

February 20, 1951

Mrs. Woodrow Smith
Westfield, N. C.

Dear Mrs. Smith:

I received your letter in regard to historical data on the Westfield Friends Church, and I have been checking through my notes tonight to see just what I could find. I would really like to have time to check some of the records of early deeds at Dobson and Salisbury in an effort to see just when the earliest settlers located in that area, but that is obviously impossible, since you need the information very quickly.

I shall cite some of the things I have checked in this letter in order to give you an idea of where I got my information, and then I shall write the 150-200 word sketch that you requested.

I know the following things to be true:

(1) Deed records ~~and~~ in Surry County and Rowan County show that the earliest settlement of people in the area which later was to center about the Old Westfield Quaker Church was ~~in the~~ between 1760 and 1770, for there are records of people buying or claiming land in that section between those dates. Since most of the early settlers were Quakers, we may assume that there was some semblance of religious group at or near westfield before 1770.

(2) Westfield Church was established as an off-spring of the historic New Garden Monthly Meeting at Guilford College, for the church records at New Garden prove that to be a fact. The Quakers at New Garden (Guilford College) regarded the church work at Westfield as a sort of mission project in its early years, and since it was located west of Guilford College, it was referred to as "the western field", and thus came the name of Westfield.

(3) The minutes of the New Garden Monthly Meeting for August 29, 1772 state that "Also the Friends near the Mountains request the indulgence of holding meetings on week-days among themselves." The people near the mountains were those at westfield, so that is proof that there were Quakers in that area before 1772. In other words there were enough Quakers in the westfield section prior to 1772 to be interested in holding meetings.

(4) The minutes for New Garden for September, 1772 show that "the committee appointed to visit Friends near the mountains reports that they complied with instructions, ... and its the sense and judgment that they (the Friends near the Mountains) be indulged the privilege of holding such meetings and appoints them the fourth day of the week." These meetings were the first official church gatherings at westfield. (1772).

(5) The Westfield meeting operated for several years under the guidance and care of the New Garden Monthly Meeting at Guilford College. It was referred to as "the little meeting nigh Tom's Creek" in minutes of the New Garden Meeting for May 29, 1773.

(6) The Westfield Quakers expressed themselves in 1779 (during the American Revolution) as opposed to war, which is an ancient Quaker belief.

(7) The church at Westfield was established on ~~an unauthorized~~ a more permanent basis when the Western Quarterly Meeting met at Cane Creek on November 9, 1782 and authorized a ~~committee~~ committee to inspect the Westfield group and report at the next quarterly session. The Westfield Quakers had requested such a preparative meeting in August, 1782. Formal organization of the Westfield Meeting as a preparative body was finally and definitely granted August 14, 1784.

(8) The Westfield Friends would send representatives all the way to New Garden -- sixty or seventy miles --- every month, and we find the Western Quarterly Meeting recording in its minutes on November 13, 1786 that a permanent monthly meeting had been granted to the Quakers near Tom's Creek and that "it be known in the future by the name of Westfield." The meeting was ordered to be held on the "seventh day preceding the last seventh day ~~of~~ in each month."

(9) The first recorded minutes of a regular Monthly Meeting at westfield bear the date of December 23, 1786. Bowater Sumner was appointed first clerk.

(10) The first marriage solemnized at the new Westfield Monthly Meeting was that of Sarah Jessup and Joseph Jackson early in 1787. They were direct ancestors of John Jackson, Hobart Jackson and others of that group. Their old home was where Hobart Jackson formerly lived.

building

(11) The exact date of the first church/at Westfield is not known, but it was probably built ~~about~~ soon after the meeting first started, for there is a deed on file in the Quaker Archives at Guilford College, dated August 1797 for nine acres "including the Westfield Meeting House." That is proof that there was already a church building there at that date.

(12) I have in my files a hand-written statement from the late Mrs. Effie Ann Hill, who stated that the first church building was built right after the meeting was started, and she states that that FIRST CHURCH stood down in the present grave yard and that it was located about twenty steps west of her father's (Ira Chilton) grave. She writes "when he was buried put there, his grave was made at the lower side of the East Yard of the church." Mrs. Hill stated that that old church stood on the east side

(13) I have ~~been informed that~~ ~~the exact date of the second church~~

of the road, but in 1939 when they had that big Home-Coming and celebration at the renovation of the present church, someone located some old rocks just below the present church toward the cemetery (but on the west side of the road along with the present church) and Rev. L. W. McFarland told me that those rocks marked the site of the first church. I cannot remember the exact location of Ira W. Chilton's grave, but it seems to me that it was not too far down in the cemetery, so it seems likely that the ~~rexxxxxx~~ oldest church might have been where those rocks were located to form a square for the old foundation. Ira Chilton died

(13) Now, Mrs. Hill also wrote that "the old ~~xxxxx~~ log wall⁷ in 1885. of the old church~~x~~ was still standing" when services were started again after the Civil War, so evidently that first church was practically gone at that time. Quaker records show that between 1801 and 1822 there were fifty-nine members, including thirty-six families, who migrated to Indiana and Ohio, and the Westfield Monthly Meeting was laid down in 1832. The bulk of the migration began in 1817. The result was that from 1832 until after the Civil War there was no Westfield Monthly Meeting. In April 1860 ~~xxxxWestfieldMonthlyMeetingxx~~ there was still a meeting house there, for there is a deed on record made by the Trustees of Friends to the trustees of the Westfield community 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 ~~xxxxxx~~ respectable religious peoples." So the Westfield Quaker property belonged to the community from 1860 until 1872. In 1872 the Trustees of the Friends (Sandy Cook, William H. Pell and Benjamin F. Davis) paid \$125 for the nine acre tract, and it once more became the property of the Friends church, with the provision that it was to be held ~~xxxxxx~~ forever by the Society of Friends.

