

FMW Renovation Update

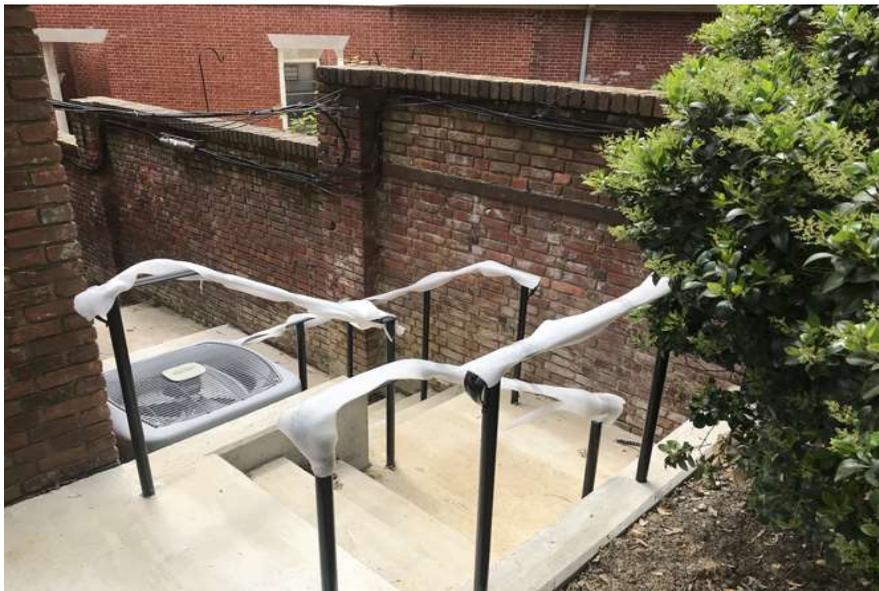
May 5, 2019

Some rise by sin,
And some by virtue fall.
— Shakespeare

But Quakers still dream of an elevator.

Monday 🌞

Looking around for visible results from the ironworkers' railing work, we find it at the far end of the Quaker House Terrace.



Today, two ironworkers turn their attention to installing modesty panels around the three rooftop compressors.



Nine carpenters apply themselves to various tasks.

They lift and fasten the Douglas fir beam on the front of the Lobby.



They tape and mud the drywall they installed last week and hang some more.



