

MIDLOTHIAN
FRIENDS MEETING

— QUAKER MEETINGHOUSE —

SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 11:00 AM

ALL WELCOME

MidlothianFriends.org

George Fox



George Fox, Margaret Fell, and Swarthmoor Hall

In this picture can be seen George Fox standing with the home of Margaret Fell, Swarthmoor Hall, far in the distance. Since the age of twenty-three he had been preaching a primitive brand of Christianity around England based on direct experience with God. As a result he had attracted a number of young adherents. However, none had as much influence on the development of the Quaker religion as Margaret Fell. At thirty-eight Margaret was older than most of these "children of God", as they were then called. Part of the hysteria from the English establishment surrounding Quakerism was no doubt connected to the fact that the new religion was originally a youth movement of sorts – a backlash reaction to the hypocrisy and stuffiness of the Anglican church.

George Fox had himself been a troubled youth who fervently sought God. Many years before his encounter with Margaret Fell, Fox had spent his spare time traveling the countryside seeking answers to his spiritual questions from various ministers and priests. "Why did Christians dress and live so fancy and extravagantly when Jesus dressed simply and had very few material things?", he asked. "Why were ministers required to study at Oxford when in biblical times all Christians were ministers of God?" "Why did the Puritan and Anglican churches legalistically follow doctrinal laws and use the Bible as a "rule book" instead of a source to inspire people to have their own experience with God?"

Finding no answers that satisfied his inner longings, George Fox turned to solitude and nature for inspiration – and there he found what religious experts could not provide him. In 1647 while deep in silent prayer and meditation he heard an inner voice say to him, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition". He also had a vision where he saw an ocean of darkness and death, and over it an infinite ocean of light and love, which was the infinite love of God. This one experience changed his life and soothed his despair. He had discovered the "Christ within" to which Quakers today still refer.

As a result George Fox was led to preach to others that God can be found within, for there is "that of God" within every person. Fox was a powerfully built man with a striking appearance. It is said that while passionately speaking in his resonant voice, his eyes were piercing as though he could see into the soul of his listeners. It was in 1652 when Fox was twenty-eight years old that he was invited to the home of Margaret and Judge Fell, prominent and wealthy aristocrats. Immediately, Margaret was deeply moved by Fox's spiritual message. She invited him to her parish where he was moved to speak to the congregation about his own spiritual experience and the indwelling of the Light of Christ. Upon hearing his words Margaret literally stood up in her pew in amazement. Later she wrote in her journal, "This opened me up so, that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly that we were all wrong. So I sat down in my pew again and cried bitterly; and I cried in my spirit to the Lord, "We are all thieves; we are all thieves; we have taken the scriptures in words, and know nothing of them in ourselves."

Margaret Fox's whole household, including the servants, were convinced of the truth of George Fox's message. Swarthmoor Hall thus became the center of Quaker activities in England until Margaret Fell's death in 1702. Margaret was a well-educated woman and a prolific writer. Along with Fox she helped mold the Quaker religion as we experience it today. While George Fox is generally credited with forming Quaker spirituality, Margaret Fell is the one who shaped the demonstration of that spirituality through compassionate and socially responsible living.



The Presence in the Midst

This painting by Doyle Penrose of a meeting for worship in an old English meetinghouse in the early 1700's is timeless. If you put the worshipers in the simple clothing of our day, it would look like any modern meeting for worship. The expressions of contemplation and prayer are very familiar to anyone who has taken a glance around the meeting room well into the worship hour.

The painting illustrates the Quaker belief that the Divine Presence is leading the meeting in worship. In this early painting that Divine Presence is illustrated as Jesus. For modern Quakers the Divine Presence takes varied forms, whether Jesus, Buddha, God, the Universal Spirit, or whatever draws one into the eternal Spirit who is present always for us to draw upon.

Quakers originally practiced silent worship as an addition to Sunday services of the more formal churches of England. They came to know the truth of the Psalmist words "Be still and know that I am God". In the silence of worship a profound religious experience occurred, where they were drawn into the very presence of the Divine. Often, where they ended and the Divine began became blurred as they were swept into a deeply religious experience. As the individual wills and desires of the worshipers subsided, they discovered their hearts and minds were fertile ground for God to appear. Willingly they submitted themselves to be used as messengers of God both during the worship and once the worship hour was over.

The experience of God in worship led these early Friends to reject many of the social norms of the day. The reality of Christ's teachings reached their hearts in a way that no sermon by a minister ever could. Unconditional forgiveness and love became a motivating force for Quakers just as it had been for Jesus. They began to live his message instead of just believing it. This Christian activism coupled with their belief that God is reached by going within instead of by outside stimuli, caused the early Friends a great deal of trouble. They were led to declare and practice as early as the 1650's that war is unacceptable, that men, women, and children are equal, that royal and religious hierarchies are folly, that religious doctrines are merely "notions", and that all of the races of humankind are God's children and should be treated as such.

Such is the power of Quaker worship.

The established church was not pleased with the position of these early Friends. For they were very evangelical in the practice of their faith, and therefore sought to convince others as they had been convinced. It was only after being ostracized from the established church that Quakers really established themselves as a religious denomination. It is not surprising that silence was the only "sacrament" they used to draw them within towards God. All other sacraments used in the established church were quickly abandoned since they are only symbols of a spiritual reality. Quakers preferred to experience that reality directly during meeting for worship and in their daily lives.



Der Große betrieger und Fälsche MESSIAS

LACOB NAYLOR

König der Quaker

1707.

Religious Fervor Leads to Controversy and Reforms

Many of the earliest Quakers were exuberant in their demonstration of evangelism, powered by their sense of spiritual freedom. However, due to the strict English society of the mid-1600s that had been defined by Puritanism and the Church of England, such freewheeling and unbridled religious fervor resulted in misunderstandings and persecutions for Quakers. English society was ill-equipped to deal with a spiritual movement that promoted an individual experience with God without the constraint of a church government, a rule book such as the Bible, doctrinal positions, or designated ministers.

James Nayler, a charismatic and effective associate of George Fox, began to clash with Fox on strategies to spread the Quaker message. Nayler routinely used dramatic tactics in order to evangelize. Fox preferred a more conventional method of extemporaneously speaking with those he met on his travels. Their relationship worsened when Nayler orchestrated a religious procession in 1656 that was disturbing to the general public and the English parliament. Nayler entered Bristol in the manner that Christ entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, accompanied by several Quaker women strewing their garments in his path and singing, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Israel". One result of this incident was an unflattering caricature of James Nayler (pictured above) being put on the cover of a German pamphlet entitled, "The Great Deceiver and False Messiah, James Nayler, King of the Quakers in the Year 1657". As a result of Nayler's re-enactment, the English Parliament almost ordered him executed; but instead ordered cruel punishments for him, including whipping, a boring of his tongue, and branding with the letter "B" for "Blasphemer". After these tortures, he was imprisoned for two years with hard labor. The hysterics over this incident was part of a broader attack against the Quakers by the English parliament.

After completing his prison sentence, while travelling to rejoin his family in Yorkshire, James Nayler was robbed and left near dead in a field. A day later and two hours before he died at age 42, he made a moving statement which many Quakers since have come to value:

"There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other. If it be betrayed, it bears it, for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness; its life is everlasting love unfeigned."

Nayler's Palm Sunday re-enactment might not seem to be particularly outrageous by today's standards. However, for a number of years before-hand the Church of England, and English Parliament had been disturbed by the Quaker preaching throughout England concerning the inner Light of Christ – which they viewed as preaching equality with Christ. Nayler's symbolism was just too over-the-top because he assigned himself the role of Christ in his re-enactment. This Nayler incident contributed to George Fox's eventual decision to begin the introduction of outward forms, uniformity, and hierarchy within the Religious Society of Friends to better control the Quaker adherents. That decision created a decade or more struggle within the Religious Society of Friends itself. Many of the earliest Quakers did not take lightly to this attempt to dampen spiritual freedom, egalitarianism, and mystical experiences within their ranks in order to placate the Church of England, Parliament and the general public. It reminded them of the authoritarian churches they had left at the start of the Quaker movement over a decade before, so they tried to thwart George Fox's efforts - to no avail.

THE QVAKERS DREAM:

O R,

The Devil's Pilgrimage in England :

B E I N G

An infallible Relation of their several Meetings,

Shreekinge, Shakinge, Quakinge, Roaringe, Yellinge, Howlinge, Tremblinge in the Bodies, and Ravinge in the Bells: With a Narrative of their severall Arguments, Tenets, Principles, and strange D^eclar: The strange and wonderful Satanicall Apparitions, and the appearing of the Devil unto them in the likeness of a black Boar, a Dog with flaming eyes, and a black man without a head, causing the Dogs to bark, the Swine to cry, and the Cattel to run, to the great admiration of all that shall read the same.



London, Printed for G. Horton, and are to be sold at the Royal Exchange in Cornhil, 1655.

The Earliest Quakers and Liberal Quakerism

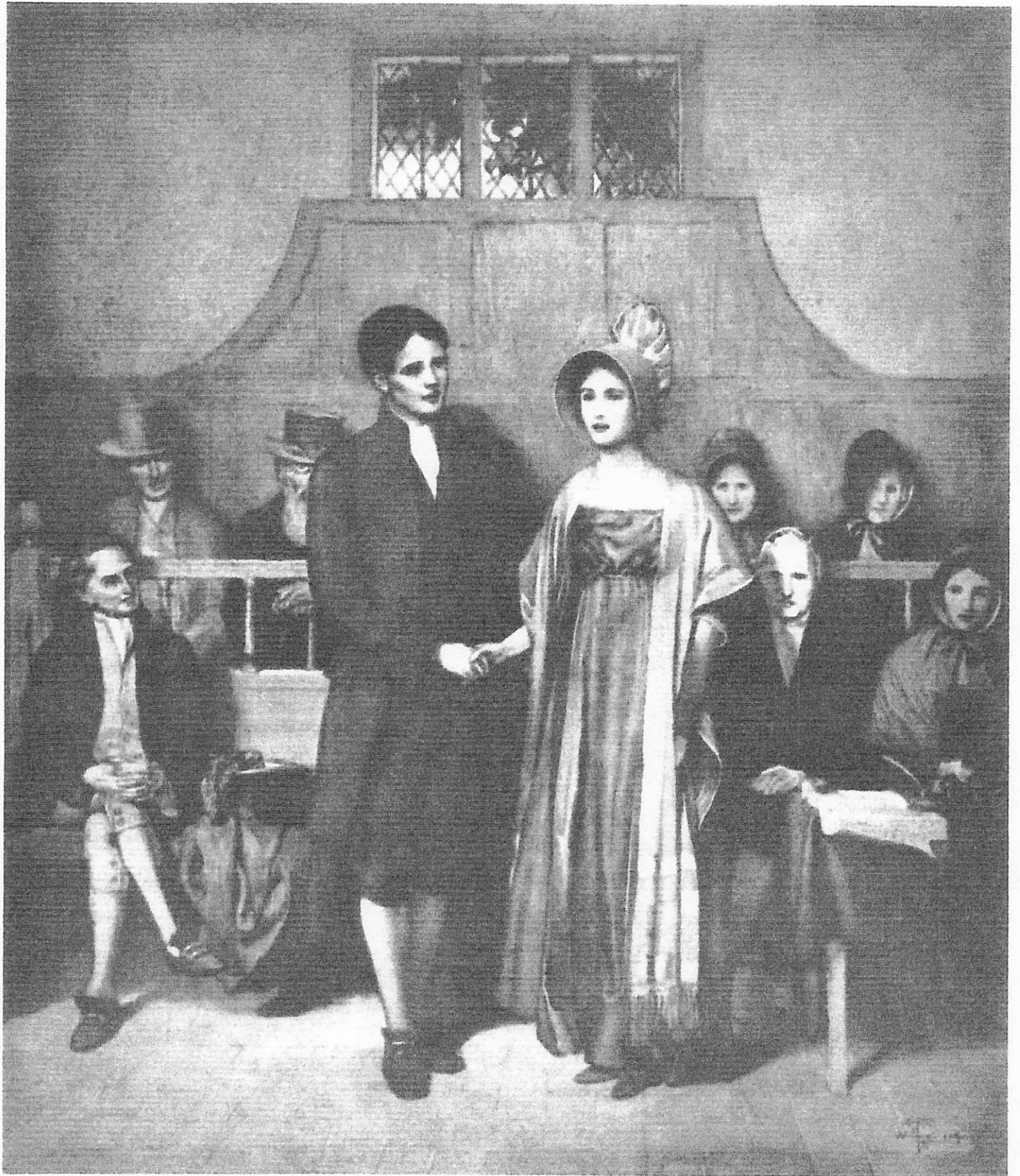
Many Quakers mistakenly assume that the modern liberal Quaker movement is not akin to the movement first began by the very earliest Quakers from the 1640's into the 1670's. Yet, three characteristics of these very earliest Quakers remain essential characteristics of liberal Quakers in modern times: Spiritual freedom, egalitarianism, and mysticism.

