

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Graves in North Adelaide

EARLY HISTORY RELATED

Anyone who has visited the property on Pennington terrace, North Adelaide, on which the Friends' meeting house is erected, will have seen a tombstone on the northern side of the building. It bears this inscription:—

"In memory of Mary Ann Barritt, died 5th, 4th mo. 1848, aged 32 years. And her son, Joseph Earn Barritt, who was drowned 8th, 2nd mo. A.D. 1849, aged five years."

Eighty years ago marked the first burial on the property according to the custom of the Society of Friends, which was that members who died should be buried in their own burial grounds when such existed.

This link with the past suggests that some particulars regarding the early history of the Society of Friends in South Australia will be of interest.

First Meeting in Adelaide

One of the first references to the meeting of Friends in Adelaide is taken from a letter written on December 29, 1839, by Maria May to Maria Morris, of Bedfordshire, England, in which she states:—

"We went to a meeting on a First day (Sunday) in a large parlor of J. Barton Hack's. They had met only once a day before we (the May family) came, but decided to meet twice, which we did at 11 and 6 o'clock."

As will be seen from the inscription on the tombstone and from this letter it is customary among the Friends to substitute "First month," "First day," and so on for the usual designations of the months and days of the year. The origin of this is believed to be a refusal to countenance the usage of names, some of which were derived from heathen deities.

House Shipped From England

The Friends' meeting house in North Adelaide was shipped from England in sections, presumably by Mr. Joseph May, who lived at Fairfield, Mount Barker. The date was probably 1841 or 1842, shortly after the proclamation of the Province of South Australia. The land on which it stands originally had the full frontage to Pennington terrace; later this frontage was sold with the exception of a right-of-way, which leads to the meeting

house, which leads to the meeting house.

Friends were more numerous in and round Mount Barker than at Adelaide in the early days. On February 2, 1843, there was a meeting of members of the society held in James McGowan's school-room, Mount Barker, and the names of 36 Friends are mentioned.

Succession of Clerks

Joseph Barritt, afterward of Riversdale, Lyndoch, at this meeting announced his engagement to Mary Ann Harrison, and their marriage was solemnised on March 7, 1843. The stone at North Adelaide perpetuates the memory of his wife and son. He subsequently married Hannah May, daughter of Mr. Joseph May, mentioned above. Miss Edith Barritt, of Mitcham, and Mrs. A. Williams, of Blackwood, are surviving daughters.

At the meeting at Mount Barker in 1843 Jacob Hagen was appointed clerk (chairman or president and secretary), and among those mentioned as being present are J. Barton Hack, his wife, and six children, and Joseph May, his wife and eight children. When Jacob Hagen left South Australia, George Sanders, of Echunga, was appointed clerk, and he was succeeded by William May, of Mount Barker, on March 7, 1847. He remained in this position until 1874, when Thomas B. Robson, of Hectorville, was appointed, and he occupied the office for more than 40 years. The present clerk is Prof. J. R. Wilton, of Adelaide University.

Other burials which took place in the grounds of the meeting house on Pennington terrace were those of John Swinford Bassett, of Adelaide, Thomas Turner, of Walkerville, William Woodman Watson, of North Adelaide, Edward Coleman, of Barossa, Joseph James Mold, of Gawler Town, Mary Mitchell, Alfred Hannay Kekwick, of Adelaide, Mary Helena Perry, of Cox's Creek, Elizabeth Turner, of Walkerville, and Alfred Capper, of Unley.

Burial Ground Closed

On July 2, 1854, the meeting directed that the graves be levelled round the meeting house, and in 1855 the burial ground was closed by Adelaide Corporation.

Samuel Gurney, of England, writing in 1846, on behalf of English Friends, instructed the society in Adelaide to sell the meeting house and burial ground. This was rescinded in 1847 on condition that no expense whatever was incurred on behalf of English Friends, and that Friends in South Australia keep the premises in a proper state of repair.

In March, 1858, an acre was allotted in West Terrace Cemetery for the use of Friends. This space was later reduced in size, as it was much larger than was ever likely to be required.

Friends who died at Mount Barker were

Friends who died at Mount Barker were interred in a small private burial ground at Fairfield, Mount Barker.

In 1850 J. Barton Hack and his family left the Friends and joined the "Wesleyan Society."

There is no mention at all in the minutes of the society from 1843 to 1858 of the actual erection of the meeting house, but it has been stated that it was probably set up during the Bendigo gold rush of 1852.