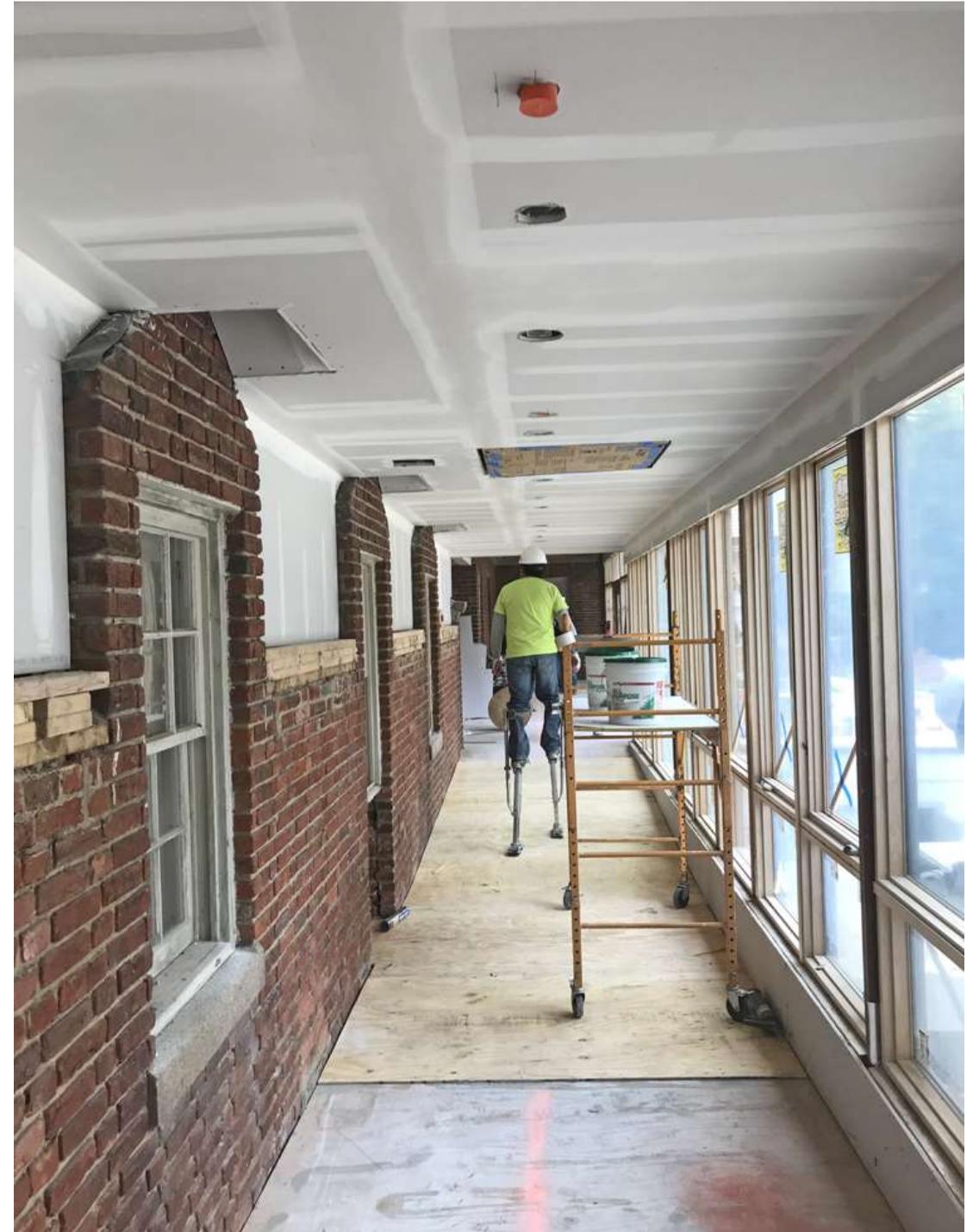
Then they start attaching rafters to it for the Lobby entrance canopy.

Two HVAC workers add condensate lines and other finishing touches to the new ceiling cassette air handlers.



Four electricians run fire alarm wiring all over.

There are reports of an odd, storklike creature stalking the new halls.



Tuesday 🌞

Nine carpenters do various stages of drywall, and also install mullions on the windows.

A strange way to spend the day? Here are the windows without mullions.



And with mullions.



Two ironworkers finish installing the "screens" around the HVAC compressors.



Now, no one will ever guess that there are compressors up there.

Our plans were held up in Zoning for months to get those screens just right, so let's hope somebody can see them.

A pair of masons extend the Quaker House patio brickwork.



Four electricians add more wiring. Today it's for soffit lighting (just under the eaves) and for floor boxes (plugs in the middle of the floor).

Douglas mixes a little concrete to build up the Assembly Room door thresholds.



Wednesday 🌤️

Twelve carpenters carping.

Or perhaps that was us.

Anyway, a record number of carpenters are installing mullions,



and insulation,



and drywall,



and another layer of flooring.



Two roofers are doing all that stuff around the edges that seems to be more work than the roof itself. Flashing and boots and things.