As with many spiritual movements at their beginning, Quakerism began as a free-flowing spiritual society. Highly influenced by Jesus' own spiritual experience and nature, the earliest Quakers' spiritual experience included what we would term in modern times a "mystical experience within". This experience was abundantly more spiritually fulfilling than what they had previously encountered from the established Church of England or the Puritan churches of the day. This mystical experience was so sufficient on its own that these very earliest Quakers eagerly cast off any religious outward forms, viewing them as unnecessary. Further, they began worshipping just as Jesus had done - surrounded by quiet so they could more easily go inward to experience individually and together the same Light experienced by Christ. This form of worship required no hierarchy of human leadership as was typical with the more established churches.

However, a free-flowing spiritual movement such as that did not bode well for its practitioners in the mid-1600's. An atmosphere of intolerance resulted for the fledgling Quakers; causing persecution, imprisonment, and a general misunderstanding by others. For example, Quakers' intense mystical experience of oneness with Christ was viewed as blasphemous by others outside of the Quaker movement. In modern times, such a blurring into oneness is well understood to be typical for spiritual mystics, as it is actually a fulfillment of Jesus' own words about his hopes for his followers, as recorded in the Bible: *"I am praying that they may all be One – just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they too may be in us."* Unfortunately for those first Quakers, Quakerism started in the mid-1600's at a time before that "oneness" concept regarding themselves and the divine was understood and tolerated.

All of this backdrop created an eventual rift among Quakers by 1670. The struggle was between a number of well-known Quakers in the countryside and an emerging London Quaker hierarchy led by George Fox to create religious order through the use of prescribed outward forms; no doubt to gain respectability for the Quaker movement and thereby ensure its survival. By the late 1670's much of the original egalitarian nature of the Religious Society of Friends had begun to subside at the instigation of George Fox. However, the introduction of outward forms was viewed by many Quakers as a wedge between themselves and their mystical relationship with the divine. They were opposed to the imposition of set worship times, prescribed forms of attire, acceptable speech patterns, membership rolls, a Yearly Meeting hierarchical structure to control all Quaker meetings, an implied hierarchy in the local meetings, and other rules of conduct that appear petty by modern standards. Many Quakers voiced that these London elders were now acting as the churches they had left years ago.

Still, as the Quaker movement entered the 1700's, the presence of outward forms to solidify Quakers into a uniform religious society had been well established by isolating and ostracizing those prominent Quakers who resisted the changes. But something had been lost in the transition. Quakers could no longer be identified as an organic group of seekers distinguished by spiritual freedom, egalitarianism, and mysticism - as they once were. No longer did their unity lie simply in the same spirit of love and Light that was manifested within Jesus. Instead, Quakers now became viewed by others as guided by uniform peculiar outward forms – just another church of sorts, but burdened with a different set of rules and beholden to a different set of religious leaders. It wasn't until 1828, when liberal Quakerism began to emerge, that a centuries' long return began back to that more egalitarian and mystical experience within the Religious Society of Friends.



THE PROMISE
J. Walter West

The Promise

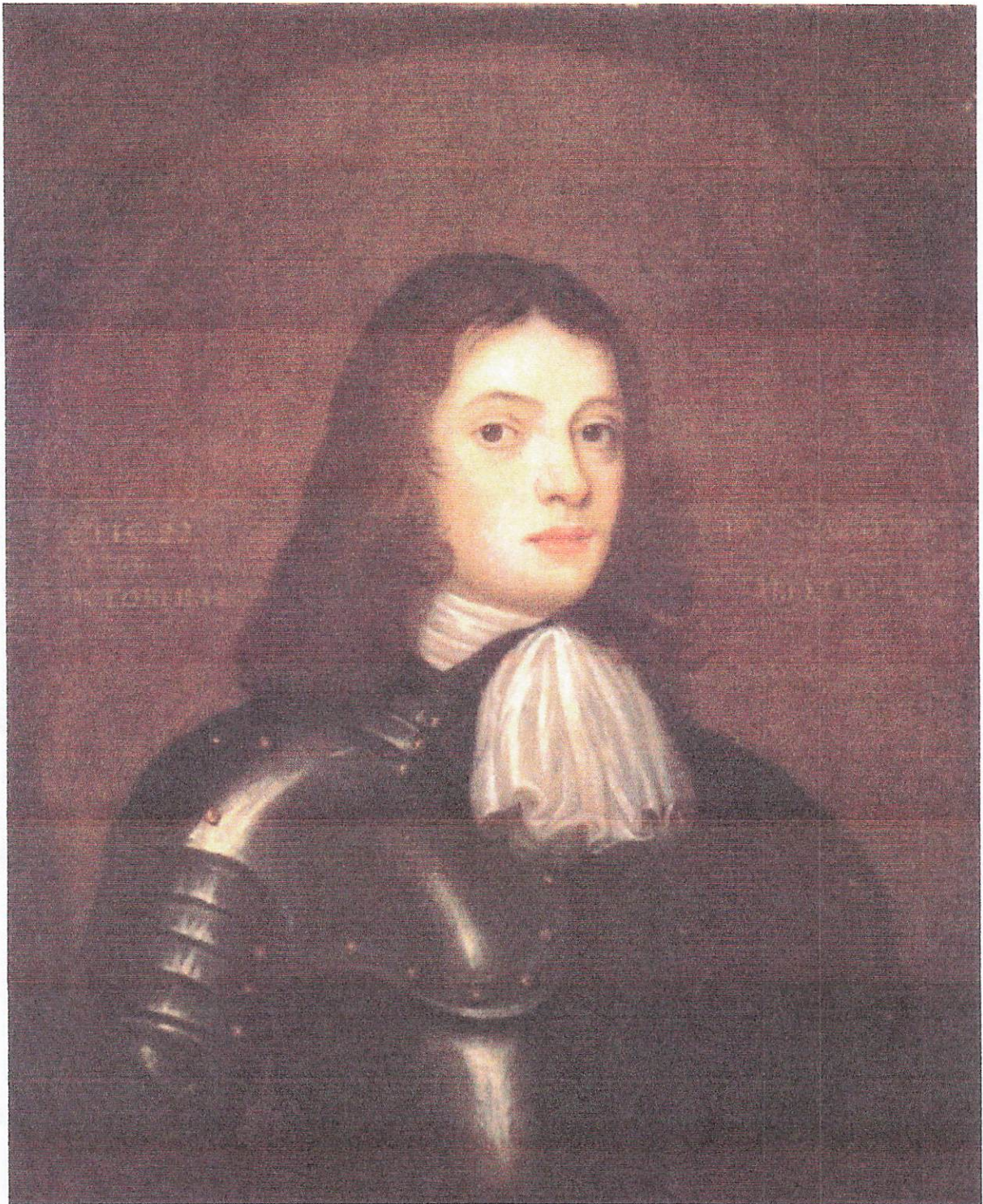
Quakers from their start in 1647 had a unique situation when it came to marriage. Since the Divine Presence is the leader during Quaker worship and all Friends are called to minister to each other, there is no special person appointed as the “minister” for the meeting. This set the tone for the Religious Society of Friends that it is inappropriate for a human to “perform a marriage” for a couple. Therefore, Quakers were led early in their history to have no human “authority” officiating at a wedding. They looked to the Bible for guidance and found it in the story of Adam and Eve, where God brought the two together and joined them as one. Quakers adopted this same method of joining two people in marriage.

The wedding occurs during a specially called meeting for worship that is similar in form and structure to a normal meeting for worship with a few exceptions. For one thing, the meetinghouse is often joyfully decorated with flowers. At least the bride and groom are dressed in special attire for the occasion. However, many other Friends at the marriage worship continue to dress simply just as they do for regular worship. Usually, there are more messages offered during the silent worship than occurs at a regular meeting for worship – no doubt due to the joyful energy and spirit of the occasion. The couple also takes a prominent seat in the front of the meeting room so that the worshipers can focus on them.

Some time during the silent, unprogrammed worship, the couple rises and begin to say their vows to each other. These vows are words chosen by the couple and therefore flow from their hearts. After saying their vows the couple sits back in their designated seats, and worship continues with more spoken messages if any of the worshipers are moved to offer them. The special worship ends with the normal handshakes, and likely with an unusual number of hugs and kisses thrown in.

To the casual observer, it may look as though the bride and groom are marrying themselves to each other. In reality, for Quakers the marriage is being divinely led and orchestrated. Some believe Christ is officiating as Quakers of old believed. For others, it may be felt that “God” is marrying them, or the “Universal Spirit”, “Holy Spirit”, or just the “Universe”. Whatever spiritual reference has meaning for the couple, the point is that they are not marrying themselves to each other. The Force or Spirit that is in control of all existence is joining the couple before F(f)riends and family.

If both the bride and groom are Quakers, before the marriage the couple was provided a specially chosen committee to help them discern all aspects of their impending marriage and life together. This same committee is theoretically available to the couple for the life of the marriage to assist them during the usual difficulties or major decisions that befall all marriages. Practically, however, in modern times, within a few years the original committee dissolves due to attrition (committee members or the couple move, or they lessen their commitment to meeting). So, it may be near impossible to regroup the original marriage committee in a timely fashion to help during a marriage difficulty or decision point. Nevertheless, the Care and Counsel committee of the local meeting is always available to assist the couple by providing counsel and advice or by forming a clearness committee comprised of Friends who will help the couple through the difficulty. Quakers who utilize the meeting and its committees of Friends during their marriage tend to avoid the problem of divorce that is so prevalent in our modern world.



William Penn's Holy Experiment

William Penn was personally convinced of the truth of the Quaker message by George Fox. This portrait of him was made just before he became a Quaker in 1666. Upon his conviction, out of concern for the Quaker peace testimony, he asked Fox, "When shall I stop wearing my sword?" Fox, in typical Quaker fashion answered, "Wear it as long as thou canst." Penn was the son of a wealthy Englishman who owned several estates in Ireland. Upon his father's death, Penn received a grant of land in the New World from the King as payment of a debt owed to his family. Penn wanted this land as a refuge for Quakers in England who were suffering severe persecution for their Quaker faith. Ignoring his objection, the new colony was named "Pennsylvania" after Penn. William Penn landed in what is now Philadelphia in 1682 some sixteen years after his conviction to Quakerism.

From the start Penn did things differently, and many historians believe he actually gave birth to American democracy. He termed his colony a "holy experiment". Even though he was granted Pennsylvania lands by the English crown, Penn insisted on always paying the local native Americans for any land used by the colonists. In 1683 he made a peace treaty with the natives. In keeping with Quaker practice he did not swear to the treaty. Voltaire said of this treaty that it was the only treaty never sworn to, but never violated. Penn felt genuine love for the native Americans and wrote many surviving letters to them stating his affection and admiration.

Philadelphia was named by William Penn, and means in Latin "city of brotherly love". Thus Penn established the standard for the colony that he insisted upon as long as he was alive. Pennsylvania was known as the most tolerant of all the English colonies in the New World. Thousands upon thousands of Quakers fled persecutions in England for the colony. Unlike the Puritans who did similarly in Massachusetts, these Pennsylvania Quakers established a standard of tolerance and freedom for all inhabitants of the colony. Therefore, it was a popular place for people to migrate to. So much so, that within fifty years the Quaker majority was overtaken by various immigrants from other lands and religions.

Some say that William Penn's "holy experiment" was ruined by its own purity – it allowed and even welcomed the influx of people who did not adhere to the same principles as their Quaker hosts. However, the reality is that the tolerance of the colony paved the way for the birth of American democracy and charity. Penn and the Quakers established democratic processes for decision-making in the colony. Even though this democratic process eventually undid many Quaker ideals due to the participation of non-Quakers, the democratic concept spread to other colonies in the New World. Although the spiritual ideals of equality, brotherhood of all, and tolerance were soon overtaken with more secular thinking, the seeds of these ideals found fertile ground throughout the new nation. In particular Benjamin Franklin is said to have been greatly influenced by the Quakers around him, and frequently attended Quaker worship.

Upon the establishment of the United States some one hundred years after the establishment of Pennsylvania, the founding fathers had seen the ideals that they wanted for the new nation in William Penn's "holy experiment".



Mary Dyer on the Way to the Gallows

In 1658 Puritan Massachusetts Bay passed a law banishing Quakers on pain of death. Mary Dyer, a recent convert, was banished but deliberately returned. Condemned to death, she was taken to the gallows, where two other male Quakers were hanged as she watched and waited for her own hanging. At the last moment, due to her being a women with children to care for, Mary Dyer was reprieved and banished again.

