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## INTRODUCTION TO THE QUAKER RECORDS PROJECT\*

*by Willard C. Heiss*

### **Origin of the Society of Friends and Its Spread in America**

The Society of Friends or Quakers (the terms are synonymous) had its beginning in the middle of the seventeenth century in England. It was in this period of religious and political turmoil and uncertainty that George Fox and others discovered “Truth” as they saw it. Quakerism was but one of the new sects that grew out of those unsettled times. This Society thrived on adversity, grew strong, and left its imprint on subsequent generations. For example, civil rights and religious liberty that we now enjoy can in a small way be attributed to the Quakers’ firm belief in human equality. The trials, sufferings, and persecutions of these early Friends that these rights might be established are beyond belief.

Fox swept aside all the clutter and trappings that weighed down the Established Church and put emphasis on personal ethics as they were embodied in the teachings of the original Christians. But he was not content with personal virtues only. Just as Jesus called for a change in the life of a nation, so Fox was concerned with the evil blight that was on England in his day. He urged judges to act justly, protested the low wages paid to laborers, proposed that palaces and manor houses be given to the underprivileged, and that the rich abbeys become orphanages or homes for old people. He demanded that Quaker shopkeepers be honest in weight and measure and that they place a single price on each piece of goods to be sold. He urged abolition of capital punishment and insisted that Friends live a life that took away the occasion for war.

George Fox wrote in his *Journal*, “Some thought I was mad because I stood for purity, perfection and righteousness.” Friends believed that with Divine help a man might here and now become perfect, if he were to be wholly obedient to the will of God as “inwardly revealed.” Friends held there was no need for priests and others to mediate between man and God but that there is an indwelling Light from God in the heart of every man that can speak to him and guide

his actions. Friends live in response to that “Inner Light,” which they believe is also to be found within their fellowmen.

One of the central testimonies of the Friends was on the matter of simplicity—in all positions of life. The rituals and sacraments (baptism, communion, and so on) of organized religion were discarded as being only “outward forms.” The Friends meeting for worship was a gathering of silence and waiting on His presence, which might or might not be made vocally manifest.

Quakers first appeared in the American colonies as early as 1656. Within two years monthly meetings were established in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In 1661, the first yearly meeting in America was opened and held at Newport, Rhode Island. Within the next thirty years, five more yearly meetings were established where there had come to be large centers of Friends. These meetings were New York (1695), Philadelphia (1681), Baltimore (1672), Virginia (1671), and North Carolina (1698). It was one hundred thirteen years after the establishment of North Carolina Yearly Meeting before another yearly meeting was required.

Due mainly to the Appalachian barrier, population stayed on the Atlantic seaboard. The migration pattern of Quakers generally was to move south from Pennsylvania into northwestern Virginia and then farther south into the Carolinas. Due to the decline of the whaling industry, Quakers from Nantucket moved directly to the Carolinas. Prior to the Revolutionary War, a few Friends had started moving westward and had settled in what is now eastern Tennessee. By 1800, there were several settlements of Friends in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio; settlements also were being founded in southern and western Ohio. The distance was so great and communications with Baltimore Yearly Meeting were so difficult that in 1813 Ohio Yearly Meeting was set off. It was first held at Short Creek in Jefferson County, Ohio, and later at Mount Pleasant in the same county.

### **The Society of Friends in Indiana**

When we now survey the position of Friends in Indiana in relation to an overall pattern of their history, we usually think of them as the link between southern and eastern Friends in their migrations to the West. We almost forget that this was once the West. In the summer and fall of 1806, Jeremiah Cox and family, John Smith and family, Elijah Wright, Frederick Hoover, and perhaps others settled on the Whitewater River at what is now the site of Richmond. Here they

cleared land and built cabins that were a great distance, in that unbroken wilderness, from the nearest Friends settlement at West Branch, Ohio. It seems incredible, but that same year the settlement was visited by John Simpson, a minister from Philadelphia. He was traveling under a concern to visit the Indian chief Tecumseh and his followers. Upon leaving the Whitewater settlement, he journeyed some thirty miles north to Fort Greenville.

As the settlement of Friends grew there was a need for a monthly meeting closer than the one at West Branch, Miami County, Ohio. In 1809 Whitewater Monthly Meeting was established, and it is from this meeting that all meetings in Indiana descend. While Indiana was yet a territory three monthly meetings were set off from Whitewater, namely New Garden (1815), Wayne County; Lick Creek (1813), Orange County; and Blue River (1815), Washington County.

Following the War of 1812, the migrations of Friends from the Carolinas and Tennessee increased, and more monthly meetings came into existence: Silver Creek (1817), Union County; West Grove (1818) and Springfield (1820), Wayne County; Driftwood (1820), Jackson County; Honey Creek (1820), Vigo County; and Cherry Grove (1821), Randolph County. The above named monthly meetings along with some others in Ohio belonged at this time to Ohio Yearly Meeting, which was held at Mount Pleasant, Ohio. It is apparent that if representatives from the Richmond area going to yearly meeting faced a hardship, then those going from the southern and western part of the state were confronted with an even greater hardship. It was concluded to divide the yearly meeting.

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### ***Indiana Yearly Meeting***

On the 8th of Tenth Month, 1821, the first sessions of the Indiana Yearly Meeting were held in Richmond, Indiana, with some two thousand Friends in attendance. Women Friends met in a log house used by Whitewater Monthly and Quarterly Meeting, and the men used a shed nearby. In the 1820s a large brick meetinghouse was completed, which was used until the present meetinghouse on East Main Street was built.

Besides the meetings named above, all the meetings in southwestern Ohio were also a part of the Indiana Yearly Meeting.