(14) Since there had been no Monthly Meeting at Westfield from 1832 until after the Civil War, it was revived about ~~xxxxxx~~ 1868 when Albert Peele and Isham Cox went from New Garden to Westfield. Albert Peele wrote that Isham Cox and I got in the neighborhood on Saturday morning and met a few Friends, who asked if we would consent to hold meeting the following day. We told them that we would, so on Sunday morning about 150 people met out there in the open air. (EVIDENTLY THERE WAS NO CHURCH BUILDING) We stood on a long to preach. The people decided ~~amongxthemselves~~ from that time to have a Friends Meeting again and made up among themselves to do it." This was in the spring of 1868.

(15) John Y. Hoover began serving as a minister in 1872 and served for some years. He was followed by David Sampson and Sampson in turn by James Jones. The Westfield Meeting was functioning as a sort of preparative group after it was started again in 1868, and it was not~~xx~~ until ~~xxxxxx~~ November 9, 1883 that the Westfield Monthly Meeting was officially reorganized. The first minutes of the new organization bear that date and show that it was part of the Deep River Quarterly Meeting.

(16) At this point let us point out the Quarterly Meetings of

which Westfield Monthly Meeting has been a part. It was originally founded in 1786 as a member of the Western Quarterly Meeting. It was transferred to the newly organized New Garden Quarterly Meeting in 1787. Within the next few years Westfield itself branched out and formed new Monthly Meetings at Lost Creek in Tennessee in 1793, at New Hope in Tennessee in 1795, Mount Pleasant and Fruit Hill in Virginia in 1797, at North Providence in 1801, and so IN 1803 THE WESTFIELD QUARTERLY MEETING set off. Apparently this Westfield Quarterly Meeting continued until the Westfield Monthly Meeting was discontinued in 1832, but when the Westfield church was revived in 1883, it belonged to Deep River Quarterly Meeting. It was transferred to the new Yadkin Valley Quarterly Meeting in 1889 and was again transferred to the new Sunny Quarterly Meeting in 1898.

(17) More about church buildings. Apparently the old original church was rebuilt after the Civil War, or else a second church was built on the land of the Quakers. It seems to have been after 1883 that the modern church was built, for the late Bertie Dix Carroll, writing in her senior thesis at Guilford College, says that "some years after this (she meant 1883) they built a spacious meeting house on the lot belonging to the Society, and by the efforts of James Jones the house was furnished with good seats."

(18) Now, about schools. The Westfield Monthly Meeting has always realized the need of good schools, and soon after it was formed there was a provision for a school. The minutes of the Meeting in 1817 list the school committee "to have charge of the schools in the future." This would indicate that there was already a school before that. This school went down when the Meeting died in 1832, but a Quaker school was revived after the Civil War, taught by Miss Ellen Minthorne and later by "Aunt Rhoda" Worth. This school grew into the Westfield Academy and later into the present Westfield High School.

(19) The Friends introduced many ~~varieties~~ varieties of fruit and grass seeds. Abijah Pinson was a leader in this bringing in of cultivated fruit and such grass as timothy and "English Millet".

Now, these things I have written in this letter are definite facts. I could find no other pertinent things in my notes here, but some day I hope to do a real history of the church. I wish I had time to get up to Westfield and also to Dobson and Salisbury to do some extra investigation for you people, but I cannot do it right now, and you need this sketch at once. So, I am writing on another sheet a brief sketch, condensing as much of this information as I can for you. If you wish to change it or write something different, it will be all right. I would certainly like to see one of your plates and to have one to keep in my collection of Westfield relics.

Page 5

I hope this letter and the sketch I am sending will answer your questions and your purpose.

Give mine and June's regard to all our friends and relatives there.

Most sincerely

LUTHER N. BYRD
Box 576
Elon College, N. C.

"OLD WESTFIELD"

The Westfield Friends Church, better known as "Old Westfield," is aptly named, for it is the oldest church in Surry or Stokes Counties. Its roots date back to the 1760's, when pioneer Quakers from New Garden crossed Quaker Gap of the Sauratown Mountains to plant a community in the valleys of Big Creek and Thomas's Creek.

Those early Quakers began holding meetings at Westfield by 1772 under care of New Garden Monthly Meeting, continuing in that manner until 1786 when Westfield Monthly Meeting was formally started. The new meeting grew and prospered and spread to start new meetings in both Virginia and Tennessee,

Westward migration weakened the congregation, and Westfield Meeting was laid down in 1832, not to be revived until 1868, when Friends from New Garden again started services on the old site. The Meeting was formally reorganized in 1883 and has continued without interruption until the present day.

Three church buildings are said to have housed the "Old Westfield" congregation. The first was built in the 1780's, but it decayed before the Civil war. It was rebuilt about 1870 and continued in use until about 1885, when the present building was erected. later to be modernized to its present form in 1939.

Westfield N.C.
Feb. 17, 1951

Dear Mr. Byrd.

The Missionary Society of Westfield Friends Church are planning to sell the commemorative plates using the picture of the Friends Church on the plate, with the historical data on the back.

We sent to Guilford College for full details about our Church. We are not completely satisfied with the information they sent us.

We thought you might have some information about our Church.

Would you please send us a history as you would have it in 150 - 200 words as this is all we can use on the plate. The Church has such a long history that we are trying to get the most outstanding dates. We do not plan to use any names, as there are so many that would deserve to be mentioned, that would be impossible to put them in the history. We especially would like to know what date the present Building was built. And the number of members the first monthly meeting was organized with.

We will appreciate it very much if you can send us a history as you would write it in 150-200 words. We would like to have this information this coming week if possible.

Most Sincerely,
Mrs. Woodruff