

REMEMBER WHEN



White Plains Friends Meeting was organized in 1850.

Religion Traces Roots Back

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The Quakers, Methodists and Primitive Baptists ran a close race to see who would help civilize this land of the towering, hazy Blue Ridges. The race, if such it could have been called, may have ended in a dead heat.

In fact, back around 1936 — some 55 years closer to the origin than researchers in this last decade of the 20th century — Luther Byrd, area historian, educator and newspaperman, wrote, "The denomination which first sent its ministers into this section can scarcely be determined, though the honor lies between three groups...early Methodist followers of Wesley, Coke and Asbury, the hardy Quaker immigrants from Pennsylvania, and the courageous pioneer pastors of the Primitive Baptist church."

One of the earlier churches in the Mount Airy area, the White Plains Friends Meeting, can trace its history back to 1850.

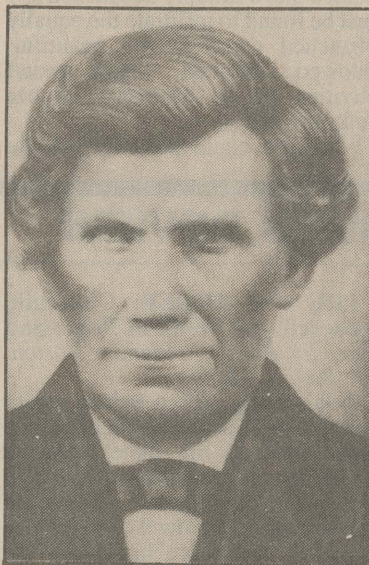
Of course, the Quakers came to North Carolina long before that. It was in 1672 that William Edmundson visited settlements in the Albemarle area but discovered only two Quakers.

But the Quakers continued their exodus to more pleasant climes, settling in the Piedmont — the "back country" of the state back in those early 1700s — and eventually in the foothills.

A Preparative Friends Meeting was established as early as 1772 by the New Garden Quakers in the area known as "the west fields." This section became the center of the friends in Surry County.

It was over three-quarters of a century later — in 1850 — that the first Friends moved to the White Plains section.

Vestal Hutchens heard of the industrial growth in Mount Airy and Elkin and moved from Yadkin County to the White Plains section, settling about one and one-half miles south-



Vestal Hutchens' family was White Plains' first Quaker family.

east of the present White Plains.

He settled in but not permanently.

He probably joined the massive emigration to the west, moving out to Iowa. However, he and his wife, the former Elizabeth Jester, and their 10 children returned to the area around 1856, purchasing 450 acres for a reported \$450.

"Grandpap" Hutchens, as he was familiarly known, assembled those early Friends around him at White Plains, and the group worshipped in private homes. In the manner of the Friends of that day, they waited in silence until the Spirit moved them to speak.

Early services were also held at the Hutchens Blacksmith Shop. T. Wesley Wooten, a young Quaker minister from Yadkin County, held revivals in the shop.

By 1870, there were enough Friends at White Plains to form a body of worshippers, which began to anticipate becoming a recognized monthly meeting.

Getting land for the planned church was no problem. Vestal Hutchens and Richard K. "Dick" Marshall offered to donate the needed amount. In October 1883, Marshall's offer of two acres was approved and in 1884 the first building was erected where the present brick structure now stands. With donations of time, work and money, the building was enclosed by 1885.

The Meeting for Sufferings of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting donated \$500, which was used to complete the inside of the weatherboarded structure and provide seats for the meetinghouse.

Among the folks traveling some distance to attend the services — they rode in a wagon drawn by two large horses — was the family of Ralph Levering, founder of famed Levering Orchards at Ararat, Va. and the father of Sam Levering.

In 1889, White Plains felt ready to request the privilege of becoming a full-fledged monthly meeting. Westfield seconded the request, which was forwarded to the Yadkin Valley Quarterly Meeting. On Jan. 4, 1890, the first session was held.

Not surprisingly, when it came time to pick a new pastor, White Plains Friends turned to the young revivalist who had held services at the blacksmith shop, T. Wesley Wooten. He moved to White Plains in 1895 and served as pastor for several years. He never accepting any pay.

It is also interesting to note that a school was operated in connection with the church. This, of course, was long before the mandated separation of church and school.

The school was discontinued in the early years of the 20th century.

The White Plains Friends Meeting is responsible for the organization of two well known Quaker meetings — the Mount Airy Friends Church and the Pine Hill Friends Church.