As the central part of the state was opened for settlement, Friends not only continued to arrive from the southern and eastern states, but they also moved on from the previously established settlements. By 1835 there were substantial communities of Friends in Henry, Grant, Morgan, Marion, Hendricks, Hamilton, Montgomery, and Parke counties. The westward expansion stretched the yearly meeting to include meetings established in Illinois and Iowa. About seventy monthly meetings were within these limits in the 1850s. Again, the distances representatives were required to travel to attend the yearly meeting at Richmond became a hardship, and a division was made of Indiana Yearly Meeting.

### ***Western Yearly Meeting***

Plainfield, Hendricks County, Indiana, was chosen as the location for the new yearly meeting. Large numbers of Friends were located in the adjoining counties, and Plainfield was geographically somewhat closer to points west. Western Yearly Meeting was established, and the first session held on the 29th of Ninth Month, 1858, with some six hundred Friends in attendance. The meetings in the eastern and northern part of the state remained with Indiana Yearly Meeting. The meetings in the central, western, and southern part were included in Western Yearly Meeting. The meetings in Howard County were at first with Indiana but later transferred to Western. This arrangement has continued to the present day.

### ***Indiana Yearly Meeting (Hicksite)***

In 1827 and 1828, a controversy that involved most of the Society of Friends, with the exception of Friends in the Carolinas and New England, finally caused an irreconcilable split. The names that came to distinguish the two groups after a separation took place were Hicksite and Orthodox. The former label was given to supporters of Elias Hicks (1748–1830), the Quaker minister from Long Island who was at the center of the controversy. The Hicksites, as one historian has put it, “held doctrines, not as essential to Christian faith but as fruits of it.” The doctrine of the “Inner Light” continued to be their central belief. Rufus Jones comments that “for a whole generation, the Society had tacked, like a ship sailing against the wind, in a curious zigzag, back and forth from Scripture to Inner Light and from Inner Light to Scripture.” The Orthodox group emphasized the centrality of the divinity of Christ and the authority of Scripture. These differences were aggravated by a procession of traveling English Friends who might have served the “Cause of Truth” best by staying in England.

This controversy affected Indiana Friends, splitting many monthly meetings. The Hicksites, the minority, held the first session of their yearly meeting in Waynesville, Ohio, in the last week of Tenth Month, 1828. The annual sessions then alternated between Richmond and Waynesville. Hicksite monthly meetings established in Indiana at the time of the separation were Whitewater and Milford in Wayne County, Honey Creek in Vigo County, and Blue River in Washington County. Hicksites later established other monthly meetings.

A great source of confusion lay in the fact that both groups, Hicksite and Orthodox, continued to call themselves Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends. In 1975 the Hicksite group changed its name to Ohio Valley. Since 1900, Hicksites have become generally known as General Conference Friends, while the Orthodox have identified themselves as Five Years Meeting or Friends United Meeting Quakers, for associations to which yearly meetings the two bodies belong.

### ***Indiana Yearly Meeting (Anti-Slavery)***

If the separation of 1828 left a divided Society, the next controversy left a mutilated Society. The English Friends continued to avail themselves of the audience of the Orthodox Branch of the Society in America. New England Yearly Meeting had not been seriously affected by the earlier schism, but it was here the English Evangelicals widened an incipient crevice. A staunch defender of traditional practices and beliefs of Friends in New England Yearly Meeting was John Wilbur. The leading proclaimer of the new theological approach was Joseph John Gurney of Norwich, England. A separation occurred in New England in 1845.

Indiana Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) was not notably affected by the Gurneyite-Wilburite controversy as it was involved in internal conflict of its own. All members of the Society were, to some degree, committed to the opposition of slavery. Differences came in the application of this belief. There were members who flagrantly violated the Fugitive Slave Law, joined anti-slavery societies that were not under the influence of Friends, and opened meetinghouses to conferences of these societies. To conservative Friends this was unsound, and as a consequence the two groups diverged. On the 7th of Second Month, 1843, Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends was organized and met annually at Newport (now Fountain City), Indiana. In a few years the attitudes of the larger body changed, and by 1857 there had been effected

somewhat of a reunion of the two groups. The damage was considerable since many valuable members were permanently lost.

### ***Western Yearly Meeting (Conservative)***

Following the Civil War, changes in attitudes assumed by some members in the Western Yearly Meeting and to a limited extent in Indiana Yearly Meeting, coupled with an influx of new members into the Society who were not concerned with traditional Quaker doctrines and practices, brought about some startling changes in many of the meetings throughout both yearly meetings. The Society of Friends had become rather static, but a movement by concerned Friends to revitalize the Society had been overwhelmed by the leadership of such ex-Methodists as Frame, Clark, and Updegraff. Esther Frame once implied that the main reason she came to join the Friends was that the Methodists did not allow women in the ministry. In any event, by the 1870s, what might be aptly characterized as the “Wesleyan influence” provoked such questions as conversion, conviction for sin, salvation, and sanctification into heated discussions. All of these were unrelated to the traditional doctrines of Friends.

The contemplative silence of meetings for worship was replaced by hymn singing and programmed church services. The interiors of meetinghouses were gutted as the galleries and partitions were ripped out and rostrums and pulpits installed for the hired ministers. There was no rest on the part of the innovators until the sighs from the reed organ had been added to the off-key harmony of unfamiliar hymns. The final desecration was the introduction of the “revival meeting” and its attendant emotionalism—the singing, shouting, and writhing at the “mourner’s bench.”

