

The Cemetery Committee Report
New York Quarterly Meeting
18 July 2020

The Cemetery Committee meets monthly and has a full roster of 6 members.

We spent the latter half of 2019 creating ambitious plans for the cemetery only to see them put on hold due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, the committee has maintained a positive outlook and continued to meet every month via Zoom. We're looking forward to revitalizing plans as things begin to open up again, and using our experiences of the past few months to inform our path going forward.

General & Events

Much of the committee's enthusiasm was directed toward making the cemetery more inviting and accessible to Friends and others. That included envisioning new facilities as well as opening the gates on a more regular basis.

That spirit informed our Fall Work Day on November 16th, 2019 when we had approximately 100 Mary McDowell School 7th+8th grade students and staff with another 100 or so people signing in at the gate. There was an overwhelmingly positive atmosphere as we opened the gates to anyone interested in visiting.

Invigorated by the general good feelings coming out of our Fall Work Day, we spent the winter planning out a schedule of regular Open Saturdays, a Spring Work Day, and a June Jubilee Day. Regrettably, we never got to the first event on our schedule: an Open Saturday on April 11, 2020, due to quarantining regulations put in place in NYC in March. We were also disappointed to miss out on the Spring Work Day because Friends Seminary was going to participate after an extended absence from such events.

A small gathering of 24 Brooklyn Monthly Meeting Friends on July 11th went extremely well and provided some model of how to safely open the cemetery to other well-organized events going forward.

Facilities

The committee has spent a great deal of its time and energy envisioning how to make the cemetery a place that continues to reflect Quaker values while offering up a greater array of accommodations. To that end we have focused on the following:

- Improving the accessibility of the cemetery, especially as it relates to people with mobility issues. We embrace that the cemetery should be inviting and we need to offer a way to get to the gravesites for those with problems navigating the cemetery's terrain. The committee is united in considering the best means of achieving that goal while also being sensitive to the storage issues that the golf cart presents. We have looked into such other forms of mobility such as a wheelchair with rugged wheels, but for now have

looked to the golf cart as the best means to get visitors to any of the plot sites. We will continue to explore alternatives.

- Adding 4-5 benches throughout the cemetery to enhance the handful already gracing the cemetery.
- Installation of a natural railing leading down the slope into the Glades (aka, The Mott Plot).
- The committee engaged an architect to guide us toward a vast upgrade on the facilities. We settled on prioritizing an expanded building offering a comfortable working space for the sexton, a secure shed for supplies, two bathrooms that are ADA compliant, and space that can accommodate approximately 75 people and chairs with ability to open up in summer and close in winter. We are looking for it to be expandable, and can act as a meeting space, a place for spiritual contemplation, or spot for family before or after interment.
- A couple of gazebos or some other structure that are conducive to contemplation.

This project was put on hold with a desire to start re-engagement toward the end of the summer, but we are realistically looking at spending 2021 planning with any construction likely taking place in 2022.

Outreach

We are committed to improving the outreach to the Quarter and making Friends fully aware of our sacred cemetery in Prospect Park.

As New York City was confronting the worst of the pandemic, the Committee was moved to send out a NYQM-wide email on April 7th that offered our loving and caring guidance on the procedures for burial in case of an unexpected death. We wanted to provide some basic information, should it be needed, to help minimize some of that stress.

Additionally, we sent out an online survey asking Friends for their thoughts on the cemetery to gauge awareness and get opinions on how we might better serve the Quarter. Our plan was to incorporate data from the survey into a presentation at the Spring NYQM gathering. We're hoping to give our presentation at a later date when larger gatherings are again possible.

A general gmail account for the cemetery committee was established that we can use for general digital correspondence as needed. It is: nycquakercemetery@gmail.com

The committee is looking forward to more coordination with ARCH and amplifying the mutual services available to Friends.

The State of the Cemetery

We continue to engage the Prospect Park Alliance for a variety of services in the cemetery. We have been operating under a verbal agreement for the past several years that reflects a general outline that was agreed to but not signed by either party. The PPA has undergone numerous

personnel changes in 2020 but we're looking to formalize our relationship once things are settled down at the organization.

While our sexton has been providing his standard loving care we're in the midst of addressing a number of fallen trees from a big April storm, one of which destroyed a section of the outer fence. We're looking to have temporary fencing replaced with a permanent one.

Since we weren't able to host a Spring Work Day or have gatherings of any size the cemetery is confronting more invasive species than in years past. Nevertheless, it remains a beautiful and inspiring place.

There have been 3 interments : Robert Leuze, Arthur Berk and Pedro Olivares.

Other Points of Significance

The committee agrees that with the ubiquitous use of mobile devices it's no longer realistic to hold onto a "No Photography" policy. We have settled on a revised policy of making photography acceptable as long as it is respectful of the cemetery and avoids photographing individual stones (except in the case of family members). We also acknowledge that there are certain stones in the cemetery that require unique care and respect when it comes to photography, and we'll provide special vigilance in those cases.

We also crafted a Minute that states the following: The Cemetery Committee of the NYQM would like for the budget of that committee to reflect all of the expenses relative to the upkeep of the cemetery, including, but not limited to, personnel, maintenance and utilities. We are aware that this has not always happened in the past, but will plan to do so, going forward.

We have also committed one member of the committee to attending the monthly Facilities Committee and providing responsible updates on future planned expenditures.

The Cemetery Committee looks forward to continuing our enriching and rewarding work as stewards of this sacred place.