

The Religious Society of Free Quakers  
Historian's Report  
October 14, 2004

On October 4<sup>th</sup> I met some of my colleagues at a lecture and, in passing, learned that Historic Philadelphia Inc. (HPI) was a tenant in the Meeting House. Coincidentally, the week before I had placed a call to Frances Delmar, Acting Chief of Interpretation at Independence National Historical Park (INHP), to determine the status of the Meeting House. When we spoke in late spring INHP did not have the staff to open the building to the public and our interpretative plan remained on the "back burner." At that time, and at every previous meeting, I was assured by Frances, her predecessor, Christopher Schillizzi, and Assistant Superintendent Dennis Reidenbach that I would participate in any interpretative plan at the Meeting House. Clearly, that may have been the intention, but there was no follow through.

On October 6<sup>th</sup> I spoke with Frances, who is now Partnership Activities Co-coordinator for the park. (The new Chief of Interpretation is Steve Sitarski.) INHP has a Memorandum of Understanding with HPI who has an office in the basement (the space was remodeled – there is no kitchen) and will open the building to the public Wednesday through Sunday, 10 –4. Frances assured me of a role in the interpretation. At the moment, HPI has an actor dressed as Timothy Matlack telling a "historically accurate" story. Samuel Wetherill, as founder of the Free Quakers and its chief spokesperson, will be represented in a "new, improved" interpretation. Frances and I met October 12<sup>th</sup> and I am to meet with Amy Needle of HPI next week.

Before I called Dennis to express my confusion and dismay, I reviewed the Memorandum of Agreement between INHP and the Society. The agreement was signed on February 22<sup>nd</sup> and March 11<sup>th</sup> 1999. Article III, Terms of Agreement, states, "Unless otherwise terminated by operation of the terms of this agreement or by agreement of the parties in writing, this Agreement shall remain in force for five years from the date of execution." There is no provision for extension or renewal. Are there plans to draw up a new agreement?

All of the items formerly on display in the Meeting House were removed and are in storage. These things, including the portrait of Samuel Wetherill, Jr., are the property of the society and are covered by an insurance policy. What are the plans for their disposition?

Respectfully submitted,

Maria M. Thompson