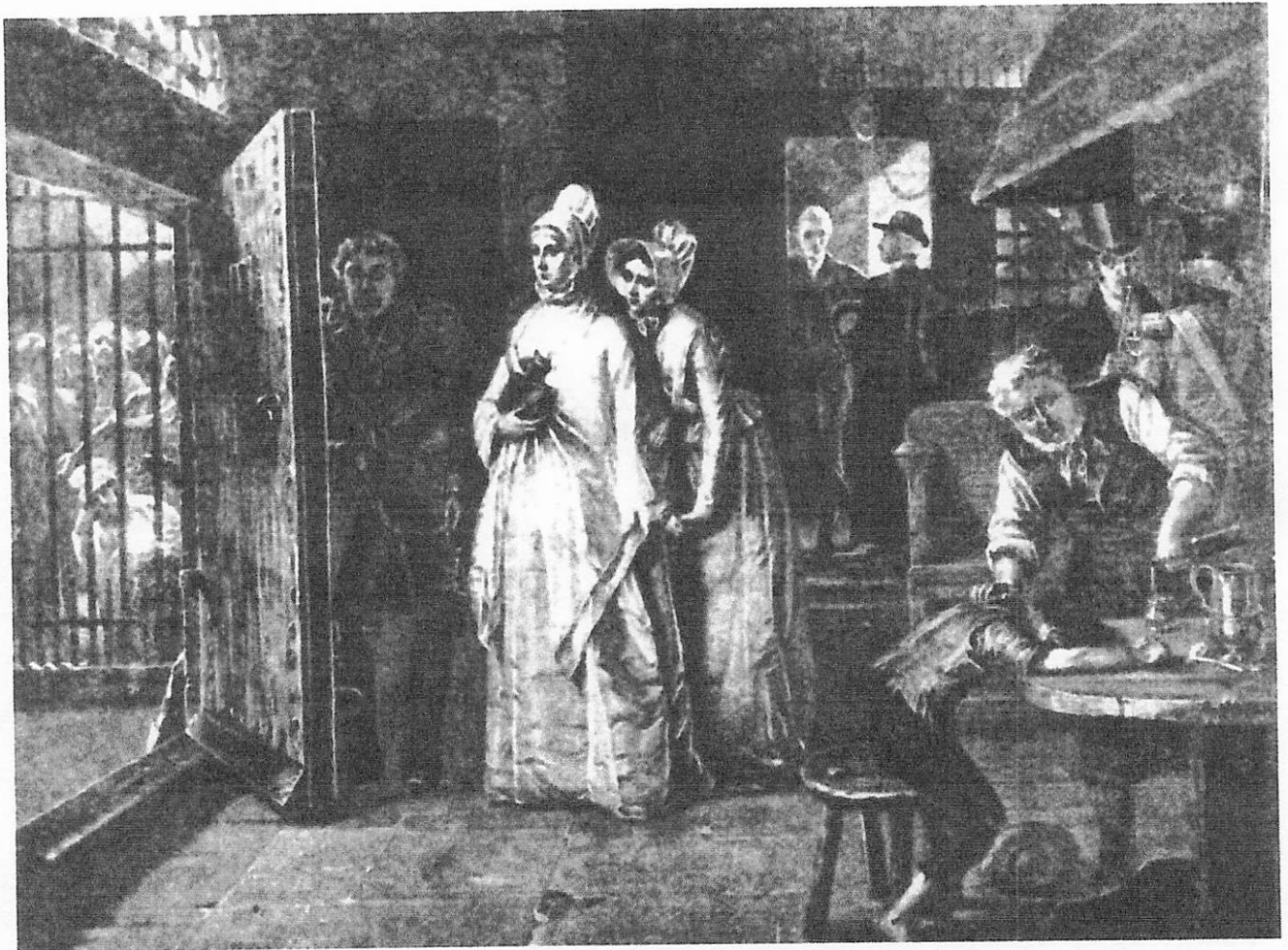
Mary had arrived in the Massachusetts Bay colony from England with her Puritan husband some twenty-three years earlier in 1635. There they raised their family under the strict guidelines of the Puritan religion. Every action and manner of speech had to be carefully chosen. For example, babies could not be referred to as "innocent" because under Puritan doctrine all humans were sinners. No work could be done on the Sabbath – even lighting a fire to warm infants in the dead of winter. Mary began associating with known "heretics" like Anne Hutchinson. Her friendship with the free-thinking Anne prepared her for a chance meeting she had with George Fox in 1653 while on a trip to England. After that meeting, her life changed forever. She had become a Quaker.

After a series of run-ins with the Puritan ministers of Massachusetts Bay as well as her husband, Mary Dyer was banished from the colony. The Puritans were determined to rid themselves of the Quaker "cancer" that had begun to grow within their colony. Unlike Quakers the Puritans respected a strict church hierarchy that enforced a set of doctrines that all Puritans had to subscribe to. Additionally, like all social structures in that day, Puritan men held a position of authority over women and children, as well as a belief in God-given superiority over the native Americans. The Bible was revered by Puritans as the "rule book" that must be followed as interpreted by the Puritan leadership. And righteous judgment of all who failed to live up to these Puritan standards was needed to keep their religion pure from contamination.

The Quakers' religious experience was in direct conflict with every one of these Puritan tenets. The foundations of the two religions were bound to conflict. The Puritans, like most Christian denominations, held "obedience to God" as interpreted by church government as important in order to obtain salvation. Quakers did not understand this concept of "obedience", for theirs was a religion of "experiencing God" as corporately understood by the community of believers. This direct experience of God naturally led to salvation without any effort needing to be expended. These two belief systems were diametrically opposed. Puritans believed in the "original sin" of humankind brought upon all peoples by Adam. Quakers preached a message of "original blessing" that is always present for all who want to partake of it.

The Quakers were quite a threat to all of these components of the Puritan world, especially because they had a strong evangelical element at that time. The few Quakers that had sprung up among the Puritans sought converts. Once convinced of the Quaker "truths" that there is 'that of God' in all persons and there is a need to have a direct experience with the Divine without the aid of a minister or pastor, Quakers became unshakable in their determination to spread this truth to all persons.

Knowing full well the righteous indignation that would befall her, Mary Dyer made the conscious decision to return to her home in Massachusetts Bay. She intentionally continued to preach the Quaker "truths" she had accepted for herself. By so doing, her fate was sealed and in 1658 she was hanged as a heretic.



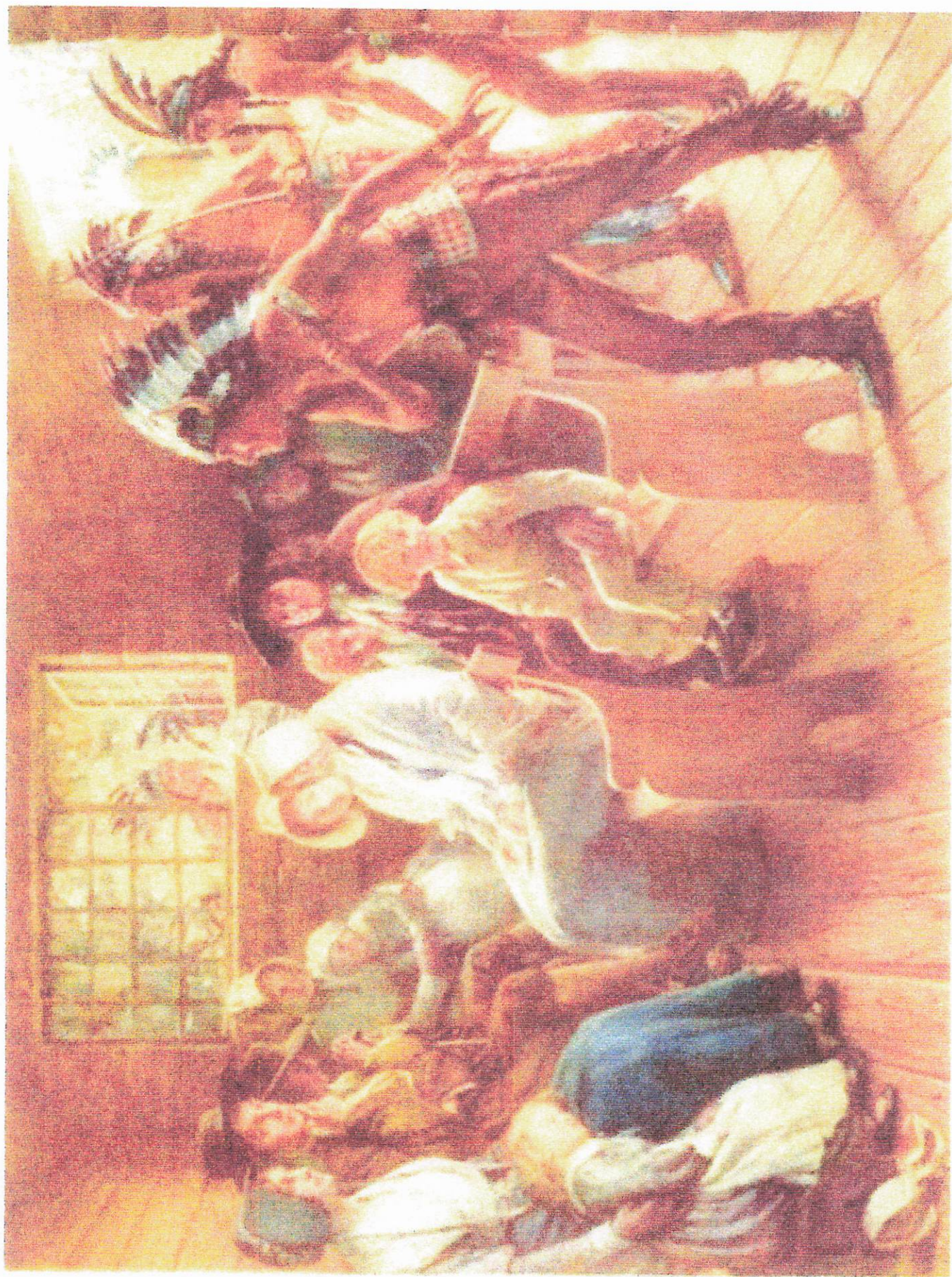
Elizabeth Fry Entering Newgate Prison

Prisons have always seemed like a natural place for Quakers to spend their time in social outreach. Historically, perhaps this is because of first hand experience with prison life during the great Quaker persecutions of the late 1600's and early 1700's. Laws were passed in England to forbid the assembly of Quakers in an effort to stop the spread of the new religion that threaten the established social order of the day. Upon fleeing to America, Quakers found the same treatment except in their colony of Pennsylvania.

That historical experience coupled with the belief of 'that of God' in every person and the literal acceptance of Jesus' teaching on returning love for evil, has moved Quakers throughout the centuries to concern themselves with the treatment of the imprisoned. The basis of that concern is not a naïve desire to let roam freely those who may harm us. Rather, it is the realization that to punish or return evil for evil only leads to a reinforcement of evil. Quakers advocated that while restraining those who would harm us, society should diminish the evil within them by returning goodness and a loving concern for their reformation.

Illustrated in this rendition of Elizabeth Fry entering Newgate Prison, is the courage and determination of early Quakers to work for "God's Kingdom" where others dared not tread. Elizabeth Fry came from a wealthy English Quaker family. She turned her back on her upscale upbringing, eventually abandoning the trappings of the wealthy to do "the Lord's work". She concentrated her efforts visiting the women prisoners in England and reading the Bible to them. By so doing, she helped to start the modern prison reform movement.

In past centuries, criminals were tortured or punished. Quakers came to support a penitentiary system that attempted to reform criminals. The term "penitentiary" is based on the word "penance". Part of the penance Quakers felt was important was the opportunity to experience silence in order to contemplate one's actions. For a time, much prison reform was stimulated by the activism of Quakers in this regard. However, in modern times the internment of criminals in penitentiaries has again become mere punishment with no expressed goal of reform. Thus, there is still much work for Quakers and other like-minded persons to do before the reality of Jesus' teachings is applied in even the most difficult circumstances.



Fierce Feathers

This painting by Doyle Penrose may look like the “wild” West, but it is actually an incident that occurred in Easton, Pennsylvania in 1775 when that part of the United States was still very wild. According to the records of the meeting, some warlike native Americans burst into a meeting for worship ready to attack the settlers. Even so, to the surprise of the warriors the meeting continued in worship, although a bit shaken and frightened. Even though the warriors and Quakers could not communicate in a common verbal language, the reverence of the silence was enough to move the warriors to take a seat with the Quaker worshipers in order to commune with them. No one was harmed.