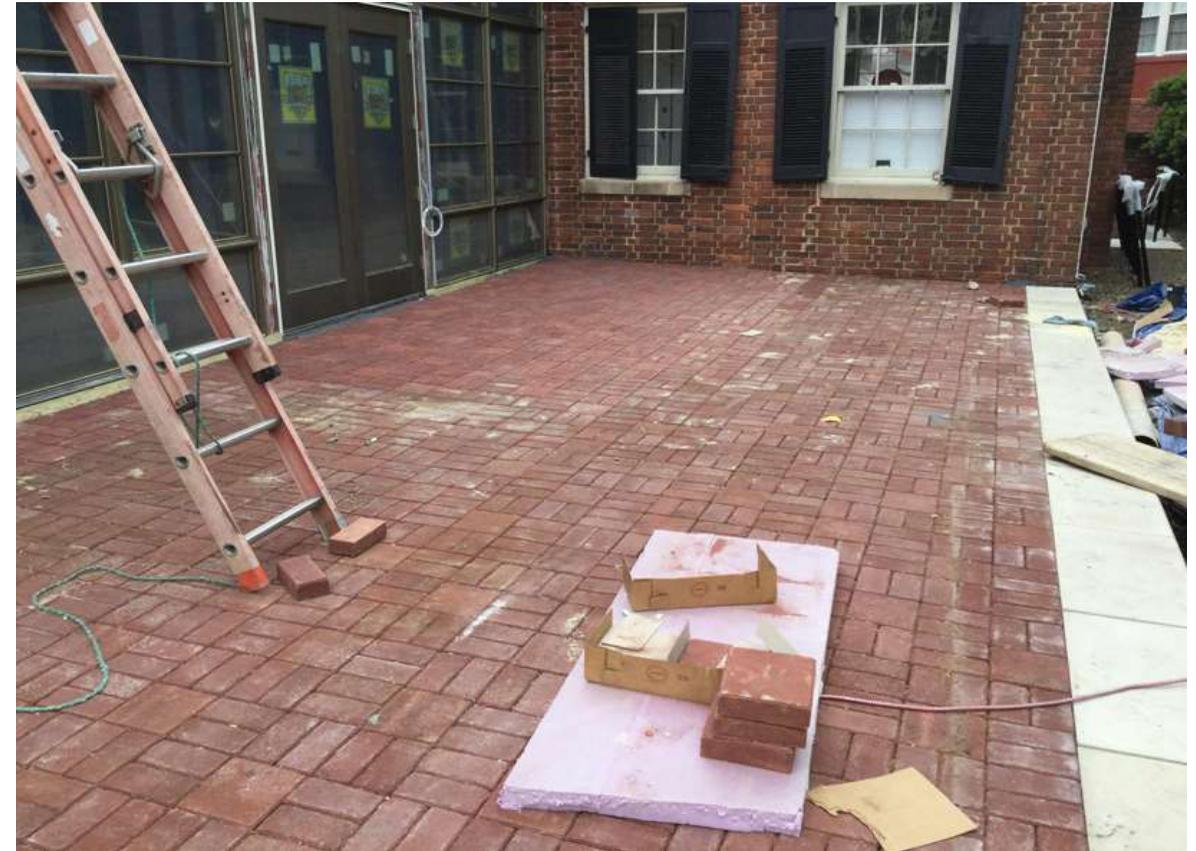
Four electricians continue to do the things they were doing yesterday.

Douglas pours some concrete at the sill of Door 27, which is the one that will open into the hallway connecting the Lobby with the Meeting Room and the vestigial Parlor.



Steve continues to try to figure out how to turn off the Meeting House water, so we can replace all the plumbing. He also discusses preparations for building a small lake on the roof to water-test it before installation of the green roof.

Two masons lay out the side of the brick patio that you can't see in the above picture. Nearly done.



An "elevator superintendent" comes to call. Surely, surely an elevator cannot be far behind.

Thursday 🌞

Not much to see today — important things happening around the margins.

Two HVAC workers solder line set connections for the ceiling cassette units.

Two iron workers review and coordinate.

Four electricians run fire alarm wires and redo some work in the elevator tower to satisfy the elevator superintendent, who turns out to be a person of many whimsical preferences. He announces that the elevator tower should have an insulated and finished ceiling, which of course is not in the plans or anybody's contract.

Five roofers work to install a large wading pool on the roof.



A sprinkler installer returns to move a sprinkler head that is not where the elevator superintendent would prefer.

Two masons “install cuts.” We thought cuts were something you inflict, rather than install.

It turns out that this means the bricks they have to cut to size to finish the last row of the Quaker House patio.



The man in the picture, however, is a roofer with a hose for filling the wading pool.

Douglas and Carlos clean and haul, to get things out of the way so the bluestone installation can begin tomorrow on the Assembly Room patio.

Here's a truck full of things, getting out of the way.



Twelve carpenters are busy again today.

They finish installing a second layer of plywood flooring. It looks just like the first layer, so there's no use showing you a picture. It feels a little more floorlike.

They continue to install mullions long after you are tired of hearing about them.

And drywall, of course.



Friday 🌤️

It was a dark and stormy night.



It rained last night. Quite a lot. Water on the outside.



