

TURNPIKE TALES

by Jim Ford

"TURNPIKE TALES" #38 Part 6

(Historical items from the "Madison Bouckville Antique Week" region)

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The Madison-Bouckville area has been rich in history from the arrival of the first settlers to the present day. As an addition to the newsletter, we have decided to share some of that history in order that the patrons who travel to the Madison-Bouckville Show will have a better understanding of our truly unique region.

THE QUAKER CHURCH

The Society of Friends, or Quakers as they are commonly referred to, established a presence in the Town of Madison at an early date. Meetings were held in the homes of members until a Quaker Meeting House was built c.1835.

The Meeting House was located on what is now West Lake Rd. (County Rd. 83), near the intersection of Airport Rd. The Beers Atlas of Madison County, published in 1875, clearly shows the "Friends Meeting House and Cemetery" at the location described above. The cemetery was located just northeast of the church.

The property for the Meeting House was originally owned by Jeremiah Brownell. From a deed dated May 1, 1815, the property was sold to Zebulon Weaver and Samuel Durfee. They in turn conveyed the property to Eshaw Kenyon and Benjamin R. Knowles "for the use and benefit of the monthly meeting of the religious Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers." Zebulon Weaver was a successful farmer and itinerant Quaker preacher. He was buried in the church cemetery.

The Quaker Church was part of the Smyrna Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends. On June 5, 1878, the property was sold by the Society to DeAlton Burlingame because the building had not been used for services for many years and all of the Trustees were deceased. The selling price was \$150. The cemetery was excluded from the sale. County records indicate that ten individuals were buried in the cemetery.

In 1881 the church structure was converted into a residence by Mr. Burlingame and the surrounding area improved. The cemetery, however, was said "to remain in primitive serenity."

Meanwhile the farm next door (originally owned by Jeremiah Brownell) was sold to Mr. A.Z. Kingsley, who worked the farm for 2-3 years before selling to Mr. H.R. Babcock. Mr. Babcock eventually bought the refurbished Meeting House and used it as rental property.

In mid-September of 1897, the property was being leased and occupied by a Mr. Hyde. The Hyde family had been away for a few days when the home was destroyed by fire. With the meeting House gone, the cemetery fell into an unkempt state where nothing "but old and leaning tombstones remain to tell of a Quaker Church and Society in Madison." In the 1950's neighbors stated that the cemetery was overgrown and in poor condition, but the stones were still there, although some were tipped over.

Eventually the farm to the south of the church site and cemetery was purchased by Mr. Joe Brown. He sold building lots to Mr. Walt Clem for the purpose of erecting homes along this West Lake Rd. property. It was implied that the stones in the cemetery were fewer in number as time went by until all traces of the stones were gone and the property divided into more building lots for sale by Mr. Brown. In a listing of cemeteries in the Town of Madison, there is a statement that the stones were removed and placed in the cemetery area at Americana Village for effect. This we will see was not true.

Homes were built along this area of West Lake Rd. beginning in 1957. By 1965, eleven homes had been built, including a home on the former Meeting House site. The site of the former cemetery is indicated on survey maps as the lawn area to the right of the driveway of the third home southwest of Airport Rd. It would be the portion of the lawn closest to the road.

To clear up any confusion, we have a listing of those buried in the Quaker Cemetery, compiled from the papers of Joyce Scott at the Madison County Historical Society, copied by Douglas J. Ingalls on January 22, 1999 and proofed and corrected on July 13, 2008.

Those buried were:

Sarah Andrus: died 3-29-1850, 68 years old

Diana Benedict: died 4-9-1822, 25 years old

Joseph Head (Revolutionary War Soldier): died 12-18-1837, 76 years old

Rebecca Head: died 9-25-1838, 80 years old

Hannah Johnson: died 10-6-1848, 60 years old

Abbey Johnson: died 5-1-1828, 8 months old

Sarah Johnson: died 1-24-1850, 25 years old

Vernon Johnson: died 11-8-1827, 38 years old

Nicholas Johnson: died 4-6-1828, 11 years old

Zebulon Weaver: died 9-8-1857, 74 years old

**** It seems that burials were conducted at the property that had been purchased by the Quakers in 1815, even before the Meeting House was built c.1835.

**** When searching these names on Ancestry.com we find that eight of the ten continue to be listed as being buried in the Quaker Cemetery. Joseph Head and his wife Rebecca have information on the Find a Grave website that their bodies were reinterred in the Madison Center Cemetery.

**** When a search of the gravestones was conducted at the Americana Village Cemetery, it was found that none of the stones there match those of the Quaker Cemetery. The stones at the Americana Cemetery match names from the Woodman Cemetery, which is nearby. The story of the gravestones being placed in the Americana Village Cemetery is incorrect. At this point we do not know where the Quaker Cemetery gravestones are or if the deceased are still interred at that original cemetery site.