Friends Southwestern Burial Ground

Central Philadelphia

Monthly Meeting of Friends

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**Final Report to Friends Foundation for the Aging**

**Friends Memorial Garden**

August 28, 2020

The primary goal of the Friends Memorial Garden project was to create a place of repose and respite for the many visitors who visit the burial grounds each day. Most of these visitors have friends or loved ones interred on the grounds, but local neighbors and other persons in the area who are seeking open space and a chance to be out in nature also use the property on a regular basis. Until now, there has been no place for visitors to sit and grieve, or simply enjoy the peaceful beauty of this quiet historic precinct. The creation of Friends Memorial Garden satisfies this most important need.

For Quakers. the garden also was meant to provide Friends with simple alternatives for their own and their family’s burials, namely a place to spread ashes (cremains), a brick walkway for adding names on granite memorial stones, and a seating circle for small gatherings and meetings for worship.

Among the burial ground’s regular visitors are the elderly and persons with physical handicaps. Therefore, close-by parking spaces with hard surfaces are needed, as well as pathways within the garden that are wheelchair accessible. The cost of constructing such specialized access provisions are substantial. The grant we received from Friends Foundation for the Aging was critical in responding to these needs.

With the recent completion of the memorial garden, the goals of the overall project and the objectives for the use of the Foundation’s grant funds have been met. Paving surfaces that meet the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act have been installed throughout the garden.

With regard to diversity, equity and inclusion, the subcommittee administering the construction of the garden conducted an extensive search to find and include minority-owned construction firms to bid on the project, but were not able to find any in the area. However, the firm eventually chosen, Think Green LLC, employed mostly contract labor from Guatemala to execute the work. In a wider sense, the burial ground always has served persons of all races and ethic backgrounds. In the last five years especially, over one thousand persons of Muslim belief have been buried there, almost all nonwhite, and many of foreign origin.

With regard to schedule, the work was meant to begin April 1, 2020, and to be completed by Memorial Day. Due to the pandemic and temporary US government exclusion of immigrant contract labor, the project started late and finished in early August.

A summary of the finances for the project is as follows:

Target per FFA grant application Actual final

COSTS:

Construction $ 175,000 $ 146,000

Paving stones - $ 9,000

Total $ 175,000 $ 155,000

Source of funds:

Burial ground funds: $ 50,000 $ 50,000

Quaker foundations: $ 70,000 $ 55,000

Quaker meetings: $ 20,000 $ 10,000

Families and individuals: $ 25,000 $ 35,500 \*

Memorial stone purchases: $ 10,000 $ 4,500 \*\_

Total $ 175,000 $ 155,000

As shown, the projected and final costs and funding sources varied in certain areas. In July, 2019, construction bids were received, the lowest bid being $173,000. By then, $153,000 had been raised. It was clear that reaching the fundraising target of $175.000 would require identifying new sources of support plus indefinite schedule delays. After thorough consultation, the construction subcommittee decided to enter a value engineering (cost cutting) process with the low bidder, to lower the construction cost to the $155,000 amount in hand. The contractor and the construction subcommittee together were successful in finding items in the work, as designed, that could be reduced to meet a new construction contract amount of $146,000, while maintaining the essential high quality of the project. For example, the number of benches around the oval were reduced, and some less expensive paving and edge materials were substituted. Also, the burial ground agreed to pay directly an additional $9,000 for the memorial stones, totaling the required maximum, $155,000.

* These two numbers are substantially accurate in total, but some individual and family donors also received memorial stones, so the separation of categories is somewhat misleading. Also, the sale of memorial stones continued beyond July, 2019, and will go on indefinitely, with proceeds going to general burial ground operations, so the actual total sales of stones may vary slightly.



