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A Compilation of Westfield Origins

At the beginning of this paper on Westfield Monthly Meeting it seems fitting to give the date of the organization of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends. "at a quarterly meeting at the house of Henry Whites this 4 day of the 4 month 1698: it is unanimous agreed by friends that all the quarterly meetings be altered from the first seventh day of month to the last seventh day and that all the quarterly meetings be held the last seventh day of the same month they were formerly held on, and the last seventh day of the seventh month in Every yere to be the Yerely meeting for this Countree at the house of Francis tooms the Elder and the second day of the week following to be seat aparte for busines and that a meeting be held at the house of Thomas Catreke in pastotank (Pasquotank) the first day Every month."

The Yearly Meeting, according to the above minute, was held in eastern Carolina. However, this is several years previous to any record of a meeting at Westfield.

A wave of Quaker migration rising in Pennsylvania and New Jersey during the first generation of the eighteenth century, moved southward through Maryland, Virginia and on into Surry, Stokes, Guilford, Alamance, Chatham and Randolph counties, North Carolina. The large settlement of Friends in these counties was formed by Quaker immigrants, not by the expansion of the native element. The following are some names of Friends who came about this time to our own state: Bowater Beales came as a young man from Fairfax, Montgomery county, Pennsylvania, within the years 1751-1754 to Cane Creek Monthly Meeting: Isaac Jackson, from Chester County, Pennsylvania (That is perhaps the origin of the name Jackson in Westfield neighborhood and meeting). Others were, Philip Hoggatt from Virginia,

Joseph Hoggatt, John Beales, Joseph Unthank and family from Pennsylvania. How many of these Friends came to this particular section of the State is not known; but there were Friends living at Westfield sometime before a meeting was established. It is said that George Fox himself on a visit to America "visited the north part of Carolina and made a little entrance for Truth among the people there." This, however, was in eastern North Carolina.

We find in the minutes of New Garden Monthly Meeting of Friends held 29th of 8 mo., 1772, this account; "Also the Friends near the mountains request the indulgence of holding meetings on week-days among themselves. Therefore Jesse Henley, Amos Kersey, David Brooks and Aaron Mills is appointed to visit them on the occasion and see if they be capable of holding such meetings to the Honour of Truth and report their care to next meeting."

From minutes of next month -"The committee appointed to visit Friends near the mountains reports they all comply'd therewith except David Brooks who gave his reason of his not complying, and its the sense and judgment of the others that they be indulged the privilege of holding such meetings and appoints them the fourth day of the week."

On the assumption that "near the mountains" is what is known later as Toms Creek and still later as Westfield, the meeting on week days just granted is the beginning of a meeting for worship at Westfield. These Friends applied for membership to New Garden until their meeting was established.

From New Garden minutes for 5 mo. 29, 1773, "Uriah Carson, an inhabitator of Toms Creek near the mountains, makes request to be joined in membership with Friends of this meeting, which is granted accordingly." Any trouble arising in the "little meeting" had to be carried to New Garden Monthly Meeting to be settled. In 1775 a testification is brought against Joshua Sumner which if he decline an appeal is to be read at a Frist day meeting at Toms Creek. This is the first mention of the name "Toms Creek," so it was certainly this meeting which was alluded to as "near the mountains."

In the minutes of New Garden there is frequent mention of persons whose names are familiar at Westfield, applying there for marriage certificates. However no place is designated in such connection.

In 1779 this minute is inserted - "Also complains of Jonathan Clark for attending umsters to screen himself from a fine; and also for hiring a man to go into the wars;" a paper of denial against him was read by Caleb Sumner "at the little meeting night Toms Creek." This is the first account we find in which Friends at Westfield declared themselves opposed to war.