And water on the inside.



Leaks at the elevator tower.

Leaks in the Storage Room.

Leaks in the Lobby.

Leaks at the corridor windows.

Some expected (work in progress) and some not.

This is the sort of thing that makes life difficult for the general contractor. The roofer is responsible for fixing the leaks, but the carpenters may have to replace the wet drywall, so who pays for that work?

Speaking of water, four roofers work late finishing their wading pool.



They will fill this up to see if the roof leaks or collapses.

If not, then the green roof installation will start next week.

Four electricians continue with fire alarm work.

Nine masons begin at last to install bluestone on the Assembly Room patio.

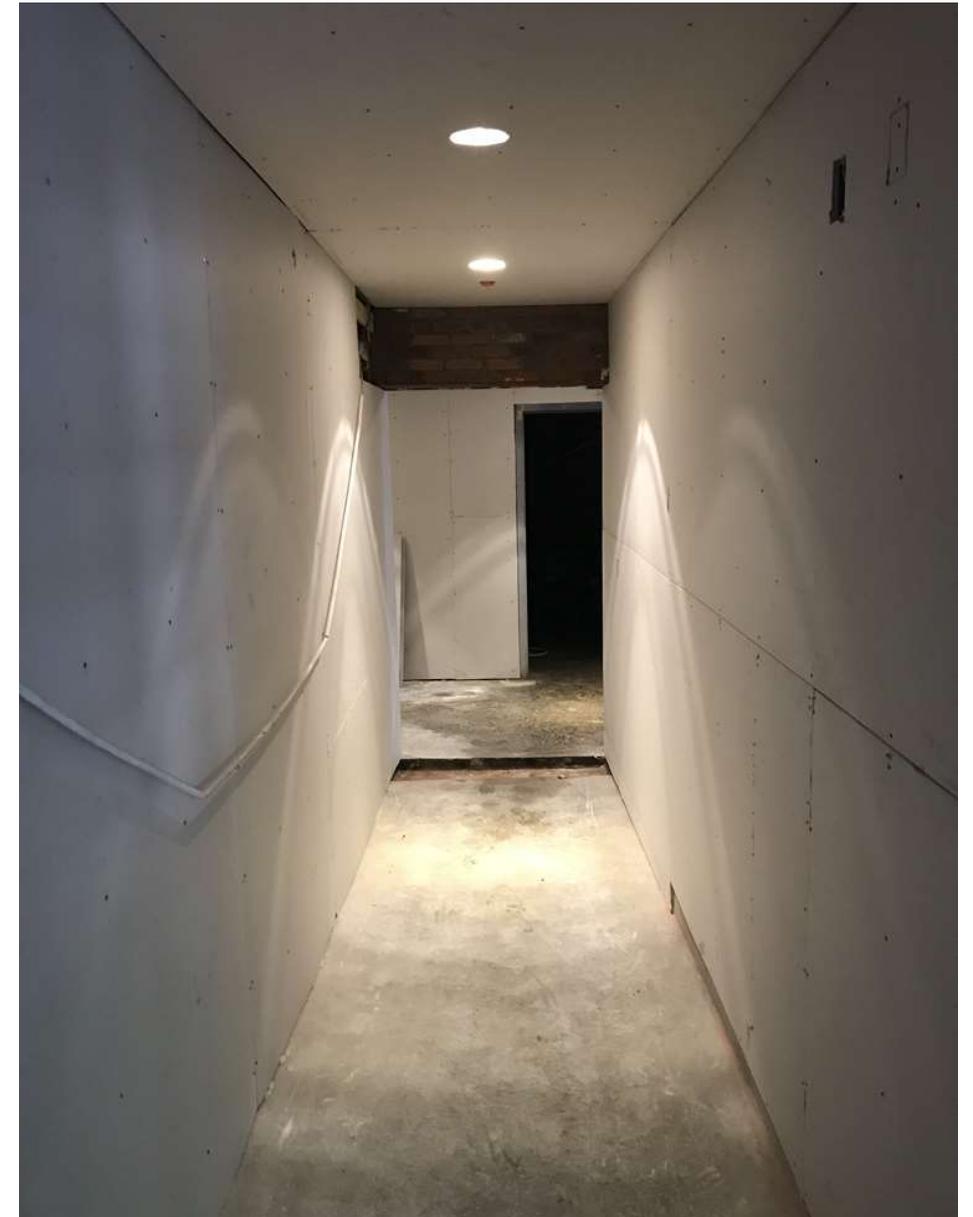


Our tree wrangler stops by to discuss the future welfare of the big and much abused white oak tree in the eastern garden.

