

Some Interesting Ohio

Elisha Bates (1781–1861)

Elisha Bates was a leading Ohio Friends minister and printer of the early 19th century who was involved with the initial stages of the Beacon controversy.

Bates was born in eastern Virginia in 1781. He moved to Short Creek MM in 1817. The next year, Bates purchased a printing shop in Mount Pleasant from Charles Osborn, where he continued Osborn's magazine and engaged in job printing (such as the YM minutes and the 1819 *Discipline*). Bates changed the name of Osborn's magazine to the *Miscellaneous Repository*.

In 1819, Short Creek MM recognized Bates's gift in the ministry. He then served as Clerk of Ohio Yearly Meeting in 1819. That year, Ohio YM adopted its first *Discipline*, which Bates then printed. Bates had a difficult time as Clerk. He was troubled by some poorly chosen words offered by a visiting minister, and Bates' insistence on not endorsing the travelling minister's minute upset Horton Howard, who was serving that year as Assistant Clerk of the men's Ohio YM. Then on Bates's way home, he lost the committee reports.

Bates undertook several travels in the 1820s and 1830s. His first travel with a minute took place in 1823, when he visited with each family of Short Creek MM. Later in 1823, he and Jonathan Taylor visited Indiana YM. When possible, Bates would seek out inactive and former members and hold a home meeting with them.

In 1824, Bates's most famous book was printed. Entitled *Doctrines of Friends*, the book was one of the most important Quaker doctrinal treatises of the years 1775–1825. The book was republished several times later in the century.

Bates became prominent among those Friends who opposed the ministry of Elias Hicks, and some of Bates's sermons against Hicks were printed by Marcus T.C. Gould. Bates played a major role in the decision of Ohio Yearly Meet-

ing in 1827 to recognize the Orthodox Philadelphia YM. When the General Committee first met in 1829 at Mount Pleasant, Bates clerked their sessions. The *Testimony of the Society of Friends on the Continent of America* was approved by them, then endorsed by all Orthodox YMs, and published by Bates. His brother Fleming Bates was serving at that time as men's Clerk of Virginia YM.

In the early 1830s, Bates's ministry began to suffer. Friends noted that he was misquoting and misapplying scripture, and several Elders worked with him to nurture his ministry. Bates countered that they did not appreciate scripture. Soon thereafter, Bates began to adopt Anglican religious terminology and denying the existence of spiritual rebirth. Bates travelled to England without a travelling minute, where he met with Isaac Crewdson, Joseph John Gurney, and some Friends who were associated with Crewdson's Beaconite supporters. While in England, Bates chose to have himself "baptized" with water. Ohio Friends were unnerved by Bates' unexplained behavior, and he was disowned in 1837. During a heated discussion of Bates's case on the yearly meeting floor, Philadelphia minister Thomas Kite warned Ohio Friends they should worship the Creator and not the creature, and this warning played a key role in the YM deciding to sustain Bates's disownment.

Bates left Quakerism. In the mid 1830s, he contacted former Friends in the Short Creek area and organized a Methodist congregation. He served as their minister for a time, but they later disowned him, too.

Near the end of his life, Bates became interested in Quakerism again. He is reported to have sat on the rear benches during worship in the old brick Short Creek Meeting House west of Mount Pleasant, though he never returned to membership. He died on Eighth Month 5th, 1861, and his remains were interred in the Short Creek burial ground.

Friends of 1825 to 1850

Jonathan Taylor (1768–1831)

Jonathan Taylor was an early settler in eastern Ohio and Clerk of Ohio YM. He sometimes suffered from depression; his memorial suggested the Lord used it to deepen his ministry.

Taylor was born in Pennsylvania on 2/13/1768. He was recorded as a minister while he and his wife Ann lived at Goose Creek MM in Virginia.

Jonathan and Ann Taylor settled in eastern Ohio in 1800. They built a log cabin in what later became Colerain Township, Belmont County, before the land was officially opened for settlement (the first house constructed in the Township). The Taylors hosted the Friends from North Carolina when they arrived in Ohio in 1800.

Taylor was the first Clerk of the Meeting for Sufferings (1813–1822). In this role, he advocated for Indians and blacks in Ohio and delivered memorials to the Ohio legislature several times regarding their rights. In 1818, he was one of the Quaker observers during federal negotiations with the Indians. Three years later, Taylor purchased a large tract of land at Wapakoneta, Ohio

that he held in trust for the Indians to ensure that they could not be forced to leave by the government. A school was built on the land to teach the youth to read, and a mill was built to provide an income. Quaker families lived there to operate the mill and school until the Indians voluntarily moved west in the 1830s.

Taylor was the Clerk of Ohio Yearly Meeting at the time of the 1828 division. While seated at the Clerk's table at Mount Pleasant at the opening session, a young Hicksite threw Taylor out of the meeting house, breaking his glasses. As some Friends helped Taylor up, he is reported to have remarked, "What kind of religion is this?" It was a cruel irony that Taylor was injured in this way, as Hicksite leaders themselves reported at the time that they had no quarrel with his impartiality as Clerk.

In 1831, Taylor was one of four well-known American Friends ministers who travelled to England; the others were Christopher Healey, Stephen Grellett, and John Wilbur. Taylor became ill in Ireland, where he died on 11/6/1831.

Benjamin W. Ladd (1782–1851)

Benjamin W. Ladd was a prominent Elder of Ohio YM in the early 1800s. He was born in Virginia YM to James and Isabella Ladd, a minister and elder who lived in Charles City County and were members of Waynoak MM. In 1814, Ladd married Elizabeth Wood, who was living at "Prospect Hill" near the Smithfield MH, and the following year he moved there for the remainder of his life. Ladd opened the first business west of the Alleghenies to pack and cure bacon, and many of his workers were free blacks and people who had escaped to freedom on the underground railroad.

Ladd was a voracious reader, particularly interested in early Quaker writings. On one occasion during a business meeting, a discussion took place regarding a minute that contained a verse of scripture that seemed awkward. As other verses were being recommended, Ladd recommended a

quote from an early Friend that had more clarity, but he was criticized thereafter for recommending an early Quaker quote over a Bible verse. Though that one moment was awkward, Ladd was widely acclaimed for his ability to quote sections of the approved writings of Friends. Ladd was also continuously asked to serve the meeting in various capacities. He served as Clerk of the Ohio YM for Ministers and Elders for 30 years in addition to his many other appointments.

Ladd was a leading opponent of the ideas contained in the *Beacon*, and he maintained a strong stand against Gurney's writings. During the 1840s, Ladd supported the policy of minimizing the differences between the Gurneyites and Wilburites, even as his second wife, Hannah S. Ladd, fostered divisiveness on the women's side of the partition.