

# THE QUAKER CALENDAR

Submitted by R. C. (Bob) Stokes

5th Month, 26th day, 1770

22nd of 2nd Mo 1749

We are all familiar with the change from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian one in 1752/53; however, those of us who have ancestors who were members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) are sometimes confused when we encounter dates that are listed with the days and months numbered rather than named.

## WHY DO QUAKERS NUMBER MONTHS AND DAYS?

Quakers objected to the naming of days and months after heathen gods; therefore, used the numbering system to identify the date. We encounter a date that our computer genealogical data base will not accept except by overriding the acceptable entry. The basis for numbering rather than naming days and months, Samuel G. Barton of the University of Pennsylvania found in the "Act of the First General Assembly of Pennsylvania" on December 7, 1682.<sup>1</sup>

And bee it enacted by the Authority afores<sup>d</sup> that y<sup>e</sup> days of y<sup>e</sup> week & y<sup>e</sup> months of y<sup>e</sup> year, Shall be called as in Scripture, and not by Heathen names, (as are vulgarly used,) as y<sup>e</sup> first, Second & third daies of y<sup>e</sup> week, and first Second & Third months of y<sup>e</sup> year, beginning with y<sup>e</sup> day called Sunday, and y<sup>e</sup> month called March.<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally a researcher will encounter Quaker dates recorded before 1953 with the names of the months from September to December which the Friends did not find objectionable since they were derived from numbers rather than "heathen gods."



## CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

In my files I have listed David Stokes, a Quaker, of Burlington County, New Jersey Colony, b. 12 day, 11th month, 1751. As I was researching data for this article I encountered on the FamilyTreeMaker Online site, a family file, "Thomas French, O'Rourke/Horan, Smith/Rice Connections," which listed my David Stokes, b. "November 12, 1751."<sup>2</sup> However, David Stokes, this David Stokes, was born according to my records on January 12, 1751. How can this be?

## WHICH DATE IS CORRECT?

Was David Stokes born in January or November? I must admit that I originally listed David Stokes as having been born in November because that is the date usually recorded on the internet. However, that was incorrect. Jim Robertson, the first president of Root Seekers

Genealogical Society, was kind enough

to refer me to information that corrected my "Quaker dates."

## RECORDING QUAKER DATES

Generally, and I emphasize *generally*, Quaker dates **prior to January 1, 1752** are recorded as follows:

1st month	March
2nd month	April
3rd month	May
and so on until	
11th month	January
12th month	February <sup>3</sup>

There are several ways to record Quaker dates prior to 1752. Consider the birth and death dates on the tombstone of John Stokes, second son of John Stokes who is buried in the Rancocas Quaker

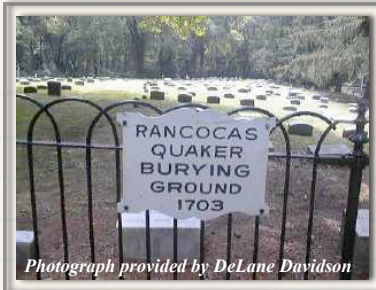
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<sup>1</sup>Barton, Samuel G., *The Quaker Calendar*, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 93, No. 1 (Apr. 18, 1949), p. 32, Published by: American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA

<sup>2</sup>Szeliga, Diane B., [familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/s/z/e/GENE15-007.html](http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/s/z/e/GENE15-007.html)

<sup>3</sup>Tysinger, Barbara A., [ftp.rootsweb.ancestry.com/pub/roots-1/genealog/](http://ftp.rootsweb.ancestry.com/pub/roots-1/genealog/)





Photograph provided by DeLane Davidson

Burying Ground, in Willingboro, New Jersey. There on the stone is chiseled "born 5th mo 16th 1713, died." (On other occasions the researcher may find this recorded as "16 v 1713" where the day is indicated by Arabic numerals and the month by Roman numerals. Now consider four ways this may be recorded:

- Original: 5th mo 16th 1713 (*preferred recording system*)
- Recorded #1: 16 July 1713
- Recorded #2: 16 5th mo [July] 1713 (*square brackets*)
- Recorded #3: 5th mo 16th 1713 o.s. (*Old Style indicates that the date has not been converted.*)

I have stated that the preferred recording system is the original entry. However, if the researcher is using commercial software that does not allow a non-standard date entry to override the standard entry, it is best to record only the year without any reference to the month and day.

