

Westport Monthly Meeting Newsletter

July, 2009



Vocalist Candida Rose singing "The Old Ship of Zion," at the 250th Anniversary of Paul Cuffe's Birth, June 13, 2009.
PHOTO BY Ty Gordon/The Chronicle

Clerk: Marion Athearn, 508-673-7159
Friends In Residence: Emily and David Sutton, 508-636-4963

"Our friend Paul Cuffe having informed us that he had some prospect of making a voyage to Africa, We hereby Certify that he is a member of our Society and a man whose orderly life and Careful conduct has recommended him to the esteem of his Friends. Desiring that he may experience Devine preservation in his present undertaking, we recommend him to the friendly attention and assistance of all well Disposed people where his Lot may be Cast."

Ebenezer Baker, Clerk
Westport Friends Meeting, 1810*

Ministry and Counsel Clerk: Mark Bauer, 401-228-8386
Web: www.westportquakers.org

JULY CALENDAR

- 6/28 Book Fair Tent Raising after Meeting, 11:45**
Sunday Evening Book Sorting. 7PM
1 Wed Evening Book Sorting. 7PM
5 Property Committee, 8:30
Ministry and Counsel Committee, 11:45
Sunday Evening Book Sorting. 7PM
8 Wed Evening Book Sorting. 7PM
9 Summer Conversation Series. See details
11 Book Fair, all day on Saturday! Details →
19 Monthly Meeting for Business, 11:45
21 Market Ministries
23 Summer Conversation Series. See details
25 Sandwich Quarterly Meeting at Allen's Neck

Dates to Save: NEYM Sessions at Bryant University, Smithfield, RI, August 1-6.

JULY BIRTHDAYS

- 3 Stewart Kirkaldy**
3 Gloria George-Dowd
7 Avery MacGregor
9 Greg Stone
10 Molly Little
12 Mark Bauer
13 Maggie Bauer
15 Richard Anderson
21 Christine Hodge
22 Paula Andrade
26 Melinda Foley-Marsello
28 Sara Mercer-Medeiros



Book Fair - July 11th!

Book Fair Day Details:

- | | |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 7:00 AM: | Begin moving books under tents. |
| 8:00-ish: | Food tables begin setting up. |
| 10:00 | Meeting House opens for paperbacks |
| 10:45 | Children's tables open <u>UUfor children only</u> |
| 11:00 | Official opening – Large tent |
| 11 – 3 PM | Restock tables, tidy-up tables, etc |
| 3:00-ish | Break down food serving tables |
| 3-4:00-ish | Move paperbacks from meetinghouse to tent |
| 5:00 | Crash! |

Your help is needed. Please come!

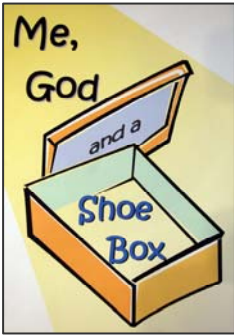
A sign-up sheet to fulfill specific tasks is posted in the Community House. Questions? Please contact any of the following Friends: Deana Chase, 508-636-8980, Greg Marsello, 401-624-9840 or Dave/Emily Sutton, 508-636-4963.

Baked Goods Table: Please contribute home baked sweets for the Book Fair! Alice Mercer-Medeiros will coordinate baked goods, so please contact Alice at 508-995-1306 or email, amnm13@comcast.net

Book Fair Wind-Down:

Book Fair Open Season doesn't officially close until 2 weeks after the sale—this year on Saturday July 25. After Book Fair Day, the community continues to come together Sundays and Wednesdays 7:00-9:00 pm to consolidate books, break down boxes, fill the dumpster with trash...and, yes, take breaks for ice cream and chat.

MONTHLY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS



Religious Education Committee was reported by Betty Ann Lee, clerk; our meeting's R & E committee will be in a Religious Ed Fair at NEYM Sessions in August featuring First Day School curriculums. Our own Gretchen Baker-Smith, creator of the curriculum series called "God, Me, and a Shoebox," will be featured at the upcoming fair. Many Westport

Friends have benefited already by the ingenious approach in which an entire lesson of readings, hands-on activities and ideas are contained in.... you guessed it....a shoe box for First Day School teachers! Note: If you have shoe boxes in good condition, please know that Gretchen is looking for more! (Graphic design as shown, by Betty Ann Lee)

As many Friends already know, Joe Bossom will relocate to live with his family for a year in Costa Rica. Meeting approved a sojourning letter of introduction which will be sent to Monteverde Friends Meeting, in Monteverde, Puntarenas, Costa Rica. Joe and his wife, Mika and their daughters Penny and Isabelle will leave in time for the new school year that begins in August. Our meeting approved one additional stipulation, however, that Joe and his family *must* return to our community in one year's time!

