

# Ohio Yearly Meeting Hicksite

Today, Ohio Yearly Meeting has little institutional memory of Ohio Hicksites. The Hicksites were originally strong in Belmont and Columbiana Counties, which accounted for 18 of the 48 meetings that belonged to their YM at any time.

## Organization

When founded, Ohio Yearly Meeting (Hicksite) replicated the organization of the pre-division yearly meeting. It retained the separate men's and women's business meetings and the select meetings. An interesting parallel between the Orthodox and Hicksite Ohio YMs was that the first men's Clerks following the division were soon disowned. On the Hicksite side, the first men's YM Clerk was David Hilles of Westland MM. Hilles had been the men's Clerk of Redstone QM prior to the division. Hilles became disruptive during Westland MM (H) sessions, and he was disowned in 1831.

A major early event in the history of OYMH was the construction of a new yearly meeting house. The Hicksites and Orthodox had shared the earlier Salem Meeting House, which was in poor condition (discussions to rebuild it were discontinued when the division took place in 1828). By 1840 sharing had become unmanageable. The two sides agreed to sell the meeting house and divide the money; each side purchased land and built a new meeting house. The new Salem Hicksite Meeting House, built in 1845 on Ellsworth Avenue, was large enough to accommodate their yearly meeting sessions. After that time, their YMs alternated between Salem and Mount Pleasant.

Always small, the Hicksite Ohio YM declined in numbers throughout its history. By 1845, 12 of the original 40 Ohio Hicksite meetings had been laid down; they had opened seven new meetings.

## The Progressive Division

The Hicksite Ohio Yearly Meeting was the only Hicksite YM that was seriously undermined by the Progressive movement. This movement began in Indiana YM Hicksite in 1842, when some Hicksites desiring a more public opposition to sla-

very organized a body with the name of Green Plains Yearly Meeting. No original Hicksite body recognized Green Plains YM, but "progressives" in other Hicksite bodies began to press for changes that spread their influence. Leading ministers in Ohio YM (H) such as William Schooley (Stillwater MM Hicksite) visited Green Plains and were horrified at what they found. The Progressives at Green Plains had removed their partition, allowed families to sit together, and allowed visitors to remain in the meeting house during business meetings. The business was held in joint session, which was more efficient but allowed a strong personality to sway the business too much.

A major progressive force in Ohio YM Hicksite was James Barnaby Jr., editor of a Salem newspaper named the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*. Barnaby supported the Progressives at Green Plains and the reform movements of the day. He organized a "comeouter movement," which called on progressive Hicksites to "come out" of their old meetings and organize Progressive meetings. Comeouters held a "Conference of Friends of Progress and Reform" in the abandoned New Garden Hicksite Meeting House in 10/1849. New Garden MM began to disown those who attended the conference, and in early 1850 a division took place. The entire meetings of Grove, Sandy Spring, and New Lisbon became Progressive, as did a large number of Friends at Salem, Fairmont, and Richland. At yearly meeting that year, Ohio Hicksites reorganized the weakened New Garden QM, naming it Western QM after the new West MM.

West Meeting [14], located in Sebring, was an active Hicksite meeting. Formed by Hicksites of Upper Springfield MM, it became a MM in 1845 and established subordinate meetings at Berlin, Fairmont, and Cope's Run.

The decline of Ohio YM Hicksite in the latter 1800s was remarkable. The number of local meetings fell from 32 in 1850 to 22 in 1860, 13 in 1870, and 11 in 1880. Salem QM absorbed West QM in 1859 and Redstone QM in 1862.

# 1828 to 1900

