

HISTORY OF THE OLD WESTFIELD
QUAKER MEETING

By June Stone Byrd

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QUAKER ~~CHURCH~~ MEETING

The Old Westfield Quaker ~~Church~~ ^{MEETING} is the oldest religious group in Surry County and in that section of North Carolina. It was founded ~~by~~ ^{the} in/Revolutionary period by settlers, who moved into the community as part of a migration from ~~Eastern North~~ the eastern shore of North Carolina and from Pennsylvania.

The Quaker movement in North Carolina started before 1700, and there is a record of at least one Quaker family in the Albermarle section of ~~North Carolina~~ the state as early as 1672. ~~The denomination increased rapidly in this section, and the North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends was organized in 1698.~~ George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, visited the state late in that year, and the sect began to gain members rapidly. The ~~North Carolina Yearly Meeting~~ ³ was organized in 1698.

~~Fifty years later~~
Migration westward began about ~~50 years~~ ⁵⁰ fifty years later, ^{when} with a large group from the ~~Albermarle~~ Albemarle congregations ^{settled} ~~settling~~ in present Guilford County. ^{about 1750} They were joined there by other Quakers from Pennsylvania, who had moved down through the Shenandoah Valley in quest of new homes. The combined groups founded the New Garden Monthly Meeting at the ~~present~~ present

- ~~1. Stephen B. Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1896), pp. 35-47.~~
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site of Guilford College. The New Garden Meeting was organized in 1754.

The desire for more and better land drove the Quakers on toward the frontier, and before the American Revolution there were ~~several~~ several families ~~moved~~ moved from the New Garden settlement into the fertile valleys ~~near~~ near the Blue Ridge Mountains. These families ~~moved across~~ ^{crossed} the low Sauratown Mountains at a point called Quaker Gap and settled ~~in the vicinity~~ along Tom's Creek and Big Creek. ~~Their settlement here was known as Westfield.~~ This settlement, ³ ~~which started in 1754~~ became known as Westfield. ✓

These Quakers carried their religion with them, and they began holding meetings in the homes before the American Revolution, although they retained their membership in the ^{Monthly Meeting} church at New Garden. A temporary, or ~~preparative~~ preparative ~~Monthly~~ Meeting was set up at Westfield in 1782, operating under the guidance of the New Garden ministers. ²⁰⁰ This was followed on February 1787 by the formal organization of the Westfield Monthly Meeting, which ~~was~~ has come to be known, from its great age, as the Old Westfield Monthly Meeting.

~~The charter members of the group included~~
A list of charter members of the group includes Joseph Jackson, Joseph Jessup, Thomas Jessup, Joseph Hiatt, Jacob Jackson, Royal Simmons, Thomas Sumner and

2. Ibid., pp. 104-107.
3. ~~Bertie Carroll Dix~~
Bertie Dix, A Genealogy of Westfield Origins (Graduation Thesis, Guilford College, May 1922), pp. 2-5
3. Jesse G. Hollingsworth, History of Surry County (Mount Airy: Times Publishing Co., 1933), p. 189.

Richard Pinson, ⁴ all of whom have descendants living in the community today.

The Westfield Quaker meeting grew rapidly, for the migration from New Garden continued ~~unbroken~~ unbroken for several years. The newer settlers found homes in sections twenty and thirty miles away ^{✓ this} from Westfield, and by 1792 the Westfield Monthly Meeting was sponsoring branch groups at Mount Pleasant, Chestnut Hill and Fruit Hill. ⁵

The growth lasted only a few years, for by 1800 there began a new movement of the Quakers to points still further West. The records show that between 1801 and 1822 ~~the Westfield~~ there twenty-two families who left Westfield to go to ~~the~~ Tennessee, Ohio and Indiana. The removal of these families took fifty-nine members ~~away~~ from the Meeting rolls. This resulted in 1832 in the complete collapse of the Westfield organization.

^{forty} Thirty years intervened before the Westfield Meeting was revived, but several of the old members and a group of new ones brought about the reorganization in 1883, and the Meeting has had an unbroken existence since that ~~time~~ time. ✓

A significant feature of the history of the Westfield ~~Quakers~~ Quakers has been their interest in education. One of their first acts after the Meeting was founded was

4. Stephen B. Weeks, Southern Quakers and Slavery (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1896), p.109.

5. Zora Klain, Quaker Contributions to Education in North Carolina (Philadelphia: Westbrook Publishing Co., 1925), p. 230.

to provide for a school. A log school house stood on the church grounds, and the school continued to operate during the years when the church was inactive. One of the teachers in the school, during the years just after the Civil War, was Miss Ellen Minthorne, an aunt of ~~Zachary Taylor~~ ⁶ Herbert Hoover, the only Quaker president of the United States.

The school house is gone from the church grounds today, for the state has long since taken over the duties of public education at Westfield, ~~Westfield~~. The original church building is gone, too, but a modern structure stands only a few feet from the original site to house the oldest religious group in the section.

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6. Bertie Dix, A Compilation of Westfield Origins (Unpublished Senior Thesis, Guilford College, 1922), pp. 4-14.

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