Beginning 1 January 1752, the first month began following the English practice and designated January as the first month. Again, I must emphasize, *generally*. There are always exceptions to any rule.

According to the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, in England, Wales, Ireland, and the British Colonies the Quaker year until 1952 officially began on 25 March. For example: 24 March 1725 was followed by 25 March 1726. This presents another problem in understanding the Quaker calendar system.<sup>4</sup>

## DOUBLE-DATING

*George Washington son to Augustine & Mary his Wife was born at 11<sup>th</sup> Day of February 1731<sup>1/2</sup> about 10 in the Morning & was baptised the 5<sup>th</sup> of April following by Mr. Beverley Whiting & Cap<sup>t</sup>. Christopher Brookes his father and Mr. Milner Gregory his mother*

From the Bible of Mary Washington, Mother of George Washington, First President of the United States of America

If we did not have enough problems, we see that our first president was born on "11<sup>th</sup> Day of February 1731<sup>1/2</sup>." Dates which fell from January 1 to March 24, 1583 to 1752, were affected by the change to the Gregorian calendar which changed the first of the year from March 25 to January 1. For these 170 years knowledgeable clerks and recorders accommodated both calendar systems as different countries and groups such as the Quakers approved the change. This

## TO THE Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends in Great-Britain, Ireland, and America.

DEAR FRIENDS,

**P**URSUANT to the Directions of the last YEARLY MEETING, and the Report of a Committee, appointed by the said Meeting to consider what Information or Advice might be necessary to be given to Friends, in Relation to an ACT made the last Session of Parliament for regulating the Commencement of the Year, and correcting the Calendar now in Use, this Meeting hath thought convenient to communicate unto you the following Advices, viz.

1. By the said ACT it is Ordered and Enacted, that "The Supputation, according to which the Year of our Lord beginneth on the 25th Day of March, shall not be made Use of from and after the last Day of December 1751, and that the first Day of January next following the said last Day of December, shall be reckoned, taken, deemed and accounted to be the first Day of the Year of our Lord 1752," and so on from Time to Time, "The first Day of January in every Year which shall happen in Time to come, shall be reckoned taken deemed and accounted to be the first Day of the Year, and that each New-Year shall accordingly commence and begin to be reckoned from the first Day of every such Month of January."
2. The Opinion of the said Committee, agreed to by the YEARLY MEETING, was, "That in all the Records and Writings of Friends, from and after the last Day of the Tenth Month, called December, next, the Computation of Time established by the said ACT, should be observed; and that accordingly the first Day of the Eleventh Month, commonly called January, next, shall be reckoned and deemed, by Friends, the first Day of the first Month of the Year 1752, and

The	Eleventh Twelfth	Month, called	January February March April May June July August September October November December	shall be reck- oned, and styled the	First Second Third Fourth Fifth Sixth Seventh Eighth Ninth Tenth Eleventh Twelfth	Month of the next, and every succeed- ing Year.

1751 Epistle from the Meeting for Sufferings in London

3. And

was done by "dual" or "double-dating."<sup>5</sup> We see this in Mary Washington's Bible where she noted the birth of her son George. She has recorded the birth as 1731/2 indicating the old Julian date first

and the new Gregorian date second. According to President Washington's mother, he was born on 11 February 1732 as determined by the present calendar in use today.

<sup>4</sup>Quaker Dating before 1752, [swarthmore.edu/x7968.xml](http://swarthmore.edu/x7968.xml), Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA

<sup>5</sup>Adamson, Terry L., **Dual Dating and the Gregorian Calendar Conversion in Great Britain and Its Colonies**, [Adamsonancestry.com/calendar](http://Adamsonancestry.com/calendar)