Upon arriving in the New World from England, most Quakers were not led to convert native Americans to Quakerism, as they were led to convert the English settlers they found around them. The native American belief in the Great Spirit that lived within everything and the Quaker belief of ‘that of God’ in everyone had much in common. Quakers held that native Americans needed no conversion. These early Quakers thought the native Americans already practiced “true religion”. This formed the basis of a great deal of respect by Quakers for native Americans. Quakers in Pennsylvania paid native Americans for their land and lived in peace with them until more and more non-Quakers moved into the colony and eventually took over the legislature.

The Religious Society of Friends in the United States has always advocated for native Americans, lobbying government officials and agencies to respect their rights and pursuit of happiness. In 1795 Quakers in the northern Shenandoah Valley of Virginia set up a fund to pay American Indians for the lands Quakers had settled in the region. Unable to locate survivors of the natives who had previously lived in the valley, these Friends set aside the monies for assistance of native Americans under the care of Baltimore Yearly meeting. The Indian Affairs Committee was established to distribute the interest income from this endowment to organizations which assist and advocate for native Americans. The committee also stimulates interest in and activity for native Americans, cooperates with other Yearly Meetings and other Friends’ organizations in projects for the benefit of native Americans, and concerns itself with pending legislation on the national and local levels involving native American issues.



Elias Hicks

Elias Hicks and Liberal Quakers

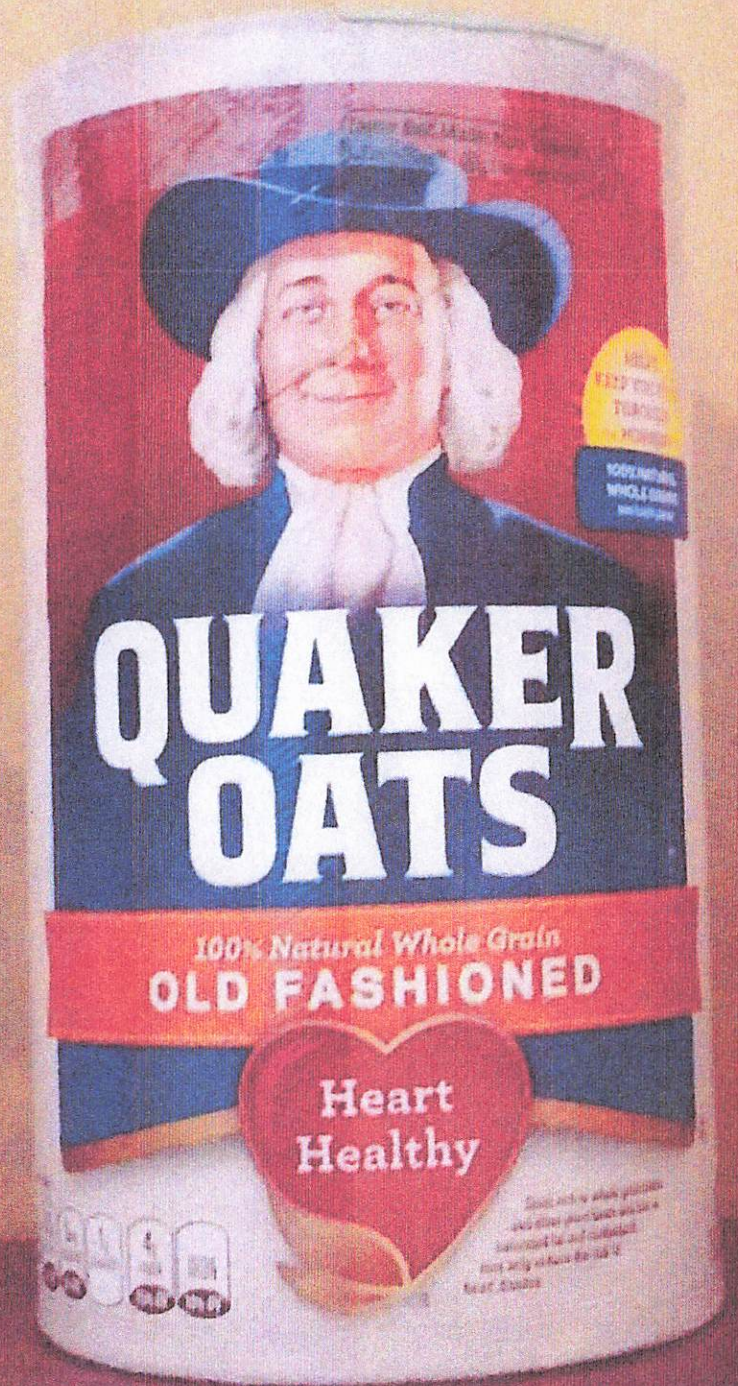
Born on rural Long Island in the year 1748, Elias Hicks unwittingly became the catalyst for the great Quaker schism of 1828. Until that date Quakers were unified as one religious society with slight variations between yearly meetings (regional groups) due to geographical separation. Within every meeting there was quite a diversity of beliefs and spiritual experiences. The silence of worship brought them all together as one community of faith.

In the year 1800 this cooperative and loving spirit was disrupted when a Quaker woman in England stated that there were parts of the New Testament of the Bible, such as the virgin birth of Jesus, the truth of which she was not convinced. The Quaker elders in her meeting proceeded to "disown" her; the Quaker term for revoking membership. Elias publicly defended this English Friend's right to believe however she was moved by God to believe. He felt that the English Quaker elders were engaging in idolatry by placing the Bible before the Holy Spirit that inspired men to write it. On the other side of the issue, many Friends believed that Elias Hicks was questioning the role of the Quaker elders to keep the meeting "pure". They feared not doing so would lead to Friends becoming "worldly". Unlike today, Quakers were distinguishable from everyone else. Not only were their values different than most people's, they also dressed in the Quaker "plain garb" (collarless dresses and shirts that were black or gray) and spoke the Quaker "plain speech" ('thee' and 'thy' in place of 'you' and 'your' and the use of numeric identifiers for the months and days of the calendar).

Over the next twenty-seven years a chain reaction played out that increasingly polarized the Religious Society of Friends within the United States, culminating in a schism in the year 1828. Leading up to that year for nearly three decades Friends more and more began to identify themselves with one side or the other. All the while, Elias Hicks tried desperately to keep Quakers together as one united Religious Society of Friends. However, by that year the more fundamentalist and evangelical Quakers could no longer tolerate the more mystical and liberal Friends. So, in most yearly meetings in the United States they separated themselves from the more numerous liberal Friends to form separate yearly meetings within the same geographical areas as the original yearly meetings – something that had never occurred before among Quakers anywhere in the world. English Friends were never affected by the rift.

As the more conservative Friends had predicted, once they were gone from the yearly meetings now comprised of the more liberal and mystical Friends, things began to change gradually over the next 150 years. First, within one or two generations the Quaker "plain speech" fell into disuse by liberal Friends – especially outside of the meeting and family. The Quaker "plain garb" gave way to the simpler clothing worn by the world. As though to insure that an abuse of power by the elders would never occur again, they were limited to terms of three years instead of life. Eventually, the term "elder" fell into disuse because of the negative connotations associated with it. Disowning was also eventually discontinued because it was considered judgmental and not in keeping with the teachings of Jesus. In order to enhance the mystical element of worship, benches were rearranged from rows into squares or circles. The Bible and the historical figure of Jesus received less and less emphasis over time. Many of the liberal Friends began to believe that the teachings of Jesus which centered on love, forgiveness, and compassion were the most important thing. This eventually led to an embracing of universalism.

Liberal Quakers today can directly trace all of these facets of their Quaker experience to the great Quaker schism Elias Hicks unwittingly caused over two hundred years ago.



Hijacking the Quaker Reputation

From their beginning in the 1600's Quakers have been known for their integrity. Quaker-owned shops, Quaker businessmen, and Quaker craftsmen were quite successful during the early years of the Quaker religion because of their reputation for providing good quality and honest value. Quakers actually instituted the current practice of labeling items with price tags to demonstrate the Quaker value of equality. Rather than using this fair approach, non-Quaker merchants at that time routinely priced items on the spot depending on what amount they thought could be garnered from the customer at hand.

In order to benefit from this positive Quaker reputation, it is not surprising that starting in the early 1800's numerous non-Quaker businesses began using the Quaker name to promote their products to the general public – even though the products were not endorsed nor made by Quakers, and these businesses were not owned nor operated by Quakers. Usually, the advertised products enlisted a byline such as “good quality and honest value”, prominently displayed under the name “Quaker”.

Over the years all sorts of Quaker named products have emerged. This is just a partial list:

- Quaker Steak and Lube
- Quaker State Oil
- Quaker Maid Meats
- Old Quaker Whiskey
- Quaker Oats
- Quaker Lace
- Quaker Maid Cabinets
- Quaker Chemical Corporation

Additionally, the name “Quaker” has been used for sports teams, mascots, flowers, parrots, street names, etc. Even though most people do not know any Quakers or what they stand for, they are very familiar with the “Quaker” name due to its heavy use in merchandising.

This unapproved use of the name “Quaker” has been like a monkey on the back of the Religious Society of Friends throughout its history. QUAKER OATS: The impression most people have of Quakers today comes from the image of the 18th century Quaker Oats man displayed prominently on their cereal boxes and breakfast bar wrappers. This image has fostered a mistaken image of what a modern Quaker is like. OLD QUAKER WHISKEY: Even though during their first few hundred years, Quakers refrained from the use of alcohol, they found themselves having to explain to non-Quakers that Quakers did not make and sell whiskey. QUAKER STATE OIL: Oil tycoons were part of the industrial elite during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, these shrewd businessmen were not highly thought of by the general public due to their ruthless business practices that were then unregulated by the government. These unsavory business practices bumped squarely against the Quaker values of integrity, simplicity, care for the community, and Earth stewardship. Yet, many people assumed these businesses were run by Quakers due to the use of the name “Quaker” to sell oil. QUAKER LACE: Lace was considered a vain and extravagant product by many Quakers of old – a product that was not in keeping with Quaker simplicity as evidenced in the simple style of Quaker dress that was worn by Quakers during their first 250 years of history.

Over the years various Quaker groups have lodged complaints to American corporations for their portrayal of Quakers through their products that bear the Quaker name. However, since the name “Quaker” is a nick-name and has never been trademarked, there has been no legal basis for adjudicating these complaints with the courts.



John Woolman and the slave

The Abolition of Slavery

This picture depicts John Woolman at the age of twenty-three (1743) at his place of employment in Mount Holly, New Jersey. He was asked by his employer to write a bill of sale for an African American slave. He did it under protest, with a resulting crisis of conscience. Almost immediately, he made a commitment to devote the rest of his life to opposing slavery as "inconsistent with the Christian religion". He has come to be recognized as one among the finest flowerings of American Quakerism.

It was three years later in 1746 that John Woolman came to Virginia in his attempt to remove the scourge of slavery from the Religious Society of Friends and the entire nation. He visited all of the meetings in the colony, including Cedar Creek meeting (the parent meeting of Richmond Friends Meeting and grandparent meeting of Midlothian Friends Meeting). While many of the older Quakers opposed his desire to free all slaves, he found a hearing ear among young Virginian Quakers. Their parents had much to lose with the abolition of slavery. The entire economy of the South was based on the horror of slave labor. Quakers had a real crisis to come to terms with. They knew that to free their slaves when the rest of Virginia continued to depend on slavery, meant economic ruin. No doubt as the years went on and the young people who heard John Woolman's message grew to adulthood, a majority of Virginia Quakers began to favor the abolition of slavery within the Virginia Yearly Meeting. However, Quaker process required that all members of the Yearly Meeting agree before abolition could occur.

It was the year 1800 that the decision was finally made at the Virginia Yearly Meeting sessions to "disown" (excommunicate) Virginia Quakers who continued the practice of slavery. That this decision occurred 65 years before the Civil War is amazing once it is realized that all Quakers at the yearly meeting sessions had to agree to the ban and disownment policy. It is likely that many had already freed their slaves due to decisions made years previously in their monthly meetings.

The abolition of slavery within Virginia Yearly Meeting proved devastating to the yearly meeting's membership. In 1800 there were sixty-three Quaker meetings in Virginia Yearly Meeting (which covered most of the state – but not all of it). By 1820 thirty of these had been 'laid down'. Some Virginia Quakers were 'disowned' (their membership was revoked) for continuing to own slaves. Other Quakers found it difficult to survive in a slave economy where they were held in suspicion by their neighbors due to their stand. So these ones moved west, mainly to Ohio. Among the surviving meetings were Cedar Creek Friends Meeting and its offspring, Richmond Friends Meeting. However, they were greatly reduced in size, and eventually Cedar Creek Meeting was laid down in 1875.