Nine carpenters install mullions and drywall.

The new hallway that joins the new corridor to the bottom of the Quaker House stairs now looks like a hallway.

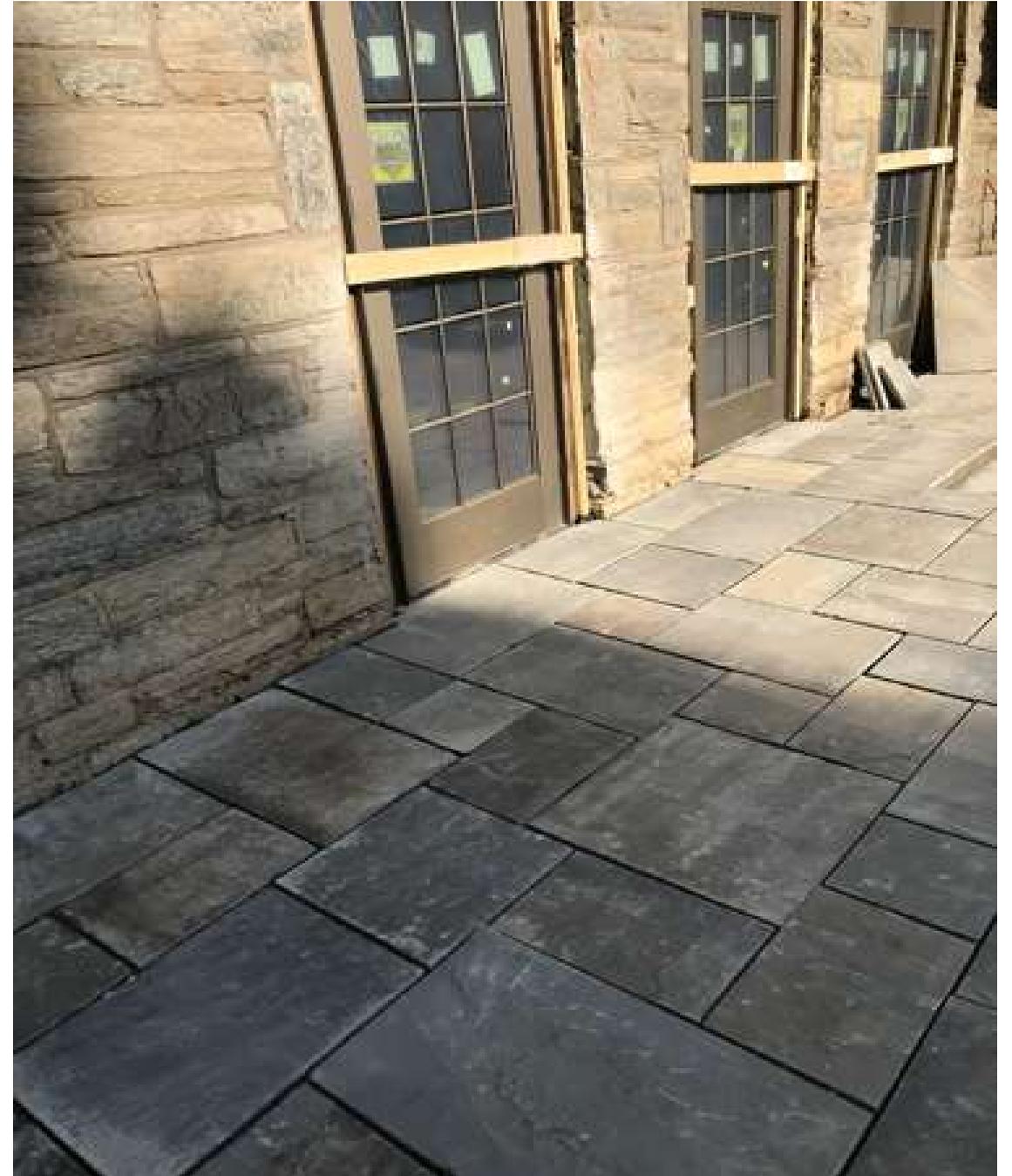
Wonder of wonders, the light switch actually turns the lights on.