Marion Athearn, Clerk of Meeting, will be traveling in China for several weeks and will not be here for July's business meeting. Friends agreed that Betty Ann Lee would serve as interim Clerk of Meeting while Marion is away.

Nominating Committee was reported by Gretchen Baker-Smith. NomCom is hard at work creating a slate of officers and committees for the Meeting to consider for the coming year which begins in September.

Ministry and Counsel was reported by Dave Sutton. The committee proposed and Meeting approved that a series of pot-luck dinners in homes would be held beginning on September 13th. Following the meal and fellowship, a focused discussion would highlight sections of our Meeting's State of Society Report. More details will be announced soon. Please read important letter regarding this proposal on page four.

Finance Committee reported in writing to the Clerk that while income from invested funds are down slightly from the year before, major expenses for the same period were down significantly too, which helps our bottom line. In short, we're good, thus far!

Property Committee was reported by its clerk, Buddy Baker-Smith. The committee especially wishes to acknowledge the excellent grounds keeping work by Emily Sutton. Emily spent countless hours fielding calls and preparing the Cuffe grave plot and Cuffe Memorial

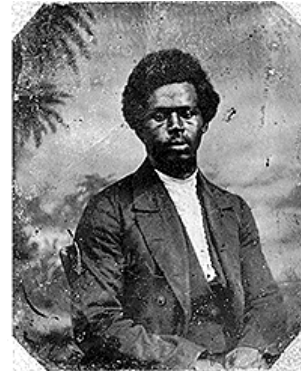
in the front of the meetinghouse in preparation for the Celebration and Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of Paul Cuffe's birth. Thank you Emily!

In addition, Property Committee is especially grateful for the work of Dave and Emily Sutton, our Friends In Residence, for their hard work during the "book lugging-sorting-tent raising- call fielding Book Fair "season" upon us! Thank you! All meeting members are reminded that your help is also needed...in abundance... during these next few weeks!

The Summer Conversations series will feature educational commentator Wick Sloane on July 9, builder/author John Abrams on July 23, and author Noreen Hertzfeld on August 6. The series is sponsored by Dartmouth, Allen's Neck, New Bedford and Westport Monthly Meetings. Additional sponsors include Baker Books, and the Dartmouth Community Action Network. The Conversations are held at the Apponagansett Friends Meetinghouse on Russell's Mills Road in Dartmouth.

Admission is free and open to the public. Donations to support the series and the Apponagansett Meeting House's Historic Trust are always appreciated.

For more information contact Kevin Kertscher at (508) 999-1009.



250th Anniversary-Celebration of Paul Cuffe's Birth Saturday, June 13, 2009, Westport Friends Meeting

((The following article is adapted from an original story by Peggy Aulisio, contributing writer to the Standard Times, June 14, 2009)

Capt. Paul Cuffe was remembered for his quiet courage and his trailblazing as a man of color at a gathering honoring his 250th anniversary Saturday at the Quaker Meetinghouse.

The building was filled to capacity with people who came from all over to celebrate the life of the man whom many in town consider its most illustrious citizen." Paul Cuffe placed the country on the road to civil rights," said Lee Blake, a Cuffe descendant and president of the New Bedford Historical Society. The inscription on his monument outside the meetinghouse describes Cuffe as

a "patriot, navigator, educator, philanthropist, friend ... a noble character."

Along with being a ship builder and whaling merchant, Cuffe was a farmer who owned 140 acres on the Westport River — although back then the town was part of Dartmouth.



Dr. Stewart Kirkaldy pointed out that Cuffe, a Quaker, was on the committee that oversaw the building of the Quaker Meetinghouse in 1813. He called Cuffe "an active leader of the Quaker community. One of 10 children, Cuffe was half African-American and half Native American. His wife, Alice Pequit, was Native American. Cuffe built the first integrated school in the United States. He brought a ship with African-Americans to Sierra Leone where he hoped they could resettle in a life free from slavery.

"He overcame barriers we can barely imagine today," Kirkaldy said, adding that he did it "without rancor" and in keeping with the teachings of Quaker founder George Fox. "He spoke truth to power to a degree that few others have done," Kirkaldy said.

George Salvador, who wrote a book about Paul Cuffe, was among those reading passages from his writings. A former history teacher in Westport, Salvador talked about Cuffe's meeting with president James Madison in 1812 after his ship was captured by the British. Salvador also talked about the quiet courage Cuffe showed when he was asked to give up his seat in a stagecoach on the way home but didn't, although he later offered it to a woman passenger.