As the Civil War approached times got even harder for Richmond Friends. There are records of arrests for members handing out pamphlets against slavery on the streets of Richmond. Additionally, as pictured, Richmond Friends likely assisted with the Underground Railroad. Although there are no records of such assistance for obvious reasons, the typical hiding places for runaway slaves have been found in homes known to have been owned by members of the Richmond Meeting. Because such assistance was regarded as a serious crime comparable to treason, it is not surprising that no written records exist. Additionally, Quaker participants in the Underground Railroad did not speak about it to anyone – even their families. For the protection of their families this oath of silence continued for decades after the Civil War. Friends likely took the knowledge of their participation to their graves.



VERA MAE GREEN
1928-1982

Confronting the Vestiges of Slavery

Vera Mae Green (pictured), a world renowned Anthropologist, was born in 1928 in poverty in Chicago, Illinois. As a young adult she soon became highly educated and taught at several prestigious universities. It was not long before Green recognized and advocated for the complexities associated with the social/cultural factors in African American life. Additionally, she was very concerned with the issue of international human rights. Her actions on behalf of human rights contributed significantly to interethnic studies, black family studies, and the study of poverty and the poor. As a result Green found herself working on international community development with the United Nations and many other organizations and became a spiritual influence for those she worked with.

A dedicated Quaker and member of 57th Street Friends Meeting, Vera Green assisted Quakers in confronting a previously ignored vestige of slavery that was negatively affecting the *Religious Society of Friends* (Quakers). In both England and the United States, Quakers played a major role in the abolishment of slavery. In doing so, Quakers were the first religious organization to take a collective stand against both slavery and the slave trade. In the United States these efforts began to bear fruit in northern states during the Revolutionary War and its aftermath (1776-1805) as slavery became illegal there. Even though Virginia did not ban slavery along with northern states, Quakers in Virginia followed suit with the northern states and banned the practice of slavery for all Quakers in Virginia. Once slavery was ended in the entire United States in 1865, few African Americans were attracted to Quakerism, and this remained so into the twenty-first century. After emancipation, the practice of social separation of the races became entrenched throughout the nation, either by law (in the South) or through custom (in the North). Perhaps due to centuries of slavery in the United States, with no comprehensive long-term plans to integrate the races upon ending slavery, continued social separation would inevitably happen.

It is disconcerting to many Quakers in our day that Quakers back then, just like most other predominantly white churches, did not encourage and facilitate social integration within their meetings. As a result, twentieth and twenty-first century Quakers were left with an ugly vestige of slavery inside their meetinghouses. With the advent of the Civil Rights movement, liberal Quaker yearly meetings, as well as the umbrella liberal Quaker organization *Friends General Conference (FGC)*, began to actively seek answers to an increasingly pressing question: Why are there not more African American Quakers among liberal Quakers?

After researching and studying the question at hand, Green revealed her findings to *Friends General Conference* in the early 1970's. She found that little outreach was specifically being done to reach African Americans where they were located except for those African Americans who had similar socioeconomic and educational backgrounds to the existing population of liberal Friends. She also found that while some Quaker characteristics such as "lack of ceremony" and "an understanding of humanity" appealed to African Americans, others like "patience" and "avoidance of conflict" did not - due to the historical reminder of "submissiveness" that had been demanded of enslaved people in order to survive. Vera Mae Green continued her work with *Friends General Conference* through 1979 as she also continued her international work to promote human rights by enlightening many influential organizations with anthropological information that uncovers the root causes of injustice. She died after a long illness in 1982 at the age of 54.

Much of Green's initial work within the *Religious Society of Friends* has been continued by other individual Friends and more official groups within the *Religious Society of Friends*. Needless to say, the problems of long-term social separation demand positive actions in order to remove this vestige of slavery. Blinders must be removed, relationships must be cultivated, and a desire to understand long-standing needs, fears, and hopes must be honestly pursued. Love and Light, which is so precious to Quakers, must be at the core of our efforts to remove the vestiges of slavery.



Miss B. Arthur

The Progressive Quakers and Liberal Quakerism

The social activism and spiritual diversity that is so prominent within liberal Quakerism in our day can be traced directly to the emergence of the Progressive Quaker movement that began in the 1840's. Initially influenced by the Hicksite branch of Quakerism that previously emerged from the great Hicksite/Orthodox Quaker schism of 1828, Progressive Quakers soon became disillusioned with the Hicksite Quaker meetings of which they were members.

This was because the first generation of distinctly Hicksite Quakers retained much of the ecclesiastical (top-down) Quaker hierarchy that had been present within Quakerism since the late 1600's upon George Fox's introduction of outward forms to dampen the religious fervor of the earliest Quakers. The major reason for the 1828 Hicksite-Orthodox schism was disagreement over the primacy of the Inner Light versus the primacy of the Bible. Contrary to the belief of most modern liberal Quakers (the modern-day inheritors of the Hicksite Quaker tradition), the Hicksites left historical Quaker traditions, culture, and hierarchy in-tact. Progressive Quakers among them were convinced that those Hicksite meetings were not going far enough with reforms in two major aspects.

First, Progressives wanted dismantled the ecclesiastical hierarchy that had been present within Quakerism for two hundred years. They wanted to bring about within the Religious Society of Friends the spirit of expanding democracy that had been spreading throughout America. As a by-product they also wanted to end the sectarian isolationism that had always been a part of Quakerism; they wanted Quakers to work for social reforms hand-and-hand with other religious denominations. Additionally, they wanted their Hicksite meetings to not just embrace Christian seekers; they wanted their meetings to also embrace seekers who were more humanistic and atheistic in outlook, as well as those who were involved in the spiritualism movement (which believed the Spirit world was actively communicating in our day). They wanted a complete openness to diversity within the Religious Society of Friends.

Secondly, they wanted their Hicksite Quaker meetings to reach far beyond the Religious Society of Friends in order to effect change in the outside world. Previous generations of Quaker social reformers had confined their efforts towards their fellow Quakers. Quakers like Elias Hicks and John Woolman worked tirelessly within American Quaker Yearly Meetings to free enslaved African Americans. Their efforts were generally not directed to the world outside of Quakerdom. More progressive-minded Quakers who began to emerge were different. Levi Coffin, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony (pictured), Henry Wilbur and many other progressives believed in activism and inclusiveness which sprung from a place of unbridled love, forgiveness and compassion. Progressive Quakers were responsible for social reforms like the Underground Railroad and Women's Suffrage.

While the progressive Quakers' Hicksite meetings were not inclined to expel them, they were equally not inclined to embrace their desire to dismantle traditional Quaker seclusion, tradition, quietism, and ecclesiastical order. Out of frustration, during the 1840's the progressives began to form their own monthly and yearly meetings.

Yet, the seed had been planted among Hicksite Quakers. And by 1940 there was no longer a need for the Progressives to maintain their own monthly meetings because Hicksite meetings everywhere had embraced their way of thinking. Entirely due to the influence of Progressive Quakers, in our day Hicksite (renamed "liberal") Quaker meetings are routinely associated with spiritual diversity, activism, and a more egalitarian spiritual environment than other branches of Quakerism or other religions.



Mysticism: The 'Engine' of liberal Quakerism

Rufus Jones (1863-1948) helped to shape the modern soul of liberal Quakerism. Liberal Quakerism was first birthed unintentionally by Elias Hicks in 1827, to then be matured by the influence of the Progressive Quakers during the later 1800's, and then ripened into a more universal mystical religious experience due to the influence of Rufus Jones in the first half of the twentieth century.

Born in 1863 to a New England Quaker family, Rufus Jones wrote extensively about mysticism; always stressing that Christian mysticism is a personal experience of "Oneness" with the divine that is similar to what Jesus himself experienced when he walked on the Earth. He was convinced that such a personal mystical relationship with God is life-changing.

In 1917 Rufus Jones helped found the Nobel prize-winning American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) as a vehicle for Quakers to provide humanitarian relief around the world. In 1927, Jones visited India to meet with Mahatma Gandhi and tour the birthplace of the Buddha. Upon experiencing 'that of God' outside of Christian spiritual traditions, he formulated a new approach to Quaker missionary efforts - that of giving humanitarian aid to people while having no need to also convert people to Christianity. And thus an appreciation of spiritual universalism became widely accepted by liberal Quakers.

Rufus Jones experienced his Quakerism as a direct personal experience with the Inner Light that guided his every action. He felt a kinship with the very earliest Quakers before the Quaker movement under George Fox's influence adopted a strict discipline and practice that was expected from all Quakers until the mid-1800's when liberal Quakerism began to emerge.

Beginning while Jones was still alive, his mysticism and influence started to thrust the liberal Quaker tradition solidly into the family of mystical world religions; along with Taoism, Zen Buddhism, Sufi Islam, Kabbalah Judaism, among others. All of these religious traditions, including liberal Quakerism, views 'becoming one with God or the Absolute' as possible in order to live an enhanced human experience. After Jones' death in 1948, his spirituality has continued to be a major influence within liberal Quakerism.

While not every liberal Quaker would accept the "mystic" label for himself or herself, many would agree that Jesus was perhaps the first Christian mystic, and his oneness with the Universal Source was a model of how best to live. Modern liberal Quaker thought and practice clearly has mysticism as its 'engine', giving power to the movement.

Consider a selection of mystical thought from Rufus Jones which helped to shape the modern liberal Quaker experience:

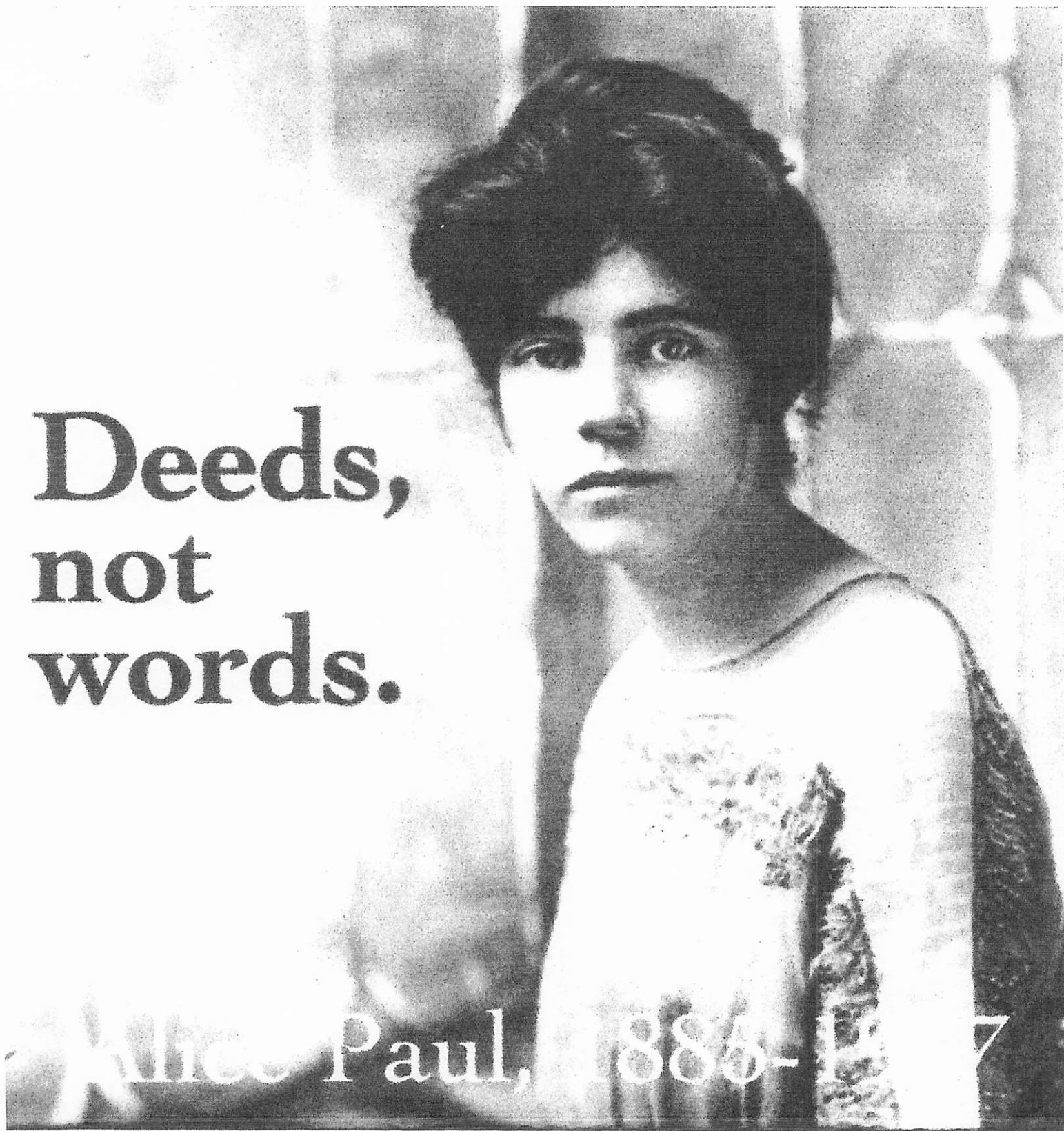
"The essential characteristic of mysticism is the attainment of a personal conviction by an individual that the human spirit and the divine Spirit have met, have found each other, and are in mutual and reciprocal correspondence as spirit with Spirit."