This movement developed rapidly, and, as more stable members of the Society were unable to stem the tide, most of these retired from the fray and on the 14th of Ninth Month, 1877, established Western Meeting of (Conservative) Friends, which included one meeting from eastern Indiana and two in western Ohio. This yearly meeting was held at Sugar Grove, south of Plainfield. If previous separations had been tragedies, this one was a disaster as the Society was divided into two extreme positions, whereas if the division could have been avoided, the leavening effects of both groups would have greatly influenced and helped the Society of Friends in the Midwest. This yearly meeting was laid down on the 3rd of Ninth Month, 1962.

## **Later Divisions of Yearly Meetings**

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) was established by Indiana Yearly Meeting in 1863. Salem Monthly Meeting had been established in 1838. It is important to note that all certificates of removal for Friends moving to Iowa prior to 1838 were deposited with Vermilion Monthly Meeting, Illinois, that being the nearest monthly meeting to the Iowa settlements. There was a separation in Iowa due to causes similar to those given above, and in 1878 Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) was established.

Kansas Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) was established by Indiana Yearly Meeting in 1872 and met at Lawrence. A separation, due to the same reasons as stated in the sketch of Western Yearly Meeting, brought about the establishment of Kansas Yearly Meeting (Conservative) in 1879. Their annual meetings were held in Emporia, Kansas, the last being in 1929 when the Yearly Meeting was laid down. The surviving members were attached to Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative).

In 1892 Wilmington (Ohio) Yearly Meeting was set off from Indiana Yearly Meeting (Orthodox). It included nearly all the meetings in western and southern Ohio.

The Indiana Yearly Meeting (Hicksite) was divided by setting off Illinois Yearly Meeting in 1874, comprising southern Indiana, all of Illinois, and also meetings in Iowa and Wisconsin.

## **Organizations Structure of the Society of Friends**

### ***Yearly Meetings***

The final authority for decisions in the Society of Friends rests in the body of the yearly meeting. As the name implies, this is an annual meeting composed of representatives from the quarterly meetings that comprise the yearly meeting. Any member of the Society may attend and is free to express his views, but the representatives are appointed to ensure the attendance of some persons from all parts of the yearly meeting. A clerk presides over these sessions, which last for several days, and all decisions are made from a "sense of the meeting." Reports from various committees are read, statistics are compiled, and so on. This information, together with the minutes of the meeting, are compiled and published. Collections of these printed minutes are to be found in many libraries: the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College and Haverford College Library probably have the most complete sets. Earlham College, of course, has a complete set for Indiana Yearly Meeting, Guilford College for North Carolina, and so on.

The original manuscript minutes as they exist are found in the archives of the respective yearly meetings. For the past decades many yearly meetings have been sending minutes and reports directly to the printer and have not compiled a manuscript record—hence in many instances the printed record is all that exists.

The importance of these minutes varies, depending upon the interest of the researcher. From the earliest days there are committee reports of the Indian, Temperance, Education, and other committees. Through these minutes, it is possible to follow the changes of attitudes of the Society on matters of discipline and theology. (Friends do not admit a theology.) These attitudes, advices, and regulations were collected from time to time and published in a “Discipline.” Although these advices have existed almost from the beginning of the Society, it was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that they were put into print. Many revisions have been made since that time.

Of importance to the genealogist are the death notices of ministers and elders that appear in the printed yearly meeting minutes. The number of notices varies; in 1842 there were eight in the Minutes of Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends; two examples:

Ann Cox, an elder, and member of White River Monthly Meeting, died twelfth month 4th, 1841; aged 65 years, wanting 5 days.

Exum Elliott, an elder, and member of West Grove Monthly Meeting, died tenth month 8th, 1841; aged 76 years, 5 months and 29 days.

Before leaving the matter of yearly meeting records, I would like to draw attention to the minutes of the “Meeting for Sufferings.” In America, these records exist from the mid-eighteenth century and consist of a record of the matters that came before a representative body (in effect, an executive committee) that met and functioned for the yearly meeting when it was not in session. These meetings contain much material concerning the resistance of Friends to wars as well as other matters relating to meetinghouses and graveyards.

### ***Quarterly Meetings***

These meetings for business were composed of representatives appointed by the component monthly meetings. Reports were brought to this meeting and annual summaries prepared. Problems that were unresolved by the monthly meetings were sent here and decided or, if found “too weighty,” were forwarded to the yearly meeting. The quarterly meeting established



or “set up” new monthly meetings or “laid down” such meetings as had come to the end of their usefulness. They usually confirmed action in relation to meetings subordinate to the monthly meetings.

In former days (and yet today) these meetings served as an important link in bringing widely scattered Friends together for their spiritual needs, and, equally as important, they were a focal point in the Society’s social life.

### ***Monthly Meetings***

A monthly meeting was usually comprised of several preparative meetings. It was here that the bulk of the business of the Society was transacted and recorded in the minutes. These records will be outlined in another section.

A misunderstanding of the monthly meeting should be clarified. Let us take for an example White River Monthly Meeting (Randolph County, Indiana). In 1840 it consisted of five preparative meetings. To the uninformed it might appear that White River Meeting was the head and the rest of the meetings were subordinate. This is not the case. White River Meeting was a preparative along with Jericho, Dunkirk, Sparrow Creek, and Cabin Creek. Together this group of preparatives formed a monthly meeting which went by the name of White River. In fact, the monthly meeting rotated at that time, being held consecutively at White River, Jericho, and Dunkirk.