Sabbath, or
First-day
Meeting

The Monthly Meeting of New Garden Friends held 28 of 9th month, 1782, states:

"The Preparative meeting informs this that the Friends at Toms Creek request their meeting to be established, which this meeting takes notice of and appoints William Stanley, Silas Williams, George Rail, Allen Unthank, Peter Dillon, Stephen Gardner, Nathan Hunt and Bethuel Coffin to visit them on the occasion and inspect into their capability of holding their meeting to the honour of Truth and report their sense and judgment to next meeting." At the next meeting the Friends reported favorably and it was forwarded to Western Quarterly Meeting, which at that time alternated between Cane Creek and New Garden. This session was held the ninth of eleventh month, 1782, at Cane Creek, and a minute from the same states: "New Garden Monthly Meeting informs this that Friends of Toms Creek request to have their meeting for worship established. This meeting therefore appoints the following committee (to-wit): Henry Mills, John Hoggatt, John Beals, Jeremiah Reynolds, Matthew Ozbun, John Ruddock Jr., Charles Stout, Josiah Tomlinson to inspect their capability of holding such meeting to the honor of Truth, and report their sense of judgment therein to next meeting." In the next quarterly meeting minutes we find this report:

"Dear Friends, We of the committee appointed to visit the meeting of Friends at Toms Creek on account of their request of having that meeting established mostly attended on that service, and after a time of solid meeting

with them and conferring on the matter give it as our sense of judgment that the granting their request will be to their advantage and agreeable to wisdom." Signed by the Quarterly meeting committee. The meeting concurs with the report and the Clerk is asked to forward a minute to that effect.

In the eighth month of the same year (1782) a request is made by Toms Creek Friends for a preparative meeting, which it is thought best at first not to grant. But after much thought and care taken by Friends it is forwarded to the Quarterly meeting, from which we find this minute - "New Garden Monthly Meeting informs this that Friends of Toms Creek request the privilege of holding a preparative meeting amongst themselves. This meeting appoints John Talbot, Hezekiah Sanders, John Carter, James Woody, Thomas Winslow, John Beals, Jr., Seth Coffin and William Tomlinson to pay them a visit on that account in order to instruct their capability of holding such meetings to the honor of Truth and report their sense and judgment to next meeting."

Preparative
Meeting is
set up at
Westfield

The request was granted in 8 mo. 14, 1784, by Western Quarterly Meeting, and they are directed to hold said meeting on the fourth day of the week before New Garden preparative meeting. Thus was the setting up of a meeting for business at Westfield.

About two years later we find in New Garden Monthly Meeting minutes this statement: "Toms Creek Preparative meeting requests the privilege of holding a monthly meeting among themselves which this meeting takes notice of and appoints Micajah Tervil, Nathan Hunt, Thomas Thornbrugh Jr., John Thomas, Silas Williams, Aaron Mendenhall, Strangeman Stanley and Jesse Williams to visit them and inspect into their capability of holding such meeting to the honor of Truth and report their sense and judgment to next meeting." At the next monthly meeting a favorable report was given by the committee and their request was forwarded to Quarterly meeting.

In the meantime it is interesting to notice that representatives were sent each month from Toms Creek Preparative to New Garden Monthly meeting--a distance of sixty or seventy miles and through "a wilderness country." Rarely, if ever, was there a person absent; to attend their meetings and to do the work of the church were a part of life to them. They must have been compelled to make some sacrifices, but life meant much more to them because they contributed to it.

Some of these faithful Friends at this time were Moses Greeg, Curtis Jackson, Thomas Sumner, Samuel Bond, William Hiatt, Timothy Jessup, David Ballard, Thomas Jessup, Joseph Hiatt, Benjamin Carr, Royal Simmons, John Hiatt, Richard Tinson, Joseph Jackson, Jacob Jackson and William Jessup. We find in the vault at Guilford College such a paper as this--"Benjamin Carr acknowledged to the society of people called Quakers in Surry County, N. C., for nine acres of land including Westfield meeting house, recorded in Box G. page 82 August term 1797. The deed given up to Friends of Deep River Monthly Meeting." This was perhaps the original deed to the land which Friends now own at Westfield.

The Quarterly meeting referred to before took into consideration the request of Toms Creek Friends and appointed a committee which made the following report 13 of 11 mo., 1786.

"We of the committee appointed last meeting to visit the Preparative meeting of Toms Creek and inspect into their capability of holding a Monthly Meeting to the honor of Truth have complied with the appointment and do give it as our sense and judgment that their request may be granted." The meeting confirms this report and directs that said meeting be held on the seventh day preceding the last seventh day in each month. Also that it be know in future by the name of Westfield."

The Monthly Meeting is held now at the same time of month as when first established.

Westfield Mo.
Meeting set up

With the permission stated we get the following from the first book of minutes of Westfield itself. "Agreeable to the foregoing directions Friends meet the 23 day of 12 mo., 1786, and representatives from Preparative meeting are Daniel Ballard and Thomas Jessup who being called appeared. The meeting appoints Bowater Sumner, Clerk." "This became in due time the center of a large and important Quaker community."

