



Historic Maiden Creek Meetinghouse

The article includes excerpts from a 1975 article written by Janet Norton, a long-time member of Reading Monthly Meeting. It is updated by Heather Ehrlich, 2025.

*Maiden Creek Meetinghouse is under the care of Reading Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends and part of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. We hope you will join us for worship at this peaceful place sometime soon. We worship here on First Days (Sundays) every summer from Father's Day weekend until Labor Day. **This year, we meet from June 15 through***

August 31 for worship Sunday at 10 am.** Maiden Creek Meeting is a place rich in local Quaker (Friends) history, dating back to the original arrival of Quakers to Berks County. **The meetinghouse is located at 849 W. Shore Drive, Shoemakersville, PA 19555

Connections to Our Past

William Penn arrived in America over 340 years ago, on October 24, 1682. It was a third of a century before non-indigenous people first moved into what is now Berks County. In 1718, a few Quakers arrived to farm in the fertile Oley Valley. They built homes and held religious services first in their homes, and later in a newly built log meetinghouse. They worked hard, prospered, and word of their success in this valley spread. Within 15 years, other Quakers, originally from Ireland and later from Chester County, Pennsylvania, came northward to settle near these Oley Valley Quakers, called Old Exeter Friends. They liked the rich limestone soil and the challenge of participating in Penn's Holy Experiment. As the first people of European descent to inhabit the Ontelaunee environs, they succeeded in building a trusting relationship with the resident Indians. They first held their Meetings for Worship as an informal group, not yet as a formalized and independent meeting. Soon, they worshiped as a preparative meeting under the care of the Gwynedd (Philadelphia) Monthly Meeting,

In July 1759, a little over four acres were purchased from Benjamin Lightfoot. On this land, a 1-1/2 story gray stone meetinghouse was erected, and a burial ground was established. Worship services continue in that meetinghouse to the present day, although there was a period from about 1910 to 1950, when the meetinghouse was not used.

In 1784, Friends built another log schoolhouse adjacent to the meetinghouse. Both original log structures were replaced in 1807 with gray limestone buildings. The schoolhouse was used as a school until at least 1870.

For 167 years, these buildings remained on the original site in the Oley Valley until the decision was made by the City of Reading to build a reservoir for its citizens' water supply. Removal of buildings in the designated construction area was necessary. Maiden creek meeting buildings were moved and relocated, stone by stone, to their current location, which is adjacent to the reservoir. In 1926, the schoolhouse became a caretaker's cottage. The meetinghouse and the 700 re-interred bodies from the old cemetery were moved to their present location.

The site chosen for relocation is next door to another old meetinghouse that has, since 1934, been a private residence. In 1827, a theological schism occurred, separating Friends, and a second meetinghouse was built. The Kindt's Corner Brick Meetinghouse, as it is known, was built in 1853 by Orthodox Quakers who did not accept the Hicksite ideas of most Maiden creek Friends. Finally, during the early 1950s, the Orthodox and Hicksite Friends in the Reading area united, ending a long and unfortunate separation."

Compiled from the original text, Janet E. Norton, October 1975

Enjoying an Active Present

Today, this place of worship remains a place of worship and a deep connection to Quakerism. Both the meetinghouse and the cottage have been extensively restored in the last several years. In addition to the structures on the Maiden creek property, you will find an arboretum that includes many native species. When the buildings were relocated, many Norway maple trees were planted along the driveway. Years later, Red oaks were added, and any of the original trees are now gone and replaced by a variety of native trees and shrubs.

In 2016, two Black Gum trees were planted to the east of the cottage and named to honor and remember Betty and Jack Hanf, two longtime active members of Reading Monthly Meeting. Ted Stokes, a member of Exeter Monthly Meeting, has donated and planted four native oak trees. In 2013, eight additional native trees were added to the collection. The burial grounds on the Maiden creek property are connected to the large lawn and located on the west, behind the meetinghouse. Remains of the original cemetery are connected to the rest of the present-day cemetery. Reading Monthly Meeting continues to maintain this active cemetery and to make use of the wonderful grounds and meetinghouse for many present-day purposes, including for worship, memorial services, social gatherings, and celebrations.



Maidencreek Meetinghouse, clockwise, a view of the meetinghouse and the old schoolhouse in the background. Planting trees, August 2023, Cemetery supervisor John Loomis and Grandson Ezra. Memorial Black Gum Trees.