

For Immediate Release
Press Contact: Sara Altherr
781/585-4533, 339/832-0624
email: spa411@verizon.net
Photos available upon request

QUAKERS HOLD OPEN HOUSE

East Sandwich – Ever been curious about the origin of the name Quaker Meeting House Road? Well, now is your chance to find out.

Members of the East Sandwich Religious Society of Friends Meeting (Quakers) will hold an open house on Sunday, October 3, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the construction of the current meetinghouse, located at 6 Quaker Road (off Spring Hill Road).

The open house will showcase the meetinghouse itself, as well as the burial grounds – where generations of Quakers, including some of the earliest inhabitants of Sandwich, are buried. Tours of the burial grounds highlighting the lives of a few of the Quakers will be led by John Cullity, a local historian. “The burial ground is a beautiful spot,” Cullity commented, “charmingly irregular in its layout and topography. It has many unmarked burial mounds, reflecting the Quaker tendency towards humility and simplicity.” Other members of the Meeting will be on hand to answer questions and lead informal tours of the meetinghouse.

Tours of the meetinghouse will be offered from 1:00 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. Tours of the burial grounds will take place at 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m., and 3:30 p.m.

This timber-framed meetinghouse, erected in 1810, was the third on this site. It was prefabricated in a Quaker community on the Kennebec River in Maine, shipped by schooner to Cape Cod Bay, unloaded in the creek north of the site and reassembled according to numbers on the timbers. At the time, the size and amount of timber needed was unavailable in this area. Friends Meetings, as Quaker worship services are called, are still held in this “new” building.

The Sandwich meetinghouse is the home of the oldest continuous Quaker meeting in America, having been gathered in 1657. The meeting became the center of a Quaker village, which included a school and the seventeenth century homesteads of the Wing and Hoxie families.

Remarkable for its preservation, the meetinghouse still has the movable partitions, which separated the men’s and women’s meetings for business until 1891. Other structures on the site include two carriage sheds and two rare outhouses. (For historic interest only not use.) The women’s outhouse is family-oriented, with 5 seats.

In general, Quaker architecture reflects the plainness and simplicity of Friends beliefs, with the structure dictated by the function. In this period, Quaker meetinghouses are of similar design, but constructed of local materials and methods. Here it was wood and in Pennsylvania, local stone.

“This meetinghouse is of particular interest because its beautiful rural site is relatively untouched, especially since development has left many of the meetinghouses in the midst of modern construction and busy roads,” said Beverly Burbank, a Member.

- End -