

# Beacon, Bates, Baptism, and

Most of the events in Ohio YM in the 1830s were in response to the Hicksite division. Elisha Bates, who had led the charge against Hicks in the late 1820s, left Friends in the mid-1830s in a divisive manner. Bates's changing beliefs alerted Ohio Friends of a new threat to traditional Quakerism and raised awareness of future danger.

In the wake of the Hicksite divisions, representatives from eight YMs met at Mount Pleasant on 7/27/1829 as the first session of the General Committee. They discussed the state of the various YMs and approved a document titled the *Testimony of the Society of Friends on the Continent of America*. The pamphlet was endorsed by all YMs and published several times.

The *Testimony* set in motion a succession of publications. Many Friends believed that a lack of knowledge of the Bible and the early Friends made the Hicksite division possible. One of the Ohio queries during this time asked if Friends gathered in their families to read the Scriptures; in 1832, only four families in the entire YM did not own a Bible. In 1829, New York YM wrote Ohio YM that Friends needed to reprint and read early Friends works. In 1831, Ohio YM directed the MMs to open libraries and purchase books. The works of George Fox were reprinted, a new weekly publication named *The Friend* began publication in Philadelphia, many journals were republished, and the series called the *Friends Library* began publication in the 1830s.

Travelling ministers continued to play an important role in the health of Quaker communities. Henry Hull, a New York Friend who was one of the most gifted Friends ministers of his generation, visited Ohio in 1834. He arrived at Mount Pleasant in time for YM, where he spoke several times in ministry and mentioned this would be his last travel. He began to have diarrhea, and through YM week his health declined. Feeling drawn to Stillwater, Hull accompanied Benjamin Hoyle there after the close of the YM. Hull died at the Hoyle's house on 9/23/1834 and was buried at Stillwater.

Elisha Bates provided drama to the YM until the mid-1830s. He played a major role in the General Committee, including an effort to write a discipline to be approved by all YMs. In 1835, a booklet by British Friends minister Isaac Crewdson entitled *A Beacon to the Society of Friends* was published. This booklet was seen as inspirational by those Friends who wanted to adopt practices of other denominations. Bates became the chief supporter of the *Beacon* in Ohio, and Benjamin W. Ladd became its greatest opponent. The Ohio M4S approved a rebuttal that complained about the *Beacon's* lack of emphasis on inward teaching by Christ Jesus. When Bates realized that Ladd was more formidable than he had anticipated, he went to England where he and Crewdson took part in a ceremony they called baptism. Bates then returned home and organized a Methodist congregation with some disowned Friends.

One leader of the retrograde spiritual movement in England visited the USA in 1837. Joseph John Gurney was a loquacious man, and even in his day some Friends questioned his discernment in conversations and in ministry. Gurney visited many Orthodox YMs, and on occasion local Friends challenged his writings. Gurney's visit had little immediate impact on Ohio Friends.

The Mount Pleasant Friends Boarding School opened in 1837 the week following Ohio YM. A committee was appointed in 1831 to take existing funds and raise additional funds. At the time, Friends envisioned that a YM boarding school would be a place where young Friends could learn about traditional Quakerism and thus avoid going down the road of the Hicksites. The boarding school would also be a place for educating Friends who would become teachers in the meeting schools. The school building also provided accommodations for Friends who attended yearly meeting. A brick walkway was laid between the boarding school and the Mount Pleasant Meeting House, much similar to that between Stillwater and Olney today. A committee was appointed to oversee the boarding school; it was usually called the Acting Committee.

# Boarding School 1829 to 1840