"What we have tried to do today is to capture the man, the time and the spirit," said another Cuffe descendant, Carl Cruz, who is active in the New Bedford Historical Society and Whaling Museum.

Candida Rose led the singing of two songs, including "Lift Every Voice." And children from Providence's Paul Cuffee School read a



poem written by one of the students, Ayanna Rowe (child on steps of meetinghouse). The school spells Cuffee with two e's as it is sometimes done.

David Burnham, founder of the charter school, said Cuffe had a "fervent desire to do what is good. May we all have such dreams and live up to Paul Cuffe's expectations for all of us. "Outside afterward, everyone gathered around the Cuffe monument where they laid flowers and sang several songs. They also laid flowers at Cuffe family graves behind the Meetinghouse.

Calling it a "wonderful tribute," Cruz said, "I'm elated. It's so nice that the community has come out in the numbers they did today. "Blake said that during her time as president, the New Bedford Historical Society has "endeavored to recognize many of the people of color from the region." She said Cuffe was among those who hadn't received the recognition he deserved. But she said, today, interest is growing in the achievements of people of color and the oversight is being corrected.

The Historical Society will be holding an all day symposium on Cuffe at the Whaling Museum on Oct. 3.



Cuffe descendants at Paul Cuffe Memorial, June 13, 2009

Credits

* Lead quote from A Brief History of the Westport Monthly Meeting of Friends, by Jean Kennison, with contributions by Eleanor S. Tripp, published 1987.

Paul Cuffe print, (page 2) courtesy of Mystic Seaport, www.mysticseaport.org

Image at Cuffe gravesite, photo of Ayanna Rowe and Cuffe descendants standing at Cuffe Memorial by Ty Gordon/The Chronicle

Kevin Lee, editor | 508-994-1638
Kevin@jymretreats.org

(See next page)

Letter from Ministry and Counsel to Monthly Meeting for Business:

M&C has continued to consider how to carry on the work of this year's State of Society report. As reported earlier to Meeting for Business, M&C has been considering various ways to continue the work begun when our meeting members identified several areas of spiritual importance to us, which were included in section III of our report.

We reiterate several of these queries here:

"We recognize the remarkable, sustaining work of our committees, yet we are also mindful that we in Quaker communities are notable for our openness and seemingly limitless patience in waiting on the Spirit. How, then, do we balance this openness and patience with the realities of mission, vision, and resources that we need to survive as a community? When do our openness and patience actually do a disservice to our spiritual growth, our community, and our Spirit-led work in the wider world?"

"Ministry & Counsel Committee, and our entire community, have labored mightily over the question of recording ministers. Remarkably, this laboring has brought us closer together rather than driven us apart. We remain in discernment and know that we are not yet at clarity, and we struggle to determine the best way to move forward. How can we support our members most deeply affected by this issue—not only those whose names have been put forward for recording, but also those who are so strongly, though often silently, moved by this issue?"

"Perhaps one of our most striking changes has been the wonderful growth of our youth membership, and our response to their needs. Yet do we also do enough to reach out to and support our adults?"

"How should we balance our craving for worship out of the silence with the desire for enlivening our worship again with music? And similarly, how should we balance the "joyful noise unto the Lord" of our young members with the craving of others for quiet worship?"

"As individuals, we try to balance our need and desire to give of ourselves, both to our worship community and to the wider world, with the need not to spend our energy into a downward cycle of frustration, exhaustion, and sometimes guilt. How can we support each other individually through this lifelong and very human dilemma?"

We propose the following as-yet unfinished plan for feedback and elaboration by Meeting for Business. We propose that we hold a series of monthly meal and discussion sessions, typically in the evening and typically at a member's house. These would be pot luck meals followed by a discussion facilitated by one or more M&C members. Our meeting members who are parents of small children tell us that they are interested in attending and will arrange child care on their own; they think that a relatively early starting time of about 5:30 would be optimal. The specific discussion topics will grow out of the above offerings from our meeting members, but have not been finalized yet. Similarly, whether there is one discussion group each month or more depends on how many will attend (some homes will accommodate a larger number of visitors than others). We propose that these would begin in September.

Note that this is one way in which we can respond to the request of Meeting for Business to develop a manner in which the wider meeting community could be brought into discernment around the question of whether to continue recording ministers, which is one of the areas above.

We welcome the feedback and suggestions, both content-wise and logistical, from the wider meeting community.

Mark Bauer, Clerk of Ministry and Counsel Committee
(Approved at M and C, 6.7.09)