"We shall not rebuild our shattered world until we recover our faith in eternal realities; we shall not do that until we discover Spirit within ourselves."

"It seems to me tremendously important that Jesus is as truly a revelation of man as he is a revelation of God. We see at last in him what man was meant to be. We have seen God revealed in Jesus. I wish now that we might learn to see the divine possibilities of man revealed in Jesus."

**Deeds,
not
words.**

Alice Paul, 1883-1977



Alice Paul, Quaker Women's Rights Activist

Alice Paul was the architect of some of the most outstanding political achievements on behalf of women in the 20th century. Born in 1885 to Quaker parents in Mt. Laurel, New Jersey, Alice Paul grew up living a simple Quaker life where values were considered much more important than money or status – even though her family was well-off. Her experience growing up as a Quaker girl was a life of equal treatment to boys within the Quaker community. As she became an adult she soon developed a calling to dedicate her life to bringing this same reality to the entire world. She eventually received three Law degrees.

In 1913, on the day before the inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson, Paul organized a march of five thousand women past the White House in Washington DC. Days later, she led a delegation asking the President to request Congress to debate a national amendment on women's suffrage. Over the next few years, she lobbied him repeatedly. By 1916 Paul broke away from the main *National American Woman Suffrage Association* to found the *National Woman's Party (NWP)* – a group intent on making suffrage a national issue by means of public demonstrations and protests. In 1917, when Wilson refused to see any more of their delegations, the NWP began a silent picket outside the White House – a radical move for the time. Known as the *Silent Sentinels*, they remained for months, at times mustering as many as a thousand picketers.

With the involvement of the US in World War I, The US government was no longer willing to tolerate picketing of the White House and the police began to repeatedly arrest the protestors, gradually increasing sentences from a few days to months in an attempt to stop the women from protesting. And in October 1917, Paul was arrested and sentenced to seven months in prison. The treatment of the suffragists in prison was appalling. The women were held in solitary confinement and denied legal counsel. When Paul went on a hunger strike in protest, she was moved to the psychopathic ward, deprived of sleep and force-fed – a painful and dangerous procedure. On one occasion, thirty women suffragists in the jail were violently beaten by their guards. Newspapers throughout the United States began to carry stories of the women's ill treatment, which generated a wave of protest and sympathy. All the women were released within a few weeks, and four months later their arrests and subsequent treatment were declared unconstitutional. In January 1918, entirely due to the efforts of women under Alice Paul's leadership, President Wilson announced his support for women's suffrage. However, it wasn't until 1920 that votes for women were secured with passage of the nineteenth amendment to the United States constitution.

Alice Paul believed the true battle for equality had yet to be won. In 1923, Paul announced that she would be working for a new constitutional amendment, one she authored. It called for absolute equality stating, "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction."

After World War II, in the late 1940's Alice Paul worked to ensure that equal rights for men and women were built into the UN's definition of Human Rights. She also campaigned for *The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)*, which was introduced in every session of Congress from 1923 until it passed in 1972. During the 1940s, both the Republicans and Democrats added the ERA to their party platforms. The amendment, which is officially named after Alice Paul, fell short of ratification by three states. Additionally, Paul played a major role in adding protection for women in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Alice Paul died in 1977 at a Quaker retirement facility in Moorestown, New Jersey, just a few miles from her birthplace and family home of Paulsdale. She is buried in Westfield Friends Meeting's cemetery. Both Great Britain and the US have issued postage stamps in her honor.

Rustin Awarded the Medal of Freedom



Bayard Rustin, Dedicated Quaker Activist

Bayard Rustin, born in 1912, was a Civil Rights activist, a close associate of Martin Luther King, an advocate of gay/ lesbian rights, and an international human rights activist. A fourth generation Quaker, he was a member of New York City's 15th Street Quaker meeting. He was an ardent pacifist and a primary influence in bringing non-violent resistance into the American Civil Rights movement. During World War II he protested against segregation that was practiced within the armed forces, and worked with the *American Friends Service Committee* to protect the property of interned Japanese Americans. Rustin was jailed in 1944 for his conscientious objection to cooperating with the draft. While in jail, he organized protests against segregated seating in the prison dining hall.

After World War II, Rustin took part in the *Journey of Reconciliation* across four southern States, to protest against illegal segregation in inter-state travel. He was arrested, along with his fellow protestors, several times in the course of the journey and in North Carolina was sentenced to thirty days on a chain gang. The protest became a model for future *Freedom Rides*, and prepared him for his work advising Martin Luther King in the national Civil Rights movement.

Rustin was an openly gay man at a time when being such was illegal in all US states, resulting in his arrest. This fact was often used against him and contributed to his relatively low profile in the Civil Rights movement even though he was a major contributor. In the 1970s and 80s he wrote a number of essays which drew parallels between the civil rights movement and the gay liberation movement.

Rustin advised Martin Luther King on the application of non-violent resistance to the boycott of public transport in Montgomery, Alabama. Rustin was responsible for organizing some of the most important demonstrations for civil rights and in August 1963, he had the mammoth task of organizing the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom* – a rally attended by twenty thousand people that culminated in King's "I have a dream" speech. In 1968, shortly before King's assassination, he drafted the *Economic Bill of Rights* which called for a meaningful job and a living wage for people of all racial backgrounds.

Throughout the 1940s and 50s, Rustin supported independence movements in India, Ghana and Nigeria. In the 1970s and 1980s, he became an election and human rights observer in countries like Chile, El Salvador, Grenada, Haiti, Poland, and Zimbabwe. As Vice Chairman of the *International Rescue Committee* he participated in the international *March for Survival* on the Thai-Cambodian border and helped raise awareness of the plight of the Vietnamese boat people. He was Co-Chairman of the *Citizens Commission on Indochinese Refugees* and helped found the *National Emergency Coalition for Haitian Refugees*.

While maintaining a senior role in the civil rights leadership, Rustin also broadened his concerns and devoted more time to his interest in international human rights and democracy. He worked on behalf of political dissidents, whether individuals or groups, and traveled extensively with the *International Rescue Committee* supporting their work with refugees fleeing war and political unrest.

Rustin maintained ties with the Quaker community throughout his life. He died in 1987, prompting Ronald Reagan to declare, "Bayard Rustin will be sorely missed by all those who shared his commitment to the twin causes of peace and freedom. As few men have, Mr. Rustin understood that the struggle for the two is inseparable; either we achieve them both or neither. Though a pacifist, he was a fighter to the finish. That is why over the course of his life he won the undying love of all who cherish freedom." In 2013 Bayard Rustin was posthumously awarded the *Presidential Medal of Freedom*, the highest civilian award in the United States.



The Ancient Mystery of Powhatan Quakers

Few people alive today know that the Powhatan hamlet of Fine Creek was a center of Quaker life in what was once part of Goochland County; then a part of Cumberland County with its formation in 1749; and finally a part of Powhatan County with that county's formation in 1777. The Fine Creek area was first developed in 1735 by John Pleasants Sr., a member of a prominent and early Virginia Quaker family. He built a gristmill at Lees Landing Road (Rt. 641) and Huguenot Trail (Rt. 711) along the lower falls of Fine Creek. Within a decade a small rural hamlet emerged next to the gristmill with several stores, a cooper's shop, a blacksmith shop, a small cheese factory, a postal station, and a ferry that provided access across the James River to the northern part of Goochland County. Eventually a one room schoolhouse was also built for the area's children.

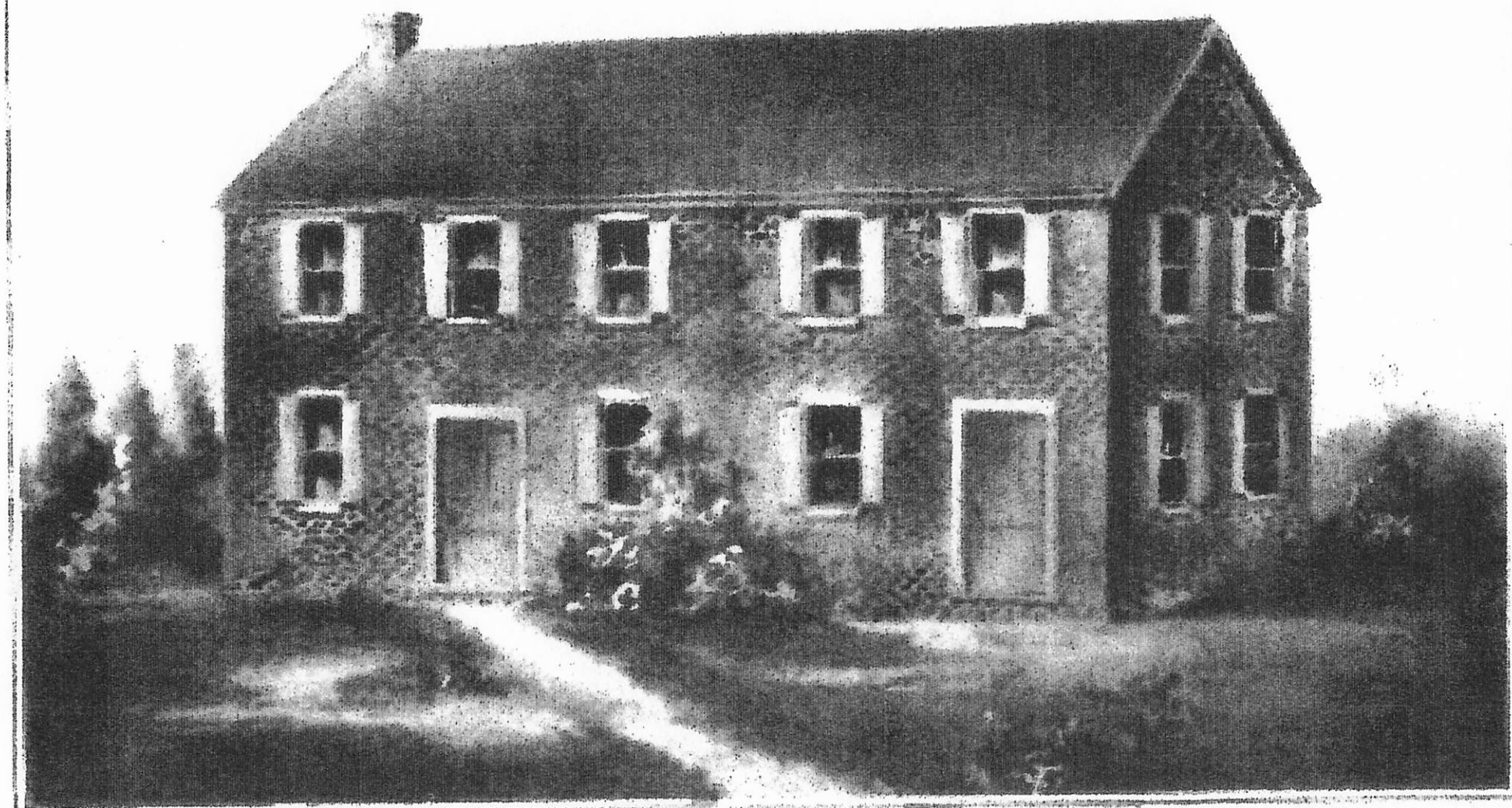
We know from the historical Quaker record that White Oak Swamp Monthly Meeting (aka. Henrico Monthly Meeting) allowed a "particular" (or subordinate) Quaker Meeting, Fine Creek Meeting, to be created in the area in 1746. At that time in Quaker history a new meeting would not have been allowed by the "monthly" (parent) meeting if there were not a good number of Quakers willing to support its ongoing existence. Quaker discipline was strict then and not the laissez-faire culture of liberal Quakerism today. Quakers were required to attend worship every "First Day" (Sunday) at the local meetinghouse if they were to remain Quakers. So, we know that a ready-made and active membership would have been available to provide ongoing support for the new meeting.

White Oak Swamp Monthly Meeting had a dozen or so Quaker meetings under its care during the eighteenth century. Fine Creek Meeting was just one of these, along with its "sister" meeting of Richmond Friends Meeting. Had Fine Creek meeting survived the ravages of history, today it would be 49 years older than Richmond Friends Meeting.

