

Old Caln Historical Society

P.O. Box 428

Thorndale, Pennsylvania 19372



OLD CALN MEETINGHOUSE FACT SHEET

1. Originally, a small log meetinghouse was located down "in the valley". A larger building was needed and the Quakers were given land "up ye old mountain". The west and middle rooms were built in 1726, if you think about it, this is 50 Years before the Declaration of Independence. The larger east room was added in 1801 to accommodate the need for the Quarterly Meeting held four times a year.
2. The Old Caln Historical Society rents the west room for their museum. The Museum was opened in 1998. The Historical Society was formed in 1976 to help restore the meetinghouse, the oldest building in the township, and to promote interest in the history of the township.

The Building is as it was originally built, except for flooring that had to be replaced in the west and middle room in 2005 due to powder post beetles that had eaten through the logs supporting the floors.

1. Stone walls were constructed by hand from stones found in local fields. The Floors were hand cut and sawed, more than an inch thick, from white oak trees found in the area.
2. The walls and sliding panels are made of poplar. The benches, also hand made, are also made of poplar. All things regarding the meetinghouse are well made, functional and simple in appearance. This was true of their style of dress in the past.

Quaker religious services are primarily silent. There are no ministers or deacons. All matters are decided by the membership. Business is conducted with the men and the women separated by the sliding panels. The benches on the raised platforms are referred to as "facing benches". These are where elders, important Friends and people gifted in ministry would sit. They would, by their example, be an inspiration to the others attending meetings, especially the younger members. This building was once used as a school. Graffiti can be seen carved on the wall and back of benches in the middle room. Today a small group of Friends from the Downingtown meeting meet each Sunday morning. An out of state group also Meets here on Sunday afternoon. Quarterly meeting is held here in August, with Friends from other areas attending.

The adjoining cemetery has many unmarked graves. Long ago there were no headstones. Sometimes a simple field stone marked a grave. Families were not necessarily buried together however, there are some who are. There are some stones that have a name and date. ~~Out of 730 known graves,~~ ^{unknown} only 302 have visible identification. Four black Civil War Soldiers are buried in the northwest corner. The county paid the funeral expenses and the Friends offered the burial plots. The last Quaker burial was in 1932. The Downingtown Meetinghouse has an adjoining cemetery and this is where burials are held today.