As settlers came into a community or an adjacent area, the population of a Friends meeting increased. When the monthly meeting became unwieldy, due to increased membership, another monthly meeting was created. For example, in 1824, when White River Monthly Meeting was “set up,” there were settlements of Friends in only the central and eastern parts of Randolph County. By 1840, the western part of the county had been settled, and there was a need for reorganization. In 1841 Sparrow Creek Monthly Meeting was “set off” and was comprised of Sparrow Creek, Dunkirk, and Cabin Creek Preparatives.

Another situation that is a source of confusion, even to persons familiar with Friends, needs to be explored. The following is a fictional situation.

Let us suppose a John Overman and his family, preparing to remove in 1806 from the Carolinas to north of the Ohio River, would request and get a certificate of their membership to Miami Monthly Meeting (Warren County, Ohio). The certificate is received accordingly at

Miami Meeting, but when John arrives in Ohio he concludes to settle in Miami County instead of Warren County. Upon his request, the certificate is endorsed by Miami Meeting and sent to West Branch Monthly Meeting. He and his family are then members of West Branch. In 1808 our fictional family moves to Indiana Territory and settles just north of Richmond. The following year, when Whitewater Monthly Meeting is “set off,” they became members of that meeting. In 1815, as New Garden Monthly Meeting is “set off” from Whitewater, they become members of New Garden. In 1820 our family moves to near Winchester (Randolph County). They then become members of Cherry Grove Monthly Meeting when it is “set off” from New Garden in 1821. There is a division of Cherry Grove Monthly Meeting in 1824, and the Overmans become a part of White River Monthly Meeting. In 1830 the family moves to Grant County, Indiana, but are still members of White River as that meeting encompassed in its membership all the territory to the north and west of Randolph County. Then, in 1832, Mississinewa Monthly Meeting is “set off.” Our Overmans are now members of Mississinewa.

This is a rather far-fetched example, but it illustrates what might have happened when a family you are tracing disappears from the records. The last record of the Overman family appearing in meeting records is the reception of the certificate at West Branch. It is possible that John Overman might never appear in the minutes of any of the above-mentioned meetings as serving on a committee or the like. And, it is further possible that he was never recorded in any birth or death record. Yet he was a member of the Society until his death, even though the last recorded evidence of his membership was in 1806 at West Branch.

A similar situation would be possible if a family never moved from its original pioneer homestead. Suppose a family settled in the southwesterly part of Wayne County, Indiana, at an early date. They could have been members of the Whitewater, West Grove, and Milford meetings consecutively. I have dealt with the above problem at length, as I have found it to be one of the most perplexing for individuals who come to the “stone wall” in their tracing of families.

A similar situation has occurred in another way. Suppose a family transferred its membership to Duck Creek Meeting in Henry County, Indiana, in 1835 and then apparently disappeared from the records. The answer to this enigma lies in the fact that from 1837 through 1840 Duck Creek Meeting was “laid down” and its membership attached to Spiceland. So if the

family in question removed in 1838, its removal certificate would be found in the Spiceland records.

The same situation exists for Cherry Grove Monthly Meeting, Randolph County, Indiana, which was “laid down” from Second Month through Eleventh Month 1825 and its membership attached to White River, except for Center and Lynn preparatives, which were attached to New Garden Monthly Meeting. Blue River Monthly Meeting, Washington County, Indiana, was “laid down” from 1828 through 1829 and its membership attached to Lick Creek for that period of time. Doubtless, other examples exist that do not come to mind.

When a monthly meeting is “laid down,” whether temporarily as illustrated above, or permanently, the membership is attached to another monthly meeting. Pleasant Hill Monthly Meeting, Howard County, Indiana, was “set off” from Honey Creek in 1861. In 1891 it was “laid down” as a monthly meeting and its membership attached again to Honey Creek.

A more complex problem is to be found in the matter of Honey Creek Monthly Meeting, Vigo County, Indiana (not to be confused with the above-mentioned meeting with the same name). In 1820 this monthly meeting was “set off” from Lick Creek. At the time of the separation in 1829, the meeting was “laid down” by the Orthodox branch and its members attached to Bloomfield (later Bloomingdale) Monthly Meeting. However, the meeting had a large Hicksite membership and as such continued as Honey Creek Monthly Meeting in the Hicksite branch of the Society.

***Preparative Meetings*** (sometimes called ***Particular Meetings***)

A preparative meeting, as the name suggests, is a meeting where business is prepared to be presented at the ensuing monthly meeting. This type of meeting and function has almost ceased to exist. Monthly meeting was usually held on Seventh-day (Saturday). The preparative was held earlier in the week; it often followed the midweek meeting for worship. At this meeting complaints against members were brought forward by the overseers, requests for membership were presented and forwarded to the monthly meeting, etc. Most of the trivia was sifted out at these meetings, and only business of a worthwhile nature was taken up at the monthly meeting. Very few records of the preparative meetings have survived. Preparatives held meetings for worship each First-day (Sunday) and at midweek.

### ***Meeting for Worship***

A meeting for worship was allowed by a monthly meeting where there was a settlement of Friends large enough that it could be maintained in good order but the number of Friends was not large enough to function as a preparative meeting. The meeting for worship met regularly for First-day and midweek meetings and usually advanced to the point of having a meetinghouse. In matters of business, it was attached to the nearest preparative meeting. It might be stated that all Friends meetings, whether for business or otherwise, were in part a meeting for worship.

### ***Indulged Meeting for Worship***

On the frontiers, two or three families might have been far removed from a Friends meeting. It was usually inconvenient, if not impossible, for them to attend an established meeting. In this situation the monthly meeting allowed members to meet in a home or in a public place on First-day as an indulged meeting for worship. This meeting was under the care of a monthly meeting committee that visited with the “Indulgement” regularly to see that “truth was maintained.” If the meeting grew, it then became a regular meeting for worship. This type of meeting has not existed since the beginning of this century.

