

This burial ground has been restored by the Pelham Historical Society with the labor of the Junior High Gathering of the Friends General Conference, in the week of July 4, 2004.

Epistle* of the Community Service to Pelham Friends Meeting Burying Ground

To Friends Everywhere:

We began our project of cleaning the Pelham Quaker Burial Ground by learning the history of it from Roger Conant of the Mount Toby Monthly Meeting. We worked with tools donated by members of the Mount Toby Meeting. FGC provided a van to take us to the site. It took us some time to find the correct path on the first day, but we finally found the four corner posts and the tips of only a few gravestones. The site is located in a commercial forest in which trees are planted and presumably used for lumber [See note].

We first cleared away the fallen sticks and trees and removed them to the boundary of the 99'x99' site. We then raked away large amounts of pine needles. We found several stones in the cleaning process that we assumed were marking gravestones. With each find we tried to dig out the vines and roots and the 6 to 12 inches of mulch that covered the stones. When Roger Conant instructed us to not move or raise the stones in any way, we just dug the soil around the

stones, thus lowering the soil around the gravestones.

We constructed a simple pine box and stained the wood with a polyurethane sealing stain. We composed a flyer based on information supplied by Roger Conant and Mount Toby Meeting history. The box and flyers are left on the site.

We moved the three flat stones and painted with latex acrylic paint "The Old Pelham Friends Burial Ground" and a smaller stone "Junior High Gathering, FGC, 2004". The two stones are in the main burial ground whereas the third stone is on the path leading to the site.

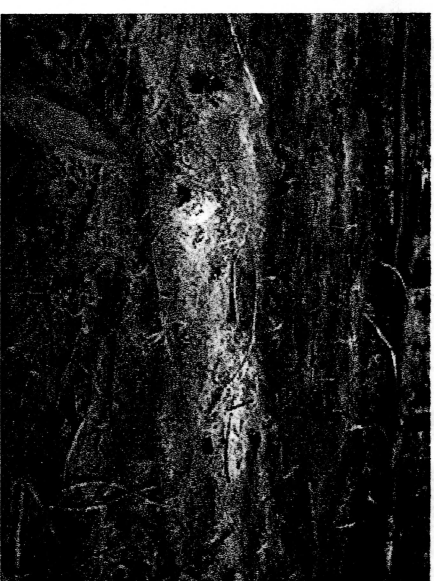
Respectfully submitted by Junior High Gathering, 2004 FGC July 7th, 2004.

David Palo, Daniel Doan, Tristan Green, Kyla McGrarty, Casey C. Kashnig, Kendra Graham, Cierra Graham, Scott Hutter, Karen McKinnon, David Dean, Cooper Cagle, Emma Reeves, Oisin Reilly, Tom Clement

Note: Not quite so – the forest surrounding the burial ground is part of the Amherst watershed, and is not a "commercial forest" though sometimes logged.

**An Epistle is a traditional Quaker form of communicating the result of a gathering to other Friends, or in this case to visitors to the Burial Ground.*

The Pelham Friends Meeting Burying Ground



before the cleanup project

History of Pelham Friends Burial Ground

The Pelham Friends Meetinghouse was established at the beginning of the 19th century in what were then the wilds of western Massachusetts. It was a small Preparative meeting of farmers that was described in the diary of Thomas Scattergood (1811): "A rainy day and but few Friends at meeting, and the other part of the company mostly raw looking people – a number of women and girls without bonnets or caps."

In the 1898 History of Pelham by C. O. Parmenter, he writes: "At one time during the early part of the century there was a small body of Quakers or Friends in town, led by Uncle Eseck Cook, whose kindly 'thee' and 'thou' the writer remembers, and their meetinghouse was about a half a mile east of West Pelham Methodist church. Here the little band used to gather on Sunday and wait in silence for the Spirit to move. Out on the plain west of the meetinghouse, which is now used as a barn, the Friends were buried as one after another they finished their earthly course. The

space set apart was not large nor was it ever enclosed by fence or wall.

Thirty of forty perhaps were buried here ... Some of the graves show like low swelling mounds of grassy turf with ordinary stones gathered from the field at the head and feet. Many tenants have occupied the small farm but the plow has never invaded the little burial place upon the plain. No name-inscribed stones are seen, no dates, nothing to indicate who the dead are who lie here."

These reports can be found in The History of Mount Toby Monthly

Meeting up to 1964, by Helen

Griffith. She also tells the story of the son of a Pelham Friends family, Gully Potter. While in medical school, Potter died and was buried in the Pelham Friends Meeting Burial Ground. His medical school associates donated a tombstone in his honor. The inscribed tombstone was contrary to the Quaker customs of that time. Friends of the Pelham Meeting removed the tombstone. Potter's father replaced the headstone. Pelham Friends once again removed the tombstone. The father then removed both the remains of his son

and the headstone to the nearby Arnold cemetery. This story demonstrates the strict adherence to the rules in the early 19th century associated with the Quaker testimonies of simplicity and equality of all people in the eyes of God.

The Pelham Friends Meeting did not exist in the second half of the 19th century. However, the meetinghouse was in use as a barn until at least 1924. All that remains of the original meetinghouse is a plank that is now in the Mount Toby Friends Meeting, in Leverett.

Additional information is available in the book by Paul Bigelow, entitled Disowned – Disrupted – Dissolved: The life and Times of the Members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) in Pelham, Massachusetts, 1806 – 1970.