With 30 workers on site, much is accomplished. At the end of the day, the sidelined kitchenette refrigerator contemplates its new digs.



But some bluestone is already on the job.



More bluestone awaits its fate:



With the temporary door removed, the lower corridor is revealed in all its hallish glory.



With a little paint, the Assembly Room would be almost presentable.



Looking Ahead

The remaining windows and doors will be completed.

Now that the drywall is in, bathroom fixtures, kitchenette cabinets, light switches, wall outlets, and other modern conveniences.

The elevator tower will be clad with stone and someday the elevator will arrive and be installed. Not next week. Someday.

The door of the tiny Assembly Room bathroom will be demolished and then reinstalled around the corner.

The bluestone will continue at length.begun.

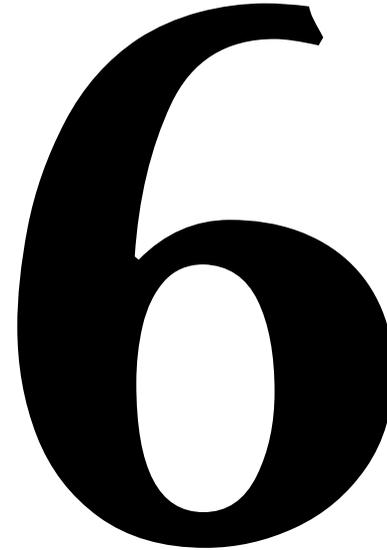
The grade will be adjusted and cleaned up, east and west, moving toward laying down some turf.

Outdoor railings will be installed.

Metal veneer panels and stone will be installed on the lower corridor and Lobby.

We still don't have a new schedule update, so we might as well say . . .

(more below)



Friend Julie Johnson writes to inquire:

Why is the white oak much abused?

Bad karma?

We actually have two white oaks, both planted by Friends since the Meetinghouse was built.

They are our largest trees and are threatened by the renovation work. We have spent quite a lot of time, money, and attention to trying to defend them.

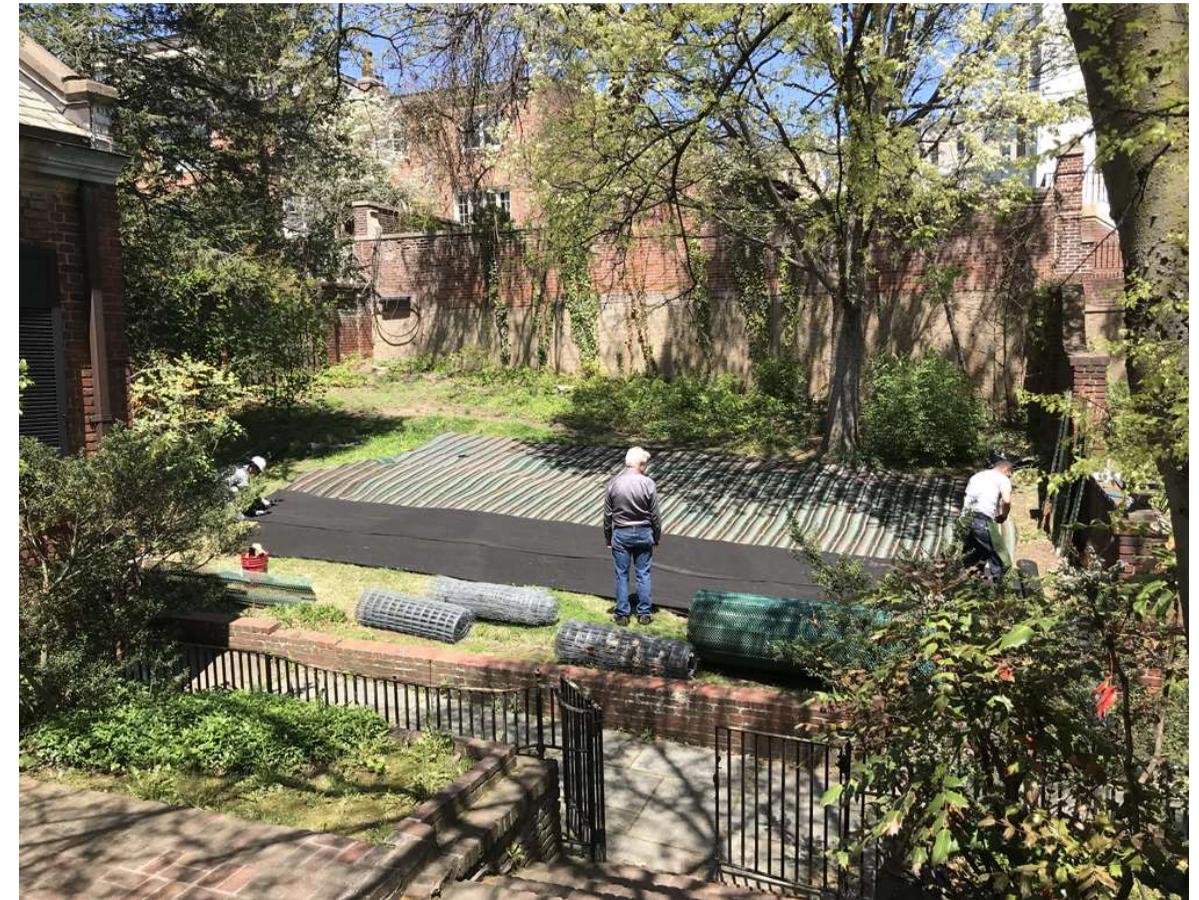
Unlike many trees which lead brief, flashy existences, white oaks are in it for the long haul. They may still be young at age 100. The Wye Oak, in Maryland, lived to be more than 400. Our younger white oak, behind Quaker House, was grown from a Wye Oak acorn.

