

Memorial Minutes

2005

**NEW ENGLAND YEARLY
MEETING *of* FRIENDS**

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Thelma Wright Babbitt

Thelma Wright Babbitt, 97, died on February 18, 2004, in Hancock, NH. She was born in Natick, MA, on October 9, 1906, daughter of George and Bertha Wright. She married Rowell Chickering, and her son, Arthur, was born in 1927.

Thelma and Rowell divorced and in 1945, she married George Babbitt. They lived in Cambridge, MA, where she was active in the League of Women Voters. They came frequently to George's old farmhouse, Woodlands, in Hancock, NH.

When her husband died of cancer in 1951, Thelma began work for the American Friends Service Committee. She served in many capacities through 1969: The Philadelphia Housing Opportunities Program, the Midwest and National Job Opportunities Program, in Mexico, at the Quaker United Nations Office, and as fundraiser for New England AFSC.

During the 1950s, under Arkansas Governor Faubus' administration, violent school desegregation conflicts erupted continuously. As an AFSC staff member, Thelma was sent to Little Rock in 1957 and coordinated efforts for peaceful resolution with the Arkansas Council on Human Relations. She worked on a variety of interracial programs, including, in 1959-60, five conferences on "Community Unity," designed to strengthen ties between the black and white communities. In a reflection on her experiences she queried, "What in the world can a New England Yankee do to help a very troubled city like Little Rock?" Deciding that it was a rare opportunity to "see what love can do," she found that she had "...learned a valuable lesson: even in the most hostile situations there are courageous people if one seeks them out and helps them see ways they can overcome fear and hatred."

Following her retirement to Hancock, NH, she turned her considerable talents, copious energy, and social concern to environmental issues. She started the Sierra Club chapter in southern New Hampshire, and she became a member of the board that created the Harris Center for Environmental Education in Hancock, remaining an active contributor to the Center, on and off the board, through 2003.

A long-time Methodist, Thelma became a member of Germantown Meeting in Philadelphia in 1956 and transferred her membership to Monadnock Monthly Meeting in 1964, where she was active in peace and social concerns and environmental concerns.

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Throughout her years, her way of life, reflecting simplicity, integrity, and honesty, matched her principles and convictions.

She served New England Yearly Meeting on the Finance; Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas; and Right Sharing of World Resources Committees. She was a beacon of inspiration, integrity, and commitment for her extended family and for all who have known her.

Thelma is survived by her son, Arthur Chickering, of East Montpelier, VT, four grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

—MONADNOCK MONTHLY MEETING, NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING

Margaret Abbie Cates

Margaret was born on September 30, 1913 in East Vassalboro, ME, the third child in what was to become a family with twelve children; she died Monday, November 4, 2002 at Maine General Hospital in Augusta, at the age of 89.

Her education started in East Vassalboro grade schools, followed by high school years at Coburn Classical Institute and Oak Grove Seminary. Two years at Farmington Normal School certified her for her first teaching job at the one-room Perley School in Vassalboro, where her mother had taught many years before.

She went on to teach in Winslow, ME; Haverford Friends School in PA; and the Lincoln School in Providence, RI. She was a remedial reading instructor in Bedford Hills, NY, and Curriculum Coordinator in Chelmsford, MA. She ended her career as a third grade teacher in Weston, Massachusetts. Throughout her teaching years, she continued her education at Columbia and Boston Universities, earning her bachelors and masters degrees, a graduate certificate, and completing almost all the course work needed for a Ph.D. in education.

During the early 1940s, she was one of the prime movers in summer market gardening and poultry projects on the Cates farm, helping earn money for the education of family members. She earned the nickname "Muscle Woman" because of her energy and hard work on the farm.

This focus on family stayed with her after retiring from teaching in 1980. Although she had no children of her own, she was almost a mother figure to all younger family members. This role was celebrated when the family reunion in 1988 was designated as "Aunt Margaret Day," with gifts and tributes from three generations of Cates descendants. In retirement years, she also became active in

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the Vassalboro Historical Society, Vassalboro Grange, and served on the Vassalboro Library Committee.

Margaret was a life-long member of the Vassalboro Friends Meeting, where she often functioned as a mentor to others. She maintained a strong, active involvement in New England Yearly Meeting over many years and in a variety of capacities, including lengthy service on the Board of Directors of Beacon Hill Friends House in Boston. She also presided as Clerk of the Permanent Board and was a delegate to the Friends World Conference in London, England in 1952. She was a representative to the Friends United Meeting as well as the Friends General Conference, and served on the Moses Brown and Lincoln School Committees.