### **The Friends Meetinghouse**

To George Fox the “steeple house” was an abomination. Yet, most Friends churches in the Midwest are indistinguishable from other Protestant churches replete with stained glass windows. The testimony of simplicity, like most other Friends testimonies, has been all but forgotten.

Traditionally, the meetinghouse, the center of a Quaker settlement, was quite plain. But few of these remain. New Garden meetinghouse, near Fountain City, Indiana, appears externally almost as it was built, except for a small belfry. The “white brick” meetinghouse at Waynesville, Ohio, is unchanged, except for the men’s side, which has been remodeled into rooms for First-day school. Sugar Grove, south of Plainfield, Indiana, is almost unchanged. It does not even have electricity.

Most, if not all, meetinghouses were oriented east and west with the doors on the south side. I know of no reason for this practice; it may be more accidental than intentional. The building was rectangular in shape, about twice as long as wide. The interior was divided into two rooms; a partition or shutters that could be raised separated the rooms. A door near the front of

the partition gave access to each room. Two sets of doors in the front wall permitted men and women to go into different sides of the building. As one faced the building, the men's side was on the right. The members sat in their respective rooms during business meetings. During worship, the shutters were up; they were lowered during the business session.

The reason for these separate sessions dates back to the beginnings of Quakerism when Friends declared that all persons were equal. Women were given an equal voice in the decisions of the Society. It has been said that the reason for separate sessions was that women were timid and hesitated to express their opinions in the presence of men.

There were separate sessions at preparative, monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings. There were clerks and assistant clerks and minutes kept for both men's and women's meetings. Beginning in the late nineteenth century this practice was gradually discontinued until by the early 1900s all branches of Friends were holding joint meetings. At First-day or midweek meetings for worship, the men and women usually sat on the men's side of the building, but the women still sat on the left side of the room.

The interior of the meeting rooms had two rows of plain benches on either side. Facing the room, across the front, was a raised "gallery" or platform with two rows of benches where the elders and ministers sat. These benches were sometimes referred to as facing benches. The reason they were elevated was so that if any of these worthies were moved to speak they could be easily heard. This did not preclude any other member from speaking.

Meetings for worship had a member who "sat at the head of the meeting." This member was an Elder and never a woman. How he was chosen is not clear, but it appears that he was chosen by the overseers. It was a lifetime appointment. The "head of the meeting" sat on the first bench on the right side of the gallery. When he sensed that it was time to "break" meeting, he would shake the hand of the person nearest him, and meeting was over.

The second row of the gallery had a drop-leaf board that was raised for a writing surface for the clerk during business meetings.

The monthly meeting records are the most important Quaker materials for the researcher, whether a historian, genealogist, or person with other interests. The monthly meetings have from almost the earliest times kept minutes, records of births and deaths, marriage records, and removal certificates. Only a few of the older monthly meetings have preserved complete sets of records.

## **Types of Records**

### ***Monthly Meeting Minutes***

From the time a monthly meeting was “set up,” a minute record was kept by the clerks in which information concerning the affairs of the meeting was written. During monthly meetings, the notes and minutes made by the clerk were written on sheets or scraps of paper and were known as “rough minutes.” Later, usually twice a year, these minutes were transcribed into the permanent record book. I make particular mention of this because a minute might be recorded that Joel Kindly, being about to remove with his family, requested a certificate to convey his and his family’s membership. The matter was referred to a committee to investigate his affairs to see if he is “clear” to remove. At the time the “rough minutes” are transcribed, by error, the report of the committee and the granting of the certificate might not be recorded.

Information found in the minutes includes removals, disownments, members received, and birthright memberships.

**Removals.** It is possible to trace a family line from arrival in Pennsylvania in the late 1600s through Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, and Indiana to Iowa in the 1850s. This is true if the family has not had members disowned in the intervening generations or if the meeting records still exist.

When a family wished to remove to another section of the country, a request was made to the monthly meeting for a certificate of membership to be sent to the monthly meeting nearest the family’s new residence. An investigating committee was appointed to determine whether the affairs of the family were in order. This committee usually reported to the next monthly meeting. If all was in order a certificate was granted. The following example is from the minutes of Cherry Grove, Randolph County, Indiana:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 11-12-1831 | Joseph Way and family request a certificate to Whitewater Monthly Meeting.                  |
| 1-4-1832   | A committee reported that it “found obstructions which was out of their premise to remove.” |
| 5-12-1832  | Joseph and wife Alice were disowned for “insubordination” two months earlier.               |
| 8-11-1832  | Minor children of Joseph Way granted a certificate to Whitewater.                           |

By consulting the Whitewater minutes, it can be learned that the children were Joseph, Obed, Martha, and Rebecca.

Usually, the date of the actual removal of a family will nearly coincide with the date of the request for the certificate, and the minutes will state “about to remove.” Occasionally, a family moved and then wrote back to the meeting requesting a certificate. The minutes in this case usually appended a note “already removed” to the request. In this situation the member might have migrated six months or more previous to the request. Instances exist where a family removed and never requested its membership be forwarded. Usually the monthly meeting would finally forward a certificate to the monthly meeting nearest the family. In this case, several years may have elapsed. The point here is that simply because a membership certificate is recorded in Fifth Month, 1832, it does not prove that a family settled in a community during that month or the month previous. It is possible that the family arrived a year or more before.

