November 3, 2023

Dear Friends,



Louise and the plaque

Some of you may remember that Louise Bruyn, a member with Sev, from 1966 to 2018, designed and carved a wooden memorial plaque which contained the names of first enslaved people brought from Africa to work as slaves in Newton. She wanted to honor those forgotten souls who had suffered such horrific and unimaginable suffering.

Louise told me and her daughters Susan and Rebecca, that the plaque was one of two projects she had wanted to complete before she died. One was to write a book about her antiwar hike of 10 miles a day from Newton to Washington, DC. She would stop each night at peoples' homes to have meetings with locals before staying the night. She did see that become a book, which now may be in the FMC library.



Louise's daughter, Rebecca

The other project was the wooden plaque which was close to being done in 2014 when I was new to FMC. When hearing I did woodworking she was thrilled as she needed help completing it and asked me if I would carve the burst chain, freeing the names of the enslaved.

After the plaque was completed with some other minor work, we met at Louise's house with a committee that was key to seeing the plaque acquired by the history museum, the Jackson Homestead. Unfortunately, it didn't move forward. I would ask Louise from time to time, but it seemed stalled for some reason and I stopped asking.



Newton mayor Ruthanne Fuller and Louise's daughter, Susan

Recently, Susan Collyer, Louise's daughter from Providence, called me and said she was taking the plaque to the mayor's office and would I like to come. There, the plaque found a temporary home on the mantel piece of Mayor Ruthanne Fuller's office.

After that I provided as many specific facts about the plaque that I had heard from Louise, finally hearing that the plaque had become an accession of the Jackson Homestead a wellknown mansion and stop on the underground railway; now the Newton History Museum.

Louise is now 93 years old and living in a nursing home with severe language and memory issues. Yet, despite that, Susan shared that Louise was overjoyed beyond her imagination. She cried tears of great happiness and gratitude. So many people had helped her attain a lifelong dream come true. She had been able to achieve her second goal!

Best, Mary Spitzer