Margaret's appearance in the video, *Rufus Jones: A Luminous Life*, shows the spiritual radiance which was an inspiration to family and Friends. Margaret was a strong, optimistic, spiritual presence and is greatly missed.

—VASSALBORO MONTHLY MEETING, VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING

Bronson P. Clark

Bronson Clark was a beloved family man, Quaker leader, anti-war activist and successful businessman who dedicated his life to peace and justice in every arena. Born in Cleveland Heights, OH, Bronson graduated from Antioch College and married Eleanor Meanor in 1941. Through work with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, he became a conscientious objector, protested compulsory conscription in World War II, and was imprisoned for his beliefs.

In his memoir, *Not by Might*, Bronson quotes a letter he wrote from prison in 1944 to his infant daughter Mallory, about his hope for her future: "I see a world of constant strife and conflict. Although it will be a much different world than we know now, there will be great need for those who preach love and nonviolence...We must fight against bitterness and hatred toward any man, and must always be ready to examine our own lives for evil, and we must always maintain a sensitive conscience toward the misery and suffering of our fellow man." After release from prison, Bronson joined the American Friends Service Committee Ambulance Unit in China. At the end of the war, President Truman granted him a full pardon, restoring all of his civil rights.

After several other AFSC assignments, he and Eleanor and their growing family moved to Oberlin, OH, where until 1961 he ran a

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successful public housing building company. From Ohio, Bronson returned to service with the AFSC in Morocco and Algeria, assisting refugees fleeing the Algerian War. Returning from Africa, he became Vice-President of Gilford Instrument Laboratories, a company that developed biomedical instruments for hospitals and research use.

From 1968 to 1974, during the years of growing US involvement in the Vietnam conflict, Bronson served as Executive Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, headquartered in Philadelphia, PA. In this service, he spoke and travelled extensively, promoting humanitarian aid projects and activities against the war. These travels ultimately included a peacekeeping mission to Hanoi in 1973. During his time as AFSC Executive Secretary, he was also elected to the Council on Foreign Affairs and he led a Quaker delegation to the White House in 1969 to meet with Henry Kissinger.

Bronson was an avid sailor and always loved the sea. Upon retiring from the AFSC in 1974, he and Eleanor followed their love of sailing and moved to Vinalhaven, ME. There he helped local fisherman on the island start up a cooperative fast-freezing operation called Fox Island Fisheries. The couple moved to Rockport, ME in 1980 and transferred their memberships from Germantown Friends Meeting to Midcoast Friends Meeting in 1984. Bronson served on the Board of Directors of Moss Tents and was a founding member of the Midcoast Forum on Foreign Affairs, an organization that encourages political education and debate.

Following Eleanor's death in 1987, Bronson reconnected with Harriet Warner of Chapel Hill, NC, a long-time family friend. Bronson and Hattie were married in 1989. In the years that Bronson and Hattie had together, spending part of each year in ME and part in NC became the norm, visiting children and grandchildren en route. He was always very proud of his four daughters—Mallory, Jennifer, Melissa, and Alison—and of their accomplishments. Bronson was a regular seasonal member of Midcoast Meeting. During the last years of his deepening illness, Hattie was a loving, faithful caregiver, keeping in close touch with a wide circle of Bronson's family and friends. Bronson Clark will be remembered by all who were fortunate enough to know him. He was a man of measure and compassion. The meeting will miss him sorely.

—MIDCOAST MONTHLY MEETING, VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING

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Cecilia Bowerman Fuglister

"Blest be the tie that binds / Our hearts in Christian love..." The message of this hymn, her favorite, reflects the life of Cecelia Fuglister. A lifelong Quaker, she was born on June 16, 1906, in her family homestead in Falmouth, MA, and died at the age of 98 on January 14, 2005, at Harborside Healthcare, also in Falmouth.