**Disownments.** The Society of Friends did not profess to hold to any theological forms or creeds, yet did have a set of standards by which members were expected to live. These standards were set forth in their Discipline as adopted by the yearly meetings. Any infraction of these testimonies and advices were reported to the overseer of the preparative meeting who in turn sent it to the ensuing monthly meeting. If the complaint seemed valid, a committee was appointed to visit with the party concerned and attempt to have him acknowledge his error. If he were so moved, he sent an acknowledgment or an offering in the form of a written note to the monthly meeting stating that he was sorry for his misconduct and hoped that Friends would pass it by and that in the future, with God’s help, he would do better. In the event he did not admit error the committee continued to visit with him to determine with certainty his guilt. After further “treating” with him, the committee might report that it “had no satisfaction” whereupon the monthly meeting would disown him from being a member. Some of the disownments were for the following reasons:

- for deviating so far as to keep ale to drink and give it to others
- for refusing to fulfill a marriage contract
- for leaving the country without settling his outward affairs
- for deviating from plainness in dress and address
- for drinking spirituous liquors to excess
- for deviating from the truth
- for neglecting to pay his just debts
- for getting in a passion and fighting his fellow man

- for unchastity with her who is now his wife
- for joining another society
- for using profane language
- for asking and receiving twenty-five percent on money loaned
- for neglecting attendance of meeting
- for accomplishing his marriage contrary to discipline
- for accomplishing his marriage before the expiration of the time therein proscribed after the decease of a former wife
- for attending a marriage performed contrary to discipline
- for marrying a first cousin
- for marrying contrary to discipline
- for marrying out of unity

Regarding the last two items, there is a technical difference between “marriage contrary to discipline” and “marriage out of unity.” The former is a situation in which both parties are Friends and married by other than a Friends ceremony. When a Friend married a non-Friend, he married “out of unity.”

**Received in membership.** When an individual desired to become a member of the Society, the overseers of the preparative meeting were informed. They in turn forwarded the request to the monthly meeting. A committee was appointed to “visit with him on occasion” and determine whether he was sincere “and convinced of the truth.” After careful consideration by the monthly meeting, the application for membership was approved or returned to the applicant. A person who had been disowned and wished to be reinstated went through the same process.

It was not uncommon for one member of the family to be disowned yet the rest of the family would retain membership. The disowned party might continue to attend meetings for worship but could not participate in business meetings.

**Birthright membership.** If both parents became members of the Society, all minor children became members. Children born to Quaker parents were birthright members. If a father were disowned and the mother remained in good standing, any further children were birthright members, but that was not the case with children born to a mother who had been disowned and the father was yet a member. When both parents were disowned, the minor children remained members and their membership certificate was forwarded to the nearest monthly meeting in event the family moved. Under these circumstances, their record finally disappears because in reality the children usually followed their parents into another religious society. One will probably not find a record of disownment for the children.



**Conclusion.** After the 1860s the application of the Discipline to the lives of Friends became increasingly relaxed. Many boys served in the Civil War in complete violation of Friends principles. Some meetings passed this by without comment. A few did disown them. Some, such as White River Monthly Meeting, accepted an “acknowledgment” such as the following by Benoni Hill on 4-7-1866:

“in an unguarded hour I so gave way as to enlist in the army and bear arms which being contrary to the will of God, and for which I feel regret and ask for your forgiveness as well as God’s and pass it by and continue me a member as my conduct may admit.”

Disownment for marrying a non-Friend or for marrying by civil ceremony had been abandoned by the 1860s. The member concerned had only to indicate that he wished to retain his membership. By the 1880s the whole matter was ignored. Some Friends churches had paid preachers, and the marriage form was soon fashioned after other Protestant ceremonies.

By the late nineteenth century there were few disownments except for serious matters that could not be easily ignored. In the White River minutes appears the following dated 3-3-1877:

Harry T. Warren was disowned for he “has attended places of Diversion, is intemperate, has abused and mal-treated his family and expressed a disbelief in the Bible.”

Except among Conservative and Hicksite branches, little concern was shown about many of the testimonies that had claimed the attention of Friends for generations.

Minutes and records for the later period have often been very poorly kept. Whereas the script of early records was usually excellent, later writing in some cases is almost illegible.

### ***Marriage Records***

From earliest times Friends refused to be married in a civil ceremony or by a “hireling priest.” They married themselves. At monthly meeting the couple would announce their intention to marry. Committees were appointed to learn if both persons were “clear of engagements.” At the next monthly meeting, the committees reported, and if both were “clear” the meetings left them “at liberty to accomplish the marriage.” Committees were then appointed to attend the marriage and see “that good order was preserved.” Unless a special meeting was appointed, the

marriage took place the following midweek meeting for worship. Marriages were not accomplished on First-day until the mid-1800s.

Where marriage records exist, either the original certificates or a copy of them are recorded in the meeting record book. This record contains invaluable information, such as the county of residence of each contracting party, the names of the parents of each, whether the parents are deceased, and the latest residence of the parents.

The laws of Indiana, until the 1920s, exempted Friends from the legal requirement to obtain a civil marriage license. Thus marriages performed under the care of a monthly meeting will not be found in courthouse records.

### ***Birth and Death Records***

Friends kept these records because they served two purposes. First, it was a membership record, and, second, Friends, for many years, were opposed to headstones on graves.