Powhatan County archives do indicate that Fine Creek Quakers were active abolitionists. James Pleasants of Fine Creek (brother of John Pleasants Sr. who was instrumental in developing the gristmill at Fine Creek) began emancipating his slaves around 1800 along with Fine Creek Quakers John Pleasants Jr. and Jonathan Pleasants, both sons of John Pleasants Sr. No doubt they were prompted to do so by a unanimous decision by all Virginia Quakers in 1800 to "disown" (the term then used to revoke Quaker membership) any Quaker who refused to emancipate their slaves. All Virginia Quakers had been asked to begin doing so since the mid 1770's. County and historical records demonstrate a concerted effort by Fine Creek Quakers to systematically work towards this end. It wasn't until 1804, however, that the county finally began providing newly freed blacks their certificates of freedom.

Fine Creek Meeting existed from 1746 until 1780 – some 34 years. Yet, there is much mystery surrounding the meeting. At that time in Quaker history, once a meeting was in existence for more than a few years, there was pressure as well as support to build a permanent meetinghouse. Also, Fine Creek meeting was nurtured by the Pleasants family – one of the wealthiest families in Virginia. So, the circumstantial evidence would suggest that a meetinghouse existed somewhere in the Fine Creek area of Powhatan.

Where exactly was the Fine Creek meetinghouse located? Was it in the hamlet surrounding the gristmill; or, was it in the surrounding countryside? Why was the Fine Creek Meeting "laid down" after existing for 34 years? One can only hope that as ancient records become more searchable due to digitization, someone will be able to fill in the missing pieces to this local Quaker mystery. Maybe it will be YOU!



CEDAR CREEK MEETING-HOUSE, HANOVER COUNTY, VA. - ERECTED 1770

Cedar Creek Friends Meeting

Cedar Creek "Particular" Meeting in Hanover County was established in 1719; later being procedurally combined in 1735 with the Golansville "Particular" Meeting in Caroline County to form Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting. After the discontinuance of White Oak Swamp Monthly Meeting (aka. Henrico Monthly Meeting) in 1841, Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting became the parent meeting of Richmond Friends Meeting. It is therefore the grandparent meeting of Midlothian Friends Meeting. The demise of White Oak Swamp Monthly Meeting with its meetinghouse in Sandston, resulted from persecution of Quakers by the Henrico County sheriff. The Quaker population moved into western Hanover to avoid his reaches. Despite their relative distance from the law, many members of the new monthly meeting had difficulties with the authorities due to their stance on war, slavery, and the established Anglican Church. A good number of families refused to pay "priest wages" or taxes to the Anglican church, causing arrest and imprisonment, as well as the confiscation of property and livestock. Members of Cedar Creek Meeting refused to fight in the Revolutionary War. Many were imprisoned or captured and forced to fight at gun point.

Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting reached its peak right before the Revolutionary War. After the Great Awakening of 1738, attendance increased markedly due to the widespread spiritual revival. In fact, the monthly meeting grew to encompass as many as fourteen indulged and preparative meetings. At its peak Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting had members from Richmond all the way out to the Blue Ridge, and from the Fredericksburg area southward to North Carolina. The meetinghouse itself was large by Quaker standards (even today) – 60 by 40 feet with a full balcony all around the perimeter of the building.

Many historical Virginia figures worshipped at the Cedar Creek Meetinghouse, including Patrick Henry (he was not a Quaker) and Dolly Payne Madison, wife of James Madison. Her family, the Paynes, were dedicated members of the meeting and built Scotchtown just three miles from the site of the Cedar Creek meetinghouse in Hanover County. Patrick Henry bought Scotchtown from the Paynes. The Friends boarding school at Cedar Creek was attended by children of many prominent Virginians, including John Lynch (Quaker founder of Lynchburg), Thomas Pleasants (influential Hanover Quaker who's descendants now own Pleasants Hardware), and Judge Hugh Nelson.

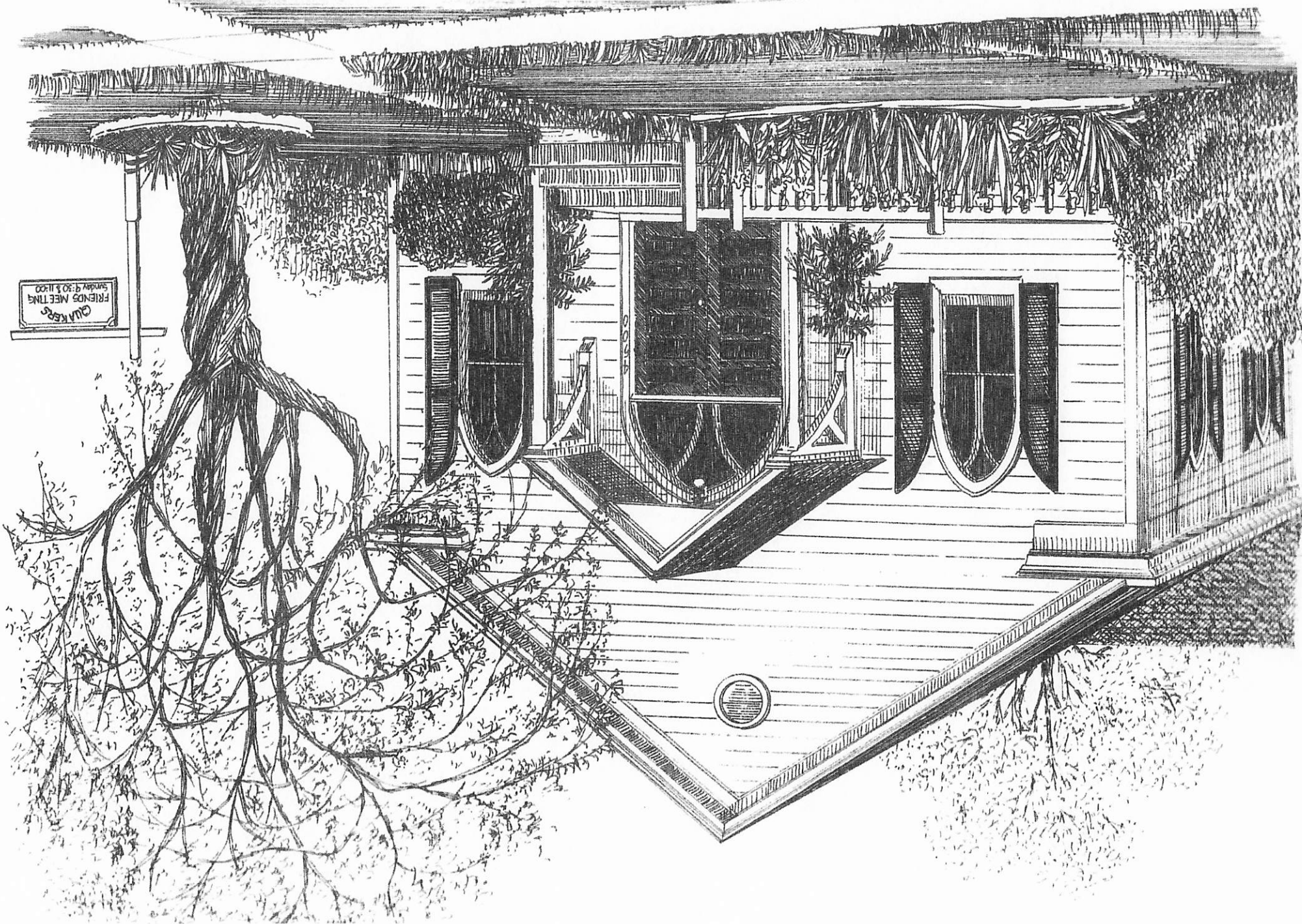
Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting was the first meeting in Virginia to discuss the abolition of slavery in 1769. By 1772, using Quaker process the monthly meeting decided that all member meetings and Friends must free their slaves. This decision affected many Particular, indulged, and preparative meetings under the care of Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting. This was the first rule or law of any kind forbidding slavery in Virginia. By 1784 the monthly meeting began to 'disown' (revoke membership of) any Friend who owned slaves. As a result many Friends had to sell their farms and move either north or west where slaveholding was illegal. They could not economically survive in the slave culture of Virginia. Some families moved to Richmond and city life in order to survive.

It is ironic that the act of faith shown by the Cedar Creek Quaker community resulted in their demise in Virginia. The great Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting eventually was laid down in 1875. Monthly business meetings had increasingly been held in Richmond since the 1850's. The large abandoned meetinghouse, then under the care of Richmond Monthly Meeting, burned to the ground in 1904 in a raging forest fire with only a few bricks left for posterity (displayed below). At that time only a remnant of Quakers remained in the Richmond Friends Meeting (likely less than twenty) who were once part of the several hundred that were associated with Cedar Creek Monthly meeting at its peak.

The site of the great Quaker meetinghouse is now on the Virginia Historical Registry and has a marker near it. You can still see the sunken graves covered in periwinkle with no headstones, as was the Quaker custom (on route 803, off of route 54 in Hanover).

Quakers - Friends Meeting

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Richmond Friends Meeting and Midlothian Friends Meeting

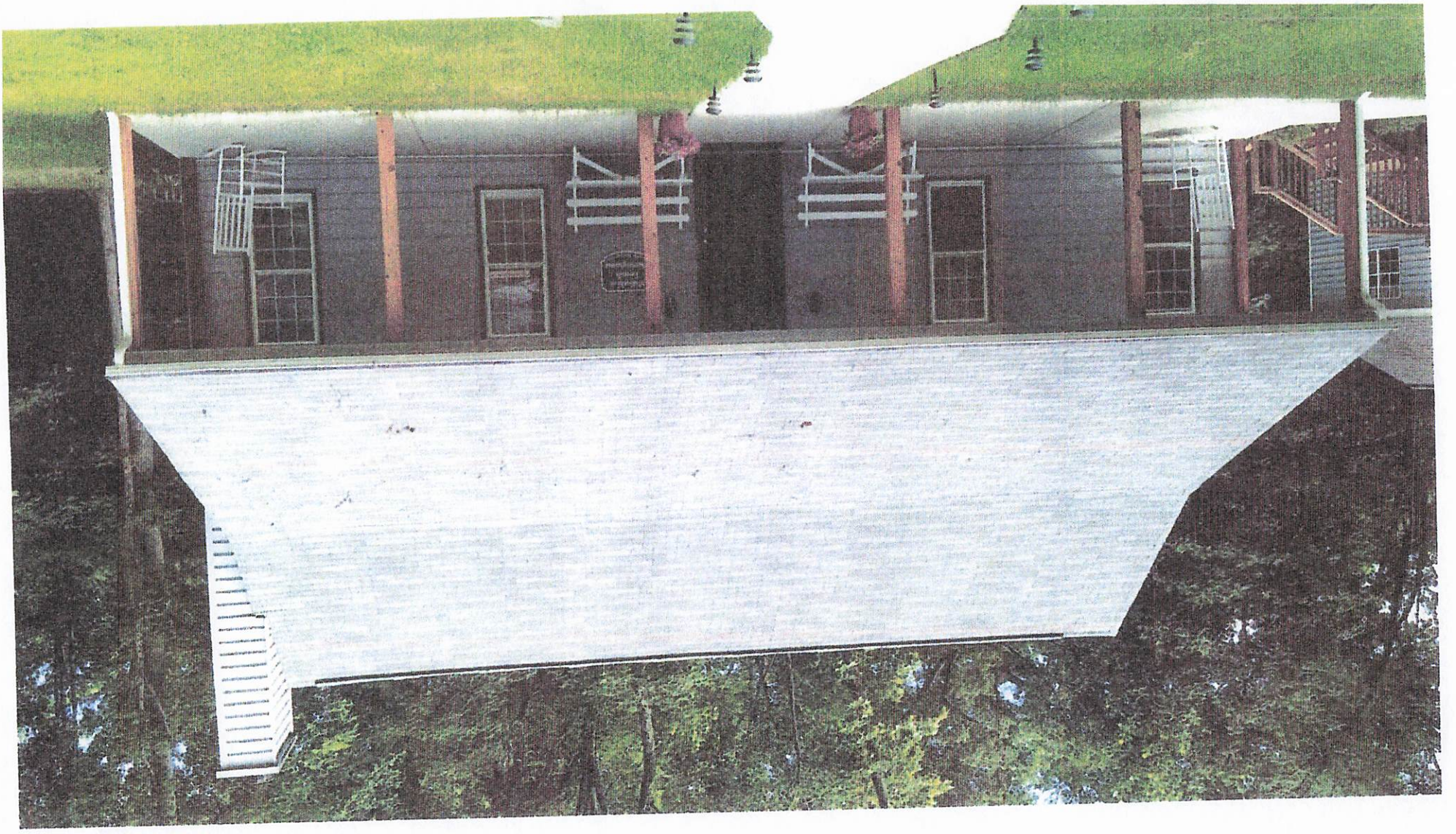
Pictured is the current Richmond Friends meetinghouse. Richmond Friends Meeting, after nearly two hundred years of existence, created its first and only surviving off-shoot Quaker group in 1987. Midlothian Indulged Meeting, along with the now extinct Ashland Indulged Meeting, were organized that year to alleviate over-crowding at the Richmond Friends Meetinghouse each Sunday. Subsequently, Midlothian Friends Meeting became an independent 'monthly' meeting in 1995.