Cecelia was educated early on in a simple village school, next at the local high school where she was valedictorian, followed by Earlham College, where she was awarded a degree in mathematics, and later, at Columbia University, a degree in library science. Trained by her father, who was himself a librarian of West Falmouth Library for 47 years, and degree in hand, she served as Falmouth Town Librarian for a decade until 1941. Cecelia leaves her three children: Frederick J. "Eric" Fuglister of Cleveland, Elisabeth "Betsy" Stewart of San Diego, and Charles Kurt Fuglister of Woods Hole, along with three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the fortune of West Falmouth Meeting had been severely affected by movement of population to the west and to the cities. In 1902, a minister, Elam Henderson, trained in religious education at Earlham College, came to West Falmouth. As a child growing up, Cecelia was beneficiary of a new and dynamic religious experience. For two decades, the meeting flourished and surged in attendance, as a spiritual renewal occurred through a programmed structure of worship. Local Quakers also engaged in considerable mission outreach, especially in Jamaica. Cecelia engaged fully in the social and religious activities, including trips to quarterly meeting by train or in some instances by costal steamer. It was an exciting period for a Quaker child growing up into responsible adulthood. She had happy memories of that time and enthusiastically became a part of a strong revival of activity and purpose in the meeting.

However, there came a slowing of the meeting's success in the 1920s when there was no longer a regular minister and numbers of meetings were reduced primarily to summer sessions. For some 30 years, Cecelia helped to arrange what became well-attended summer programs, with interesting professors and accomplished ministers filling the pulpit. While that period included generous support of New England Yearly Meeting, peace activities, and other good works, it lacked growth and stability.

By the 1960s, after membership and programs had declined, Cecelia was on hand to welcome a whole new generation of Quakers

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and would-be Quakers. She assisted by gently helping the handful of remaining members turn the meeting back to a traditional unprogrammed form and opened the meeting year-round, all this, while continuing to involve herself enthusiastically in numerous community affairs. She saw to the upkeep of the buildings, maintained the records, served as treasurer, and was the face of the meeting to the public. She was the primary link to the future for Friends in the area.

In 1981, as Cecelia was about to retire as meeting Treasurer, the West Falmouth Friends Meeting held a special gathering, to which the public was invited, to honor her long and gifted service to the meeting and the community. As we have now moved into the 21st century, the present thriving meeting is aware of and grateful for the lifelong steady hand of Cecelia Bowerman Fuglister. Quoting the fourth verse of her favorite hymn, "When we are called to part / It gives us inward pain / But we shall still be joined in heart / And hope to meet again."

—WEST FALMOUTH PREPARATIVE MEETING, SANDWICH MONTHLY MEETING, SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING

Ruth McLaughlin Heath

Emily Dickinson's poem, "I dwell in possibility" was known as one of Ruth's favorites. For many who witnessed with Ruth during anti-war rallies, peace vigils, and related social justice causes over a forty-year span, Dickinson's words also described Ruth's passion for speaking truth, taking action and for her unwavering, upbeat commitment to using dialogue and public witness for the betterment of all. She died January 5, 2003, in a retirement home in Media, PA. She was 91.

Ruth McLaughlin Heath moved to Westport, MA, in 1962 and was a long-time member of North Dartmouth Monthly Meeting. During the last decade of her life, when she was in her eighties, Ruth continued her activism on many fronts as a member of Westport Monthly Meeting. Those who had the opportunity to offer Ruth a ride to public forums, vigils, or to meeting for worship were greeted first by her friendly smile and warm heart. She had a ready laugh and sense of humor, even laughing at herself sometimes. Ride sharing usually prompted Ruth to launch into conversation in which she sought out other points of view in the hope of spirited dialogue and debate. When discussing topics she felt passionate about, Ruth was never prone to shyness or retirement. If the destination was to

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a public forum, Ruth could be expected to first listen patiently, then rise, and in a voice that was both gracious and always to the point, speak her mind.

A tireless activist within the “jobs with peace” and “no nukes” initiatives of the late seventies and early eighties, she was also an outspoken opponent of the Pentagon’s “GWEN” towers being constructed across southeastern New England in the 1980s. Bill Maddocks, an experienced social activist, recalled:

“Working alongside Ruth put us in touch with not only Quakers, but with politicians, Unitarians, and Catholics alike. Ruth knew the gravity of the peace and disarmament issues we faced and always seemed better read and more broadly knowledgeable than most of us. But during our many actions and meetings, I never heard Ruth utter an angry or vengeful word. Her message was the same as her presence, one of peace through dialogue, compassion for all human beings and oneness with the creator...”

A Friend, then new to Quakerism, recalled one of his earliest experiences of being eldered when Ruth took him aside at Quarterly Meeting saying, “I hope that you will soon find employment more befitting a Friend.”