The birth record will vary considerably in makeup from one monthly meeting to another. For example, Dover Monthly Meeting, Wayne County, Indiana, recorded births as follows:

Levi Peacock b. 5-18-1821  
Martha Peacock b. 3-28-1818  
Their children--  
Ruth b. 5-1-1844  
infant daughter b. 9-19-1846 buried at New Garden

Just a few miles away, at West Grove Monthly Meeting, is found a more complete record with the following entries:

Jonathan Mendenhall b. 5-6-1782, Wrightsboro, Ga. son of Joseph and Elizabeth  
Ann Mendenhall b. 3-28-1786, Bucks Co. Penna, daughter of John and Ann Phillips  
Their children--  
Elizabeth b. 8-21-1804, Stokes Co., North Carolina  
Phebe b. 11-30-1805, Stokes Co., North Carolina

Even though the minutes usually show that the recorder was regularly admonished to make his records complete and keep them up-to-date, the fact is that few, if any, of these records are complete.

The birth record is found in the front part of the volume and the death record in the back. The entry for the death gives the name, date of death, and age at death. Usually the place of

burial is also given and, in some instances, the place of residence at the time of death. Some examples from Poplar Run Monthly Meeting, Randolph County, Indiana:

Mary Hunt, d. 9-5-1879, ae 77y 5m 4d Died at Wesley Hunts, buried at Nettle Creek  
Joseph Fisher, d. 3-28-1874 ae 69y 9m 15d Died at Robert Fisher's. Delaware County  
Mary Lamb, d. 2-17-1877 ae 76y 7m 2d Died at E. Bond's, buried at Poplar Run

### ***Removal Certificate Record***

This record book is seldom found among the collection of monthly meeting records. It may be that some meetings did not keep removals as a separate record.

As mentioned above, when a membership transfer came to a meeting, it was recorded in the minutes. In White River Monthly Meeting minutes are the following entries:

11-10-1838 (Men's) George Thomas received on certificate from Cherry Grove  
Monthly Meeting  
11-10-1838 (Women's) Asenath Thomas and daughters, Elvira and Anna, received on  
certificate from Cherry Grove monthly meeting

From the same meeting's minutes is an example of a removal:

3-6-1858 Tilnias Hinshaw and family granted a certificate to Cherry Grove monthly  
meeting.

By consulting the Book of Removals we learn that Tilnias Hinshaw and wife, Eunice, and children, Nathan, Lindley, James Colwell, William Henry, and Ira were given a certificate.

### **Friends Burying Grounds and Funerals**

Funerals and burying grounds were under the care of a committee appointed by the monthly meeting and continued from year to year. Friends were for many years opposed to any marker on a grave. The grave of George Fox was unmarked for almost two centuries. Acceptance of any marker was very slow in coming. There seems to be have been varying emphasis placed on this practice from one part of the country to another.

Mill Creek burying ground in Hendricks County, Indiana, has a large number of small markers with initials only—a larger percentage than elsewhere. Most of the older burying grounds have rude fieldstones, some unmarked, and some crudely carved, and some small marble markers that are engraved with the name, date of death, and age of the deceased.

Miami Monthly Meeting (Hicksite), Warren County, Ohio, decided in 1845 to remove all monuments in its graveyard. In 1846, there was reported “compliance.” The Discipline at the time admonished that “Friends are also enjoined to maintain our testimony against affixing monuments of any description to graves.” So much difference of opinion existed over this subject that in 1869 the Discipline was revised to read, “They are not to erect grave stones higher than ten inches above the level of the ground, nor more than fourteen inches wide, nor three inches thick, entirely plain, with only the necessary name and date thereon.”

It would appear that until the 1870s not much care was given to the burying grounds other than keeping them fenced. At this time, there were numerous newspaper accounts of work parties that would spend two or three days cleaning out brambles, setting up headstones, and arranging them in rows.

In an 1880 account of the work on Cherry Grove burying ground, Randolph County, Indiana, it was estimated that more than 200 graves lacked markers. This was probably about half of the burials up to that time.

Friends funerals were very simple. There was a short “sitting” at the home, then another at the meetinghouse. There might or might not be speaking. The casket was then carried to the grave and consigned with no ritual at all. Not even members of the family dressed in mourning.

### Reference Material<sup>†</sup>

The number of books and pamphlets written by or about Friends is countless. Excellent sources that give considerable details and insight into the practices of Friends are:

- Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (1988)
- Howard H. Brinton, *Friends for 300 Years* (1952)
- Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism* (1806)
- Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism* (1988)
- Willard Heiss, *A List of All the Friends' Meetings . . . in Indiana* (1961)
- Gregory P. Hinshaw, *Indiana Quaker Heritage* (1995)
- Ezra Michener, *A Retrospect of Early Quakerism* (1860)
- John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey* (1985)
- Richard P. Ratcliff, *Our Special Heritage: Sesquicentennial History of Indiana Yearly Meeting* (1971)
- Elbert Russell, *The History of Quakerism* (1942)
- Stephen B. Weeks, *Southern Quakers and Slavery* (1896)

For the genealogist there is the monumental work by William W. Hinshaw, the *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy* (6 vols., 1936–50), containing abstracts of the following monthly meeting records: Vol. I, The Carolinas. Vol. II, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Salem and Burlington, New Jersey; and Falls Monthly Meeting, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Vol. III, New York City and Long Island, New York. Vols. IV and V, Ohio and meetings in southwestern Pennsylvania. Vol. VI, Virginia. Hinshaw's unpublished material is deposited in the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. The Hinshaw volumes have been reprinted by the Genealogical Publishing Company. Abstracts of other Quaker records are appearing with increasing frequency.

*Quaker Necrology* (2 vols., Haverford College Library, 1961) is an index to 60,000 death notes published in Friends periodicals. The periodicals indexed are *The Friend* (Philadelphia), *The Friends Intelligencer*, *The Friends Review*, and *The Friends Journal*.