In the second month following (1787) Joseph Jackson and Sarah Jessup "appeared at the meeting and declared their intention of marriage with each other." It was duly accomplished according to Friends' discipline two months later. This is of interest because these names Jackson and Jessup are among the oldest and most familiar names in the Westfield section. Many families have lived and passed away and the names promise to be retained many generations yet.

New Garden
Quarter 1787

The Yearly Meeting at this time included Friends in North and South Carolina and Georgia. Extracts from this meeting in 1787 show that a proposition was handed up from Western Quarter for dividing that Quarterly meeting: that the monthly meetings of Cane Creek and Center be united as the former (Western Quarter) to be held at the usual time, and all the other monthly meetings to constitute a Quarterly Meeting to be held alternately at New Garden and Deep River. Westfield thus became one of the monthly meetings in the new Quarter (New Garden).

In 4 mo. 27, 1790 "Caleb Sumner appeared at this meeting and offered a paper, condemning his drinking spirituous liquors to an excess (excess), which was read and accepted." It was customary among Friends to condemn their own misconduct.

In 1791 Benjamin Puckett appeared before the meeting and offered a paper, condemning his marrying contrary to the rules of Friends. Unless he did this he would be disowned by the Society.

In 7 mo., 1792, Westfield sets up a meeting for worship at Reed Island to be held on the first day of the week. In 1793 Friends on Lost Creek "and thereaway" make a request for holding meetings, the same being granted. This meeting was later established and still exists in Jefferson County, Tennessee. In the same year after previous entreaties, Friends at Chestnut Creek are allowed to hold meetings on first and week days. Chestnut Creek was on the mountains presumably in Grayson County, Virginia. However no meeting is there now.

In 1795 Westfield sets up New Hope Monthly meeting also in Tennessee. This meeting still exists. In 1797 Westfield established the first day meetings (Sabbath) at Little Reed's Island and Burksfork. The minutes for 1 mo., 1798, say "This meeting receives a minute from the Quarterly meeting establishing a meeting at Burksfork and at Little Reed's Island, and granting them the privilege of holding Preparative meetings alternately. The latter is to be known as Mount Pleasant and the former Fruithill." These were in Virginia.

From New Garden Quarterly meeting minutes for 6 mo. 13, 1801, "Friends near Big Creek and Dan River are granted their request for establishing their meeting. It shall be known as North providence." This meeting was laid down in 1809.

Thus we see what a widening out Westfield made and what a vast country she covered. These just mentioned are not the only meetings she set up but they show sufficiently that there was at one time a large meeting there. As a result Westfield Quarter was set off in 1803. From Westfield

Monthly meeting minutes for 5 mo., 1803, we get this statement, "Westfield, Deep Creek and Mount Pleasant Monthly meetings are united in requesting the privilege of holding a Quarterly meeting amongst themselves. And this meeting directs the same to be forwarded to the Quarterly meeting at New Garden."

The Friends at Westfield adhered strictly to Friends discipline. They compelled all marriages among their members to be accomplished according to manners and customs of the Society. If a member married out of the Society he was disowned. They forbade any kind of excess at such ceremonies as marriages, births or deaths. Members were continually being warned about "keeping to plain attire." As to smoking they said, "use it with great moderation as a medison and not as a delightsom companion." The trio of evils was chewing tobacco, taking snuff and sleeping in meeting. All "frolicking, dancing and fiddling" were forbidden. They deemed it dishonorable and not according to Friends to hold offices under the Government. To disobey any of these rules of conduct meant disownment, if satisfaction was not made.

In 1817 we find in Westfield minutes this statement, "The importance of the literary and virtuous instruction of our youth coming under consideration, Abijah Pinson, Jacob Bales, Nathan Bales, James McKinney, Lazarus Denny, Joel Jessup, John Jackson and John Carson are appointed to have the care of schools in the future." In the same year Daniel Puckett, who afterwards became a prominent minister in the various meetings, was recommended to the station of a minister.

In the same year (1817) the Westward migration, which eventually resulted in the "laying down" of Westfield meeting, began. The minutes of Westfield Monthly meeting show the following requests--

"Lazarus Denny requests a certificate for himself and family to remove their right of membership to Whitewater Monthly meeting, Wayne Co., Indiana."