Since its beginning in 1795 as an indulged meeting itself, under the care of White Oak Swamp Monthly Meeting (in Henrico County), Richmond Friends Meeting has had a long history of keeping Quakerism alive in central Virginia. During its first fifty years of existence it was one of about a dozen active Quaker groups in the region. The years leading up to the Civil War became increasingly difficult for Virginia Quakers due to their refusal, beginning in 1784, to support the entrenched system of human slavery. Therefore most Quakers moved from the region, resulting in nearly all Quaker meetings being 'laid down' (discontinued). One of the early casualties was White Oak Swamp Monthly Meeting in 1841, requiring the then preparative Richmond Friends Meeting to move its care to Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting in Hanover county. Two years later in 1843 Virginia Yearly Meeting was 'laid down'.

Once Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting itself succumbed to this ongoing Quaker tragedy and was 'laid down' in 1875, Richmond Friends Meeting was left as a full 'monthly' meeting under Baltimore Yearly Meeting to continue as the only place for Quaker worship in central Virginia. A handful of faithful Richmond Friends continued the Quaker tradition through the difficult years leading up to and through the Civil War. Richmond Quakers used legal means to acquire the emancipation of well over three hundred slaves before the Civil War. Richmond Quakers were also held under suspicion for providing comfort to run-away slaves and were ostracized from southern life. It is indeed likely that Richmond Quakers did hide runaway slaves, since excavation of a few of their homes has uncovered secret chambers apparently used for this purpose. Not surprising, Quakers increasingly came under abuse. For example, the first Richmond Friends Meetinghouse, built in 1799 in Shockoe Bottom, was confiscated by the Confederate army to be used as a hospital and some Friends were 'tarred and feathered'.

Before the year 1962, the Richmond Friends Meeting was solidly an Orthodox Quaker Meeting, siding with Orthodox Quakers over the Hicksites during the great Quaker schism of 1827. The person of Jesus and use of the Bible were central to their identification as a Christian community. However, after that year changes began to rapidly occur due to the addition of Quakers from other parts of the country and newly convinced Friends joining them as a result of the Vietnam War. Additionally, long-time Orthodox Richmond Quakers had begun to pass-away. Within twenty years a complete transformation occurred where the meeting became Hicksite ("liberal Quaker" in today's terminology), and the primacy of the inner Light over biblical teaching was fully recognized. The meeting soon became part of Friends General Conference (FGC) to acknowledge its recent liberal Quaker leanings. However, to this day it has also remained affiliated with Friends United Meeting (FUM) as well - in recognition of its past history.

When Midlothian Friends Meeting was first formed by Richmond Friends Meeting, it soon determined it was a liberal Quaker meeting and recognized its association with Friends General Conference (FGC) only. The meeting also began shedding some of the historic Quaker traditions it had inherited from Richmond Friends Meeting in recognition of its tendency to be an egalitarian spiritual community with an emphasis on the primacy of the inner Light while on one's personal spiritual journey.



Midlothian Friends Meetinghouse

Pictured is the Midlothian Friends Meetinghouse at 900 Preservation Road in Midlothian Virginia, first built as a private home in 1984 and purchased by Midlothian Friends in 2002 with the goal of eventually turning it into a viable location for Quaker worship.

Midlothian Friends Meeting was established in 1986 as an 'indulged' meeting by the Ministry and Worship committee of Richmond Friends Meeting to alleviate over-crowding during Sunday worship at the Richmond Friends Meetinghouse. Initially, it was called the "Southside Worship Group" and didn't begin to meet for worship until early 1987 – just as a once a month experiment. It was comprised of a dozen or so Richmond Friends – four long-time adult Quakers who lived on the southside of Richmond city and eight newly convinced adult Quakers who lived within the suburban county of Chesterfield. The small experimental worship group met for worship once a month in the home of one of the long-time Quakers who lived in the Bon Air section of the city of Richmond.

As that first year progressed, the four long-time Richmond Friends decided to resume worship at the Richmond Friends Meetinghouse. Starting in September of 1987 the eight remaining newly convinced adult Quakers continued worshipping together in one of their homes near Robious Road in Chesterfield. Soon after, the name of the newly formed group was changed to "**Midlothian** Indulged Meeting" in order to signify the eventual goal of purchasing a permanent meetinghouse centrally located within Midlothian. Thereafter, September of 1987 was considered the official start date of Midlothian Friends Meeting. That first year ended with nine adults and eleven children worshipping together.

By September of 1988 Midlothian Meeting decided to meet for worship twice a month, prompting the search for a more public location. The old chapel of Winfree Memorial Church, a Southern Baptist congregation on the main street in the heart of the village of Midlothian, was offered to the fledgling Quaker meeting for their worship - beginning on September 11, 1988. The minister of that church was instrumental in nurturing the meeting's viability in those early years until his departure in 1998. By the end of 1990, Midlothian Meeting had grown to include about sixty Friends, half of which were children. This prompted the group to seek preparative meeting status from Richmond Friends Meeting. Over the next five years the meeting continued to grow to about one hundred Friends, half of which were children, with worship occurring every Sunday (beginning in 1994). On February 19th, 1995 Midlothian Friends Meeting became a separate monthly meeting.

Serious efforts to obtain a meetinghouse for Midlothian Friends Meeting first began in the year 2000, after a move to Stoney Point School in 1999. Once enough funds were raised to make a down payment on a permanent "home", the Preservation Road meetinghouse site was located and purchased in October of 2002 for \$114,000 with primarily unsecured loans from Homewood Friends Meeting. Conversion of the building and grounds into a proper Quaker meetinghouse was slow, but progressive: a Religious Education building for the meeting's children was built in 2005, a gift of two additional acres and a parking lot in 2006, an addition of a large porch spanning the entire front of the meetinghouse in 2015, and extensive renovations of the interior, exterior, and grounds.

The acquisition and development of the Midlothian Friends Meetinghouse occurred due to the loving donations of time, materials, and money from F(f)riends; so the once humble home could blossom into a cherished Quaker meetinghouse.



Solid Heart Pine

A Construction Feature Shared by Cedar Creek Meeting and Midlothian Meeting

The grandparent Quaker meeting to Midlothian Friends Meeting is Cedar Creek Meeting, established in 1719. It is one of the most historical 'churches' in Virginia, due to its large membership and the stand taken by its members against the entrenched system of human slavery that was practiced in the South. The Cedar Creek Meetinghouse was situated in western Hanover County, Virginia, near the village of Montpelier.

The last Cedar Creek meetinghouse built for those early Virginia Quakers was constructed in 1770. Much of the material used to build the meetinghouse came from England. It was built of brick and had an old fashioned steep roof covered with slate shingles. It had large galleries on all sides so upwards of a thousand Quakers could worship together at times. The main body of the meetinghouse consisted of two rooms with a movable partition to convert it into one large room during worship. This movable partition facilitated the olden time custom of Quaker women holding a separate 'Meeting for Discernment' ('Meeting for Business') from men.

A distinguishing feature of the Cedar Creek meetinghouse was solid heart pine throughout its construction. The beams, studs, windows, blinds, and doors of the Cedar Creek meetinghouse were made from it. The use of solid heart pine in the meetinghouse construction was coincidentally shared over two hundred years later with Midlothian Friends Meeting. In its worship room, solid heart pine planks were used to cover the wall where the fireplace is located, as well as in the fireplace mantle, molding surrounding the windows, doorways, and floors.

Solid heart pine is a component of ancient architecture. The heartwood from the pine tree was preferred by home owners and carpenters due to its strength and hardness. The Longleaf Pine tree, the source of heart pine, is considered a high quality timber tree. Before the 18th century, in the United States, Longleaf Pine forests covered approximately 30-60 million acres along the coastal plain from Virginia to eastern Texas. These pine trees, 80 to 120 feet tall, require 100 to 150 years to become full size and can live up to 500 years. Due to deforestation and over-harvesting since colonial days, only about 3% of the original Longleaf Pine forests remain. In modern times heart pine for decorative construction is procured by reclaiming old lumber and from recovering logs felled pre-1900 from rivers.

Unlike the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a ready supply of the solid heart pine was available for construction of the Cedar Creek meetinghouse; it was situated in a forest of massive pine and cedar trees near the clear, potable water of Cedar Creek. By 1904 a forest fire destroyed the then abandoned Cedar Creek meetinghouse. The empty meetinghouse had been under the care of its only descendant Quaker group at the time, Richmond Friends Meeting.

The Midlothian Friends meetinghouse, built in 1984 (some 214 years after the Cedar Creek meetinghouse had been constructed in 1770) uses salvaged solid heart pine from an ancient local barn that was likely built within a few decades of the Cedar Creek meetinghouse. One can't help but wonder if this coincidence of a shared feature of solid heart pine used in construction is somehow available to us as a reminder of our own ancient Quaker heritage.

The Thirtieth Year Peacemaker of the Year



The Thrifty Quaker and Friend\$hare

Pictured is an award given to ***The Thrifty Quaker*** thrift store (pictured on the next page) in 2015 by the Richmond Peace Education Center, naming ***The Thrifty Quaker*** as "Peacemaker of the Year". This honor was given to ***The Thrifty Quaker*** after 19 years of continuous work to provide financial grants (totaling \$426,000 by the end of 2015) to over 100 mostly local charities; along with ***Friend\$hare***, which gave nearly 300 individual financial grants (totaling \$90,000 by the end of 2015) to people in dire need. ***Midlothian Friends Meeting*** was also recognized during the presentation of this award for its efforts in establishing and supporting the work of both ***The Thrifty Quaker*** and ***Friend\$hare***.

The Thrifty Quaker was officially opened in September of 1996 after six months of discernment and set-up by Midlothian Friends Meeting. To facilitate the work of the store an independent non-profit corporation was organized, ***The Quaker Thrift Store, Inc.***, with by-laws that require cooperation with Midlothian Friends Meeting while also remaining operationally independent of the meeting. The purpose of the non-profit corporation was to provide funds to Midlothian Friends Meeting that would be used by the meeting to benefit mostly local charities chosen by Midlothian Friends Meeting's Peace and Social Action Committee (PSAC), as well as benefit people in need of emergency financial assistance. The by-laws of the non-profit corporation were written to prohibit Midlothian Friends Meeting from using any of the proceeds for its own benefit. Twelve non-profit organizations were to be chosen each year (one each month). Each chosen charity would be encouraged to have their supporters provide donated goods to the store that could be sold in order to raise funds for the charity. Additionally, patrons from the community were to be encouraged to support with donations and purchases the chosen benefiting charity.

After three years of operating ***The Thrifty Quaker***, ***Friend\$hare*** was established by Midlothian Friends Meeting in 1999 as part of ***The Quaker Thrift Store, Inc.*** to fulfill its stated purpose of providing *individual* (as opposed to organizational) financial grants to people in need of housing, medical attention, necessary utilities, educational assistance, transportation costs, food, and other emergency needs. These recipients were to be recommended by area Social Workers, Quakers, and other trusted sources. Funds for these individual financial grants would come from community financial donations, the United Way, and up to 25% of ***The Thrifty Quaker*** profits in months that the store was extremely profitable.

The Thrifty Quaker store was located in the heart of the village of Midlothian in the Midlothian Station Shopping Center on the corner of Coalfield Road and Midlothian Turnpike. Within a few years of its existence, ***The Thrifty Quaker*** became a beloved establishment in the village; known for its quality merchandise, low prices, charitable efforts, friendly staff, and its association with local Quakers. In addition to raising funds in order to provide Midlothian Friends Meeting a means for financial granting, the store was to do other philanthropic work: a place for community members to volunteer, a vocational training location for challenged persons, a clothing and goods recycling center, a place where disaster victims and homeless persons could receive free clothing and household goods, a food collection location for hungry families, and a provider of surplus donated goods to other charitable thrift stores. All of these non-sales efforts contributed another \$2,600,000 worth of unsold goods to those in need by the end of 2015.

Through ***The Thrifty Quaker*** and ***Friend\$hare***, by the end of 2015 Midlothian Friends Meeting had served the surrounding community well, providing over \$3,100,000 worth of monetary and material aid to those in need.

The Thrifty Quaker

PEACEMAKER OF THE YEAR

AWARDED IN 2015 BY THE RICHMOND
PEACE EDUCATION CENTER