*The Christian Worker* was established at New Vienna, Ohio, in 1874. Later it was moved to Chicago, was combined with the *Gospel Expositor*, and was called *Christian Worker and Gospel Expositor*. In 1894 this periodical, combined with *The Friends Review*, was called *American Friend*. (This should not be confused with a periodical of the same name published in Richmond, Indiana, in the 1860s.)

Another source of brief biographies is *The American Annual Monitor* (New York: 1858–63), which contains obituaries of Friends in America.

One further source of information, both historical and genealogical, is the printed histories of various monthly meetings. Some of the better histories of Indiana Monthly Meetings are:

- A History of Farmers Institute Monthly Meeting* (ca. 1951)
- Plainfield Friends Mark a Century* (1951)
- A History of Union Street Meeting of Friends of Kokomo, Indiana* (1958)
- Booklet about Friends in Orange County, Indiana* (1958)
- Jericho Friends Meeting* (1958)
- Memories of New London Community* (1936)
- Whitewater—Indiana's First Quarterly Meeting* (1959)
- Early Friends in Grant County, Indiana* (1961)

†Updated by Thomas D. Hamm in 1996

## **Location of Original Records**

The following are the major repositories for Indiana Quaker records:

### ***Friends Collection, Lilly Library, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana***

This is the repository for the records of Indiana and Western Yearly Meetings of Anti-Slavery Friends and Indiana Yearly Meeting (Hicksite), as well as microfilms of the records of other American yearly meetings.

### ***Quaker Collection, Wilmington College, Wilmington, Ohio***

This is the repository of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting (formerly the Hicksite Indiana Yearly Meeting).

### ***William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana***

This is the repository for the records of Western Yearly Meeting of Conservative Friends. The library also has the largest holdings of any repository of records of Indiana Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends.

### ***CRIMP***

A portion of the County Records in Indiana Microfilm Project (CRIMP) microfilmed holdings of libraries and individuals in the various counties in Indiana. The collection of Indiana Quaker Records in the Friends Collection, Lilly Library, Earlham College was filmed. These microfilms may be borrowed and viewed at local branches of the Latter-day Saint family history libraries.

It should be noted that some Indiana Quaker records are still locally held. Those for the old Hicksite Blue River Monthly Meeting, for example, are in the Washington County Historical Society Library. Many records for Friends in Parke County, Indiana, are in a vault in Bloomington, Indiana. Similarly, the vault of the New London Friends Church holds records of many monthly meetings in Howard County.

**Orthodox Monthly Meetings in Indiana Prior to 1850**

DATE	NAME	COUNTY	OTHER INFORMATION
1828	Arba	Randolph	set off from New Garden
1838	Back Creek	Grant	set off from Mississinewa
1827	Bloomfield	Parke	set off from Honey Creek; later called Bloomingdale
1815	Blue River	Washington	set off from Lick Creek
1821	Cherry Grove	Randolph	set off from New Garden
1823	Chester	Wayne	set off from Whitewater
1837	Dover	Wayne	set off from New Garden
1820	Driftwood	Jackson	set off from Blue River
1826	Duck Creek	Henry	set off from Milford; reestablished in 1840
1826	Fairfield	Hendricks	set off from White Lick
1844	Greenfield	Tippecanoe	set off from Sugar River; later called Farmers Institute
1850	Hinkels Creek	Hamilton	set off from Westfield
1820	Honey Creek	Vigo	set off from Lick Creek
1846	Honey Creek	Howard	set off from Mississinewa
1841	Hopewell	Henry	set off from Milford
1813	Lick Creek	Orange	set off from Whitewater
1823	Milford	Wayne	set off from West Grove
1834	Mill Creek	Hendricks	set off from Fairfield
1832	Mississinewa	Grant	set off from White River
1815	New Garden	Wayne	set off from Whitewater
1841	Richland	Hamilton	set off from Westfield; later called Carmel
1846	Rocky Run	Parke	set off from Bloomfield
1850	Rush Creek	Parke	set off from Bloomfield
1817	Silver Creek	Union	set off from Whitewater; later called Salem
1841	Sparrow Creek	Randolph	set off from White River
1833	Spiceland	Henry	set off from Duck Creek
1820	Springfield	Wayne	set off from New Garden
1840	Sugar Plain	Boone	set off from Sugar River
1830	Sugar River	Montgomery	set off from White Lick
1836	Walnut Ridge	Rush	set off from Duck Creek
1818	West Grove	Wayne	set off from Whitewater
1849	West Union	Morgan	set off from White Lick
1835	Westfield	Hamilton	set off from Fairfield
1823	White Lick	Morgan	set off from Lick Creek
1824	White River	Randolph	set off from Cherry Grove
1809	Whitewater	Wayne	set off from West Branch, Ohio

### Hicksite Meetings in Indiana After Separation in 1829

DATE	NAME	COUNTY
	Blue River	Washington
	Camden	Jay
	Fall Creek	Madison
	Honey Creek	Vigo
1854	Maple Grove	Huntington
	Milford	Wayne
	Whitewater	Wayne

### Anti-Slavery Friends Monthly Meetings in Indiana After Separation in 1843

NAME	COUNTY
Cabin Creek	Randolph
Cherry Grove	Randolph
Clear Lake	Porter
Deer Creek	Grant
Duck Creek	Henry
Dunkirk	Randolph
Newbury	Howard
Newport	Wayne
Salem	Union
Springfield/Nettle Creek	Wayne
Westfield	Hamilton

### Conservative Monthly Meetings in Indiana After Separation in 1877

NAME	COUNTY
Beech Grove	Marion
Mill Creek	Hendricks
Plainfield	Hendricks
West Union	Morgan
Westfield	Hamilton
White River (Jericho)	Randolph

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