mounted on a tree near to where she is believed to have been buried.

Over the centuries, the graveyard, like Haddonfield itself, has grown. Further deeds, bequeathments, and land sales, the most recent of which occurred in 1941, gradually filled the space between Haddon and Friends Avenue.



One particular deed, dated 1755, conveyed a quarter acre of land for the purposes of establishing a "potter's field" on the property. This land was renamed "Strangers Burying Ground" in 1808 by town authorities and currently occupies the rear of the Friends School playground and Dell.

As first identified by T. Chalkley Matlack, who compiled a graveyard inventory in 1932, the oldest existing stone belongs to Susannah Matlack (1799).

Her husband, Benjamin Matlack (1807), rests beside her under the second oldest marker.

It should be mentioned that, by the time the border wall was built from stone taken from Haddonfield's original meeting house, Haddon Avenue had been widened to accommodate carriage traffic. As a result, an undetermined number of Friends likely rest under the sidewalk and perhaps the street itself. It's something you can't know...

"The large picturesque Friends' Burial Ground...has many memorial stones, all neatly similar and inconspicuous, as in Friendly custom, telling of various members of the Alberson, Bell, Clement, Haines, Burrough, Nicholson, Lippincott, Thorn, Rulon and other families who for times past and gone have figured in the annals of Haddonfield members of the Society of Friends. Through the graveyard from east to west extends a very perceptible little valley or glen which with its border of ancient trees adds to the beauty of the spot."
- T. Chalkley Matlack, Quaker Historian

Resting Place of the Famous, and Less So...

Nearly 1000 people have been interred in our graveyard over the centuries, though this number relies on existing documentation and may be low.

Among them are some very prominent Friends. Thomas Redman (1823) helped found the community's first "public" school, Haddonfield Free School, in 1786. This later became Haddonfield Friends School, where Sarah Eastlack (1884) was named its first woman headmistress in 1848.

Richard and William Cooper (1874 and 1875) were the founders and endowers of Cooper Hospital. Thomas Evans and his son Josiah (1849 and 1869), both staunch abolitionists, hid runaway slaves at what later became Croft Farm in Cherry Hill.

During the Revolutionary War, John Gill (1796) was forced to host Count Donop and 1200 Hessian soldiers prior to the Battle of Red Bank. When Donop confided plans to attack Fort Mercer, John quietly sent a warning that won the battle for the continental army.

John Hopkins, buried here in 1884, owned the Haddonfield farm where the first full dinosaur skeleton (the Hadrosaurus) was discovered.

Also interred are Joshua Stokes (1779), who provided food and shelter to Colonial General Casimir Pulaski and his troops during the Revolutionary War, and Lyle Tatum (2006), who was imprisoned as a conscientious objector during World War II.

Orthodox vs. Hicksite

During a century-long schism between Orthodox and Hicksite Friends in Haddonfield, the graveyard was shared. But that isn't to say there wasn't some "Quakerly" conflict.

In the mid-19th century, an orthodox friend named Sam Nicholson (a member of one of New Jersey's founding families) evidently objected to the burgeoning practice of adding markers to Quaker graves. Sam would routinely pound such markers into the ground and out of sight whenever he found them.

His "hobby" sat poorly with some Hicksites, among them Asa Matlack Jr., father of T. Chalkley Matlack. Asa, among others, took it upon himself to seek out and dig back up these buried markers.

It's unclear how long this subtle feud continued. It is interesting to note, however, that Asa isn't buried on the grounds. Samuel Nicholson, on the other hand, is buried there, which makes this perhaps the most ironic marker in the graveyard.



*"I always wanted to have my grave marker at the top
of the sledding hill with the engraving
'push off from here.'"*

- Paraphrased and attributed to Martin Beer (2012), member of Haddonfield Friends Meeting



Today...

After more than 300 years, the Haddonfield Friends Graveyard stands as something of a rarity among burial grounds, welcoming as it does the living as often as those who have passed.

The school routinely uses it for athletic activities and fall campouts. On Halloweens, it has been "haunted" by Young Friends to delight trick-or-treaters. In snowy weather, sleds coast down the hill and, when it's warm, games of Tag and Hide and Seek are commonplace.

With peace and quiet dignity, our graveyard draws a clear but gentle line between who we were as Quakers—and who we are.