"Timothy H. Jessup request a certificate for himself and family to covey their right of membership to Fall Creek Monthly meeting, Highland Co., Ohio."

In 1819 Isam Puckett, Job Jackson and Thomas Puckett request certificates to New Garden meeting in Indiana. In 1820- and 1821 Elijah Jackson and family remove to the same place and Levi Jessup and family go to Whitewater in Indiana.

Nathan, Jacob and John Bales and the Jessups, William and Joseph, are prominent characters among Westfield Friends at this time.

In 1822 Stephen Hiatt and family, Bowater Bales and family, Asa Bales and family and Joseph Chandler and family requested certificates to New Garden, Springfield and White Water Monthly meetings respectively of Indiana. Weeks says "Westfield Monthly meeting lost between 1801-1822 fifty-nine members, including thirty-six families. They went West and this meeting was laid down in 1832. This left but one remaining monthly meeting in Westfield Quarter and that disappears the same year." This was not the only meeting in the South that was being suspended. It was prevalent all over the states where there were Friends. Some of the reasons for this decline are said to be the removal of families of people to the Western States, which in turn was due to their instinctive love for adventure and the search for better lands. Second was the disownment for slight offenses, such as marrying out of the Society, varying from plain dress, etc. Its extreme spirituality has been a load on the Society, and persons would rather accept some other creed than try to conform to all these principles. "No body of Christians perhaps has come so near fulfilling the injunction to worship in spirit and in truth as have Friends. This deep spirituality is too high for most men." Then Friends were gradually absorbed into Methodists and Baptists in all sections of the country.

We find this meeting in the list of Friends' meetings that sent delegates to a meeting of the Abolition Society in Virginia in 1825.

Now a word about the deeds for the property there. There is in

the vault at Guilford College this writing on a small paper: "Benjamin Carr acknowledged to the Society of people called Quakers in Surry County, North Carolina, for nine acres of land including Westfield Meeting house. The deed given up to Friends of Deep River Monthly meeting." This was doubtless the first deed to the land now owned by them.

In April 1860 a deed was made by the Trustees of Friends to the trustees of Westfield neighborhood for a tract of land known as the "Westfield meeting house ground and graveyard." "The same to be known for all time to come as a public burying ground and meeting place for all respectable religious peoples."

After the Civil War when Friends revived again at Westfield, they were desirous to build up a good and permanent school free for all to enter and also to hold and maintain religious meetings for worship, and to transact the business and affairs of the Society." So in March 1872 Sandy Cook, William H. Pell and Benjamin F. Davis, trustees for Friends, paid one hundred and twenty-five dollars for this nine acres of land to be by them forever held for the use and benefit of said Society and not to be again disposed of in any way.

There is a bit of interesting history in connection with Friends at Westfield. Thomas Beales, a noted pioneer and minister, lived at this place several years and was largely responsible for that meeting. Thomas Beales came from Pennsylvania to North Carolina and was leader and organizer of the Carolina migration. He was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, in 1719, son of John and Sarah Beales. Nathan Hunt, John Bond and Levi Jessup were descendants of the family. Thomas Beales and family moved in 1743 to New Garden. They resided first at Cane Creek, then to New Garden "where few other white people then lived. Here they were subject o much privation and suffering for the necessaries of life."

In 1753 he became a minister and moved to Westfield, Surry County,

North Carolina, but the date is unknown. "Here he assisted also in building up a large meeting." He lived at New Garden and Westfield together about forty years. In 1781 he moved to Bluestone, Giles County, Virginia, where their son-in-law was taken prisoner by the Indians and put to death. This move was not approved of by his friends; for a committee was sent to move him back to Westfield. He continued to move from place to place till he finally died 29 of 8 mo., 1801, in Indiana and was buried near Richmond, Bush County, Indiana, around which grave a stone wall has been built by Indiana Yearly Meeting.