The strategy of a white oak acorn is to send down a taproot and reach for the sky. Once established, however, it switches to a long-term campaign of sending out horizontal roots quite close to the surface, extending outward many times the width of the crown. Eventually, they dominate the surrounding forest.

Our oaks are already somewhat limited by the way walls, buildings, and other trees confine them.

Older white oaks really hate to have their roots disturbed, so construction work often has a very bad effect on them. Putting extra dirt on the roots is as bad as cutting them. We are doing both.

On the Quaker House side, root aeration matting was installed to mitigate the effect of the planned additional fill.



It was surrounded by tree-protection fencing, but construction equipment operators are very difficult to contain, and the matting did not fare well.



We also deployed very expensive shoring to limit the encroachment on the white oak root zone.



Now the disturbance is mostly done, the oak has leafed out again, and the roots are grumbling under the remains of the matting and the new topsoil.



On the Florida Avenue side, the older and larger white oak has filled the grounds with roots, but it's hemmed in by walls on three sides, so the roots mostly extend north into the open area where we have been obliged by DC regulations to place a stormwater bioretention pond.

We sited the pond to minimize regrading, but the pond itself involves punching a 500-square foot hole into the oak's root zone.

At least, it was supposed to be 500 square feet, but the excavation operators got carried away and made the hole much too large.



You can see the severed roots sticking out of the topsoil layer. The heavy construction mats were intended to defend the roots outside the excavation, but the soil under the mats has been much compressed. We will use "vertical mulching" later to aerate the soil and mitigate that damage.

The concrete workers were expected to erect pond-shaped forms and pour pond walls between those forms and the vertical sides of the hole. Given the nature of the hole, this would use a huge amount of concrete, resulting in pond walls suitable for stopping a Panzer assault.

They did extensive additional work to clean up the situation, still poured more concrete than anticipated, and left a layer of barren clay on top of the construction mats.



The excavation crew returned and filled the pond with fancy dirt. Then they all departed, leaving the lawn looking like this:



You can see a few construction mats breaking the surface here and there.

Fine discussions are under way regarding who will clean up the mess and pay for the extra work and concrete. Not our problem, since it won't be us.

But we are left with an oak tree that has suffered enough to write some serious poetry.

We will not know for several years what the oaks thinks about all this. If they leaf out again on all sides in April 2022, they are probably OK.