Ruth loved her old farmhouse and the surrounding fields above the Westport River and wrote many poems about them. She enjoyed gardening and entertaining there, welcoming newcomers, youth organizations, garden clubs, and environmental groups to explore and share her property. Visitors of all ages and backgrounds experienced a sense of timeless calm and peacefulness while walking among the flowerbeds and along the old stone wall that led down to the river. Many especially enjoyed taking a turn on Ruth’s old “barn swing” that was mounted from the rafters. Still others fondly remembered sitting with Ruth over tea in her living room discussing the day’s events and where to take action next. Through her social witness and inquisitive, friendly manner, Ruth McLaughlin Heath lived life fully and inspired others of various faith traditions and backgrounds to speak their truth, believing that uplifting all of humankind was always a possibility.

She served NEYM on the Archives & Historicals Record Committee and represented the Yearly Meeting on the American Friends Service Committee Board.

—WESTPORT MONTHLY MEETING, SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING

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Ruth Stanton Kaltenbach

Ruth Kaltenbach, a beloved member of Midcoast Meeting, died on January 2, 2004, in Reading, MA. Ruth was born into a Quaker family on July 14, 1915, at Westtown, PA. Her father, Elwood Dean Stanton, and her mother, Esther Sidney Fawcett, were from Quaker families who had come to this country in the 1600s. Ruth attended the University of Pennsylvania and graduated with Honors in Mathematics in the first class of the College of Liberal Arts for Women at the University.

In 1941, Ruth married John Kaltenbach. They lived for nine years in Chester County, PA, farming and raising their family. She bore eight children between 1942 and 1959. The years between 1950 and 1963 were spent in Guilford, CT, and in Rindge, NH, where they helped start The Meeting School. At a time when disabled children were seldom seen or even mentioned, Ruth and John included their son Andrew in all family activities. During these years, Ruth taught herself to weave. She continued to find contentment and an outlet for her creativity in this skill throughout her life.

In 1963, Ruth and John moved back to Pennsylvania where they had a nursery and a shop. It was the right time for her to pursue her love of gardening and horticulture. In 1983 when Ruth was 69 years old and John began to have health problems, they retired to Maine where they bought an old farmhouse in Cushing and attended Midcoast Meeting. John died in 1984. Following his death, Ruth focused her energy on the Coastal Workshop, an agency in Camden that works with retarded adults.

Ruth's ten years with Midcoast Meeting occurred during a period of growth and change and she was a devoted member. She transferred her membership to Midcoast in 1984. With her Quaker background, Ruth knew the importance of participation in all aspects of the meeting. During those years, she served at various times as Recorder, Recording Clerk, and was on Ministry & Council and Hospitality Committees.

Ruth had a calm spirit and an integrity that were "of the earth." She never had a harsh word to say about anyone and was philosophical in a simple and direct way. She witnessed to the Truth. Her comfortable kitchen was central in her life and her wonderful breads, crackers, desserts and wholesome foods were always a welcome contribution to any Quaker gathering.

Ruth left Cushing in 1993 to live near Patience, her youngest

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daughter, in Pennsylvania and to be within walking distance of her family. In 1998, she was no longer able to live alone and moved to Reading, MA, where she lived for five years at Daniel's House. This small nursing facility was across the street from the library where her daughter Rachel worked and Rachel was able to visit Ruth every day.

Ruth had a beautiful smile that lit up her face. She died at the age of 88 years and is survived today by 7 children, 17 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

—MIDCOAST MONTHLY MEETING, VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING

John S. Taylor

John S. Taylor was born in Wilton, ME, and died in Rockport, ME. He loved Maine in all of its accents: mountains, lakes, fields, hills, and streams. During his long life, John learned many skills, including education, farming, the implement business, town management, music (as player, listener, and singer), TV repair, Treasurer of New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (1968-1972), and Clerk of North Fairfield Monthly Meeting (1980-1995). He was also a ham radio operator. No matter what work he was doing, John was always a scholar: reading, learning, and incorporating the knowledge into the tasks that lay before him.

John's life included concerns for education, other people, and family life. He studied at Earlham College and the University of Maine in Orono. During World War II, he was a conscientious objector, where he built a strong liaison with US Park Service personnel and campers. During his CO service in Gatlinburg, TN, he became an assistant to the doctor in the infirmary, where he treated serious infections. One man needed daily treatments, which extended over sufficient time that he and John read Gilbert & Sullivan librettos, which they later performed together.

He supported his wife, Lelia, in her ministry to Friends: in Maine, throughout New England, and in Friends United Meeting, as well as on the Planning Committee for the 1967 Friends World Conference. He made many personal sacrifices so that his daughter, Kathleen, could be a part of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage to England, and for his son, Stephen, to participate in Friends' activities. He was a conscientious worker, a dedicated Friend, and a patient teacher. In all of these relationships and activities, John delighted people with his wit and joy in living. God gave John a quick, creative, and healing imagination for solving the problems which arose at work and

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elsewhere.