In 1790 Ann Jessup of New Garden, a minister among Friends, went to England on a religious visit and on returning brought grafts of many standard varieties of fruit and grass seed. She employed Abijah Pinson to graft her cuttings into seedling stocks. They were superior to any then known and whole orchards were grafted in the new fruit. In the early part of the nineteenth century Abijah Pinson moved to Westfield, Surry County, North Carolina, and started a large nursery. Friends from this and other states were so pleased with Abijah Pinson's orchard at Westfield that they grafted into their orchards from it, and it was carried by emigrants in to the Western States. Among the grass seeds which Ann Jessup brought was the "English Millett," now alfalfa. "To Ann Jessup and to Friends probably belongs the credit of introducing the first cultivated fruit into the Southern States and alfalfa into the United States." Abijah Pinson was a "marked character" among early pioneers. After settling at Westfield he introduced timothy hay, probably procuring the seed from Timothy Hanson who first discovered the grass near Roanoke. Abijah's father did not own land because he thought "it should be as free as water and air and that every man should have what he needed without cost." Abijah secured state grants to cover the improvements his father has made. The "Old Pinson Farm" can perhaps be identified now in that section.

From the time the meeting was "laid down" in 1832 we have no records and very little tradition of Friends at Westfield till after the Civil War closing in 1865. The first Friends who went there after this were Albert Peele of New Garden, North Carolina, and Isham Cox of Springfield, North Carolina, in 1868. These are Albert Peele's own words, "Isham Cox and I got in the neighborhood on Saturday morning and met a few friends who asked if we would consent to have meeting on the following day if they would make it known around. We told them that we would, so on Sunday about one hundred and fifty people met out there in the open air (No meeting house was there at that time. Whether they were on the right spot or whether the house had been done away with is not known) and had meeting. We stood on a log to preach. The people decided from that time to have a Friends meeting again and made up among themselves to do it."

The first man who went there as pastor to labor with them was John Y. Hoover about the year 1872. It is not clear just how long, but he lived there with his family and served the church. Following him in 1883 was David Sampson, who also lived there quite a few years. Not very long after, if not immediately, James Jones began to serve the meeting. He labored faithfully there before going abroad and also after returning. During his last service there he lived at Guilford College and drove through the country once a month; but he was always there. Westfield Friends, as do many others, hold the memory of James Jones in the deepest and tenderest reverence.

We would not fail to pay tribute also to Wesley Wooten for the earnest and faithful service that he has rendered Westfield Friends and meeting. His work will be felt for many years.

It should probably be mentioned that soon after the War closed

Allen Jay, Superintendent of Schools under the Baltimore Association, visited Westfield among other meetings over the State and held a Normal School for a few days. Later, having seen the need of schools there, he brought back Ellen Minthorne (Marshall) to teach a school for Friends, and not only those but for all who would attend. Friends of the Association, presumably, furnished the books and paid the teacher, leaving no expense for the people. There was soon such an increase in attendance that another teacher in the person of "Aunt Rhoda" Worth was secured. Their work was indeed invaluable, and one may go over that neighborhood now and find marked results of that school,--intelligent people and those who have been foremost in all progress and church and schools. They can be found scattered in other neighborhoods, towns and states even. Some seed sown there is still covered and will be springing up and ripening in future generations. The school, however, went down some years ago, [and it is feared will not be established again.]

Westfield Monthly meeting was established again in 1883 by Deep River Quarterly meeting, and in 1889 when Yadkin Valley Quarter was set up it became a part of that till in 1898 it became a part of Surry Quarter.

I give herewith a summary of the first minutes after the establishment of it. "Westfield Monthly meeting of Men and Women Friends held at Westfield, Surry Co., N. C., 11 mo. 24, 1883, by direction of Deep River Quarterly meeting of Friends held 10 mo. 26, 1883.

Ira W. Chilton was appointed Clerk for the day. The minutes from Deep River Quarterly meeting were read, and Jonathan E. Cox, David V. Henly, Manerva T. Mendenhall and Joel G. Anderson members of the committee were present. A committee was appointed consisting of W. H. Pell, Sandy Cook, Mary C. Cook and Nannie Nichols to bring to next meeting the names of suitable persons to serve the meeting as Clerk and Assistant Clerk." Of the Overseers of the meeting appointed then, only one remains at the present time, namely, Bethania Jessup.

At this first meeting two members were received by request.

The meeting seemed to flourish for some years after this and they built a spacious meeting house on the lot belonging to the Society and by the effort of James Jones the house was furnished with good seats. There is much to be done among Friends there, but the members of the meeting have become scattered and the meeting has gradually declined in the last few years. We hesitate to say but we fear the outcome if Friends there do not wake up and come to the front.