

Transcriptions from the Records of the Westport Monthly Meetings Relating to Paul Cuffe¹

Requesting and being received into membership in the society:

1808 2nd month. Inform that Paul Cuffe requests to come under the care of friends, We therefore appoint Jeremiah Austen, Prince Wing, and Abner Potter to visit him and take a solid opportunity with him in order to discover the motive and sincerity of his request and fitness to become a member of our Society and report to next meeting. P. 111.

1808 4th month. The committee in the case of Paul Cuffe's request reported that they have had several opportunities with him and he appeared to them to be sincere in what he has requested, therefore after considering thereon we do with the concurrence of the Women's meeting receive the said Paul Cuffe under our care as a member of the society, of which Prince Wing is to inform him. P. 114

Receiving support from the Society for his first voyage to Africa:

1810 9th month. Our friend Paul Cuffe informs this meeting that he had thoughts of making a voyage or visit to Africa if his friends had unity with his prospect – We therefore appoint John Mosher, Abner Potter, Benjamin Davol, Philip Dunham, Joseph Tripp and Resolved Howland to advise with Paul in the subject and report to next monthly meeting. P. 143

1810 10th month. The committee to advise with Paul Cuffe respecting his prospect of making a voyage to Africa report that they had attended to their appointment and left him at liberty to pursue his prospect as way may open, and presented a few lines as a letter of recommendation which being read was approved herein and signed by the Clerk and is as followeth—

From the Monthly Meeting of the religious society of friends called Quakers, held in Westport in the State of Massachusetts, United States of America the 13th day of the 10th month, 1810:

Our friend Paul Cuffe having informed us that he has 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 divine 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. Signed by direction and on behalf of said meeting. Ebenezer Baker, Clerk

¹ Westport Monthly Meeting, Men's Minutes, 3-17-1797 to 3-17-1836. Viewed at the Special Collections Section of the W. E. B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA

Evaluating the sincerity and fitness of a new applicant for membership in the Society

1812 9th month. Westport meeting informed that Humphry Eldredge requested to be admitted a member of our Society, after considering thereon, we appoint David Tripp, Paul Cuffe and Prince Wing to visit him and endeavor to enquire into his sincerity and fitness to become a member and report to a future meeting. P. 168

1812 11th month. The committee that was appointed to visit Humphrey Eldridge reported that they believe him to be convinced of friend's principles and his endeavoring to support them after considering thereon this meeting received him as a member of our Society and Jeremiah Austin is appointed to inform him thereof. P. 168 (repeated)

Deciding upon the need for a new meeting house and arranging for its construction:

1813 1st month. The situation of this meeting house coming before us at this time, after Prince Wing, Ebenezer Baker and Paul Cuffe to take it into consideration and see what alteration would be best reflecting it and estimate the cost and report to next monthly meeting. P. 170

1813 2nd month. The committee to view and examine the old meeting house in order to ascertain whether it may be best to repair it or build a new one, report in favor of building a new house to take down the high part of the house and let the lower part stand to hold meetings in while the new house is in building the new house to be forty-five feet by thirty with galerys with sliders for the accomodations of mens and womens meetings to be held spate much in the form meeting houses are generally built with a portch fourteen feet by ten. The committee find that a new house of the above description can be got built for twelve hundred dollars with working in what stuff that may be utilizable from it out of that part taking down. After deliberate consideration thereon we unite therewith. Paul Cuffe and Ebenezer Baker is appointed to have the care of cutting some of the principle xxxxxx for the meeting house. We appointed Isaac Peckham, Joseph Tripp, Samuel Hewitt, Ebenezer Baker and Charles Baker to put out subscriptions for the purpose of building a new meeting house.

1813 4th month. Representatives that were appointed to the Quarterly meeting reported that the Quarterly meeting united with the proposition that this meeting sent to them respecting building a new meeting house and ordered their treasurer to pay this meeting four hundred dollars when the building is completed. P. 172

This meeting concludes to build a new meeting house forty-five feet by thirty with a portch fourteen feet by ten, and we appointed Paul Cuffe, Ebenezer Baker, Prince Wing, Abner Potter, Joseph Tripp, George Brightman and Samuel Hewitt to superintend the said building and see that it is completed and report when done. P. 173

1813 8th month. The committee that was appointed to have the care of building the new meeting house are authorized by this meeting to call on our treasury for money that may be needed for the purpose of the said house and he to pay the same as far as he is able. P. 176

Receiving support from the Society for his second voyage to Africa:

1813 11th month. Our esteemed friend Paul Cuffe informed this meeting that he had a prospect of going to the city of Washington on business of importance and requests a few lines setting forth his right of membership among friends, he being a member of our Society and this meeting unites with him in the said prospect and the clerk is directed to give him a copy of this minute. P. 179.

1814 3rd month. The committee appointed in the fourth month last to superintend the building of the meeting house in Westport reported at this time that the House was finished and the cost had amounted to eleven hundred and ninety eight dollars and the committee is dismissed. Our friend Paul Cuffe returned a copy of a minute granted him in the 11th month last. P. 181

1815 11th month. The copy of a minute granted to our friend Paul Cuffe being returned, the following recommendation is approved of and signed by the Clerk.

Our friend Paul Cuffe who is a member of our religious society informed this meeting that he has a prospect of making a voyage to Africa on business and in a particular manner, with the laudable view of endeavoring to promote the temporal and civil improvement and comfort of the inhabitation of some parts of that country which having had our solid deliberation, we feel desirous that he may be enabled to accomplish his object to the peace of his own mind, and leave him at liberty to pursue his prospect, recommending him to the friendly notice and regard of those among whom his lot may be cast.

Signed by direction and on behalf of our monthly meeting of the religious society of Friends held in Westport, State of Mass. The 16th of the 11th month, 1815, by Ebenezer Baker, Clerk, P. 199

Final records of his return from Africa and his passing:

1816, 7th month. Paul Cuffe returned a letter of recommendation granted to him in the 11th month last when he went on his voyage to Africa. P. 206

Acoaxett Monthly Mtg, Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1766-1882

P. 61. "Our friend Paul Cuffe was born the 17th of the first month 1759 and departed this life the 7 day of the 9th month 1817 and was buried the 8th of the same month in Friends Burying Ground at Acoaxet Meeting House.

Note: Research conducted by David C. Cole. Permission granted by Mr. Cole to publish on Westport Friends Meeting site. – K.L.