John's acceptance of Jesus as his Lord and Savior gave him a center and a perspective that allowed him a certainty that there would always be needs and demands. His task wasn't to fix everything, only the things he was responsible for, and to help others as time and energy allowed. He was a master gardener in God's garden: he nourished himself as he guided others toward a fuller potential, caring about all of God's creatures and intuitively tending to plants and flowers, which abundantly produced. He accepted life in its fullness, often kept his own counsel, but was grateful for assistance when it was offered.

John is survived by his wife, Lelia (Marsteller) Taylor of Rockland, ME; his son Stephen Taylor and wife Valerie and grandsons Matthew and Geoffry of Freeport, ME, his daughter Kathleen Nace and her husband Roger of Mesa, AZ, and grandson Stephen Sherwood and his wife Sara and great granddaughter Ripley Mae of Fort Collins, CO; and by John's sister, Mary.

—NORTH FAIRFIELD MONTHLY MEETING, VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING

Jean Anderson Kennison

No written minute can adequately convey Jean Kennison's contributions to our spiritual community. She served Westport Monthly Meeting as recorded minister, treasurer, clerk, newsletter writer, long-time First Day School teacher, soup kitchen worker, and purveyor of green bean casseroles at potlucks. From the time she and Larry joined our meeting in December, 1970, through his sickness and death in December, 1991, and on until the time of her own death this past year, she faithfully attended business meetings at Sandwich Quarterly Meeting and represented us at Yearly Meeting on almost every committee: Ministry & Counsel, Permanent Board, Finance, Christian Education, Equalization, Nominating, Board of Managers, Prejudice and Poverty, New England Friends Home, United Society of Friends Women and Student Loan. In all her service, Jean was wise in her advice and cautious in her decisions, not willing to outrun her Guide.

When new families walked through the door, Jean didn't see the adults as potential First Day School teachers or committee members. She saw parents who needed to sit in meeting for worship and renew themselves while she saw to nurturing our children. At business meeting Jean took careful notes in order to prepare our

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monthly newsletter, which in her hands also became a form of witness and outreach. Jean was a daughter of the Depression in many ways, and this served our finance committee well. Her mathematical mind kept details in their proper places. When it came to financial matters however, Jean lived her life in accordance with her deep belief that if God is calling us to do something, the money will be provided.

Beyond her formal roles in our meeting, Jean was a wise and trusted elder. Many of us spoke with her individually about our spiritual journeys, our glimmerings of new leadings, or about some family or Friends' committee difficulty we were facing. She was a source of compassion and affirmation, particularly to the more tentative amongst us. Her grounded counsel is deeply missed.

Jean was one who listened; when she did speak in meeting for worship, her messages confirmed that the Spirit was speaking through her. During worship, one could feel the strength of her prayer and ministry. We all hold special personal memories of how Jean's ministry touched us. However, one in particular stands out for all of us. Her recital from memory of "The Innkeeper's Wife" at our Christmas Eve worship was much anticipated and savored.

Like her mother, who was a church organist, Jean loved music, and rarely missed our meeting's 20 minutes of singing before worship every First Day. She especially loved Christmas carols. She considered deeply Friends' process of altering words to some of the old hymns, valuing both the original meanings as well as continuing revelation. Here, again, she was a model to us of remaining open to change.

She and Larry were pillars of our book sale, our only annual fund-raiser. The occasion also served her family as a yearly reunion¹ as several of their children became regular book sale helpers. In 2003, with failing eyesight and a magnifying glass, Jean sorted and priced at least half of the approximately 20,000 books we sold. Jean also served as the book sale treasurer, and we all awaited her report of the first day's receipts, which she would announce after meeting for worship.

As Jean lived so she faced her death, which came a few weeks after she was diagnosed with lung cancer. She undertook the process with incredible integrity and a sense of wholeness. She said that she'd come to perceive that "spirituality isn't something lofty or separate from life. It's an everyday thing—it's all around." She realized this seamlessness in her own life, receiving others easily and

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speaking openly about her coming death.

On August 8, 2004, at 7:00 in the evening, closely held by her family, a web of Westport Meeting and more distant F/friends, Jean passed away. Her transition from life in this world was as much a ministry to us as those gifts for which she had been recorded so many years before.

—WESTPORT MONTHLY MEETING, SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING