

Ohio YM (G) / Eastern Region

Ohio Yearly Meeting (Gurneyite), later called Ohio YM (Damascus) and then the Evangelical Friends Church – Eastern Region, has played a major role in the history of American Quakerism. It brought many changes to Gurneyite Quakerism in North America throughout its history, even after it became independent and later started the Evangelical branch of Friends.

The earliest years of the yearly meeting were bleak. Travelling Gurneyite ministers from other YMs made a point to visit the small group of Ohio Gurneyites. In 1856, Indiana YMG transferred its Alum Creek QM to Ohio YMG, and in 1869 New York YMG transferred Adrian QM (in Michigan) to Ohio. This influx of new meetings was critical in sustaining the fledgling body.

The situation in Ohio YM was drastically changed by David B. Updegraff. By the mid 1870s, Updegraff had become a leader in what was called the "holiness movement." This group set about to change [Gurneyite] Quakerism by shifting its emphasis from Christian nonconformity to the emerging evangelical conformity sweeping the nation. The nature of worship was changed; silent waiting for inspiration from Christ Jesus was replaced by prepared messages brought by a paid pastor, and congregational music was also introduced. The women's meetings were disbanded, and the proportion of women active in meeting affairs was drastically reduced. Meeting house interiors were reconfigured to allow space for "mourner's benches," pulpits, and choirs. The nationwide Richmond Conference was called to establish limits on Ohio YMG, which was considered to be a polarizing force among Gurneyite Quakerism. A nationwide organization of Gurney YMs was established with the name of the Five Years Meeting; Ohio YMG decided from the outset not to join the 5YM.

Ohio YMG became an independent yearly meeting after the adoption of the Gurneyites' Uniform Discipline. It expressed its freedom by establishing meetings inside the bounds of other Gurneyite YMs, including Hampton Roads QM (Virginia) and Piedmont QM inside North Caro-

lina YMG, Grinnell QM inside Iowa YMG, and Pelham QM inside Canada YMG.

Modernism within Gurneyite YMs in North America precipitated withdrawals throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. In the 1920s, growing acceptance of the theory of evolution and the use of biblical criticism caused Oregon YM to separate from the 5YM. Additional tension was caused by pastors who objected to using translations of the scripture other than the King James Version. Kansas YM withdrew from the 5YM, and the majority of Nebraska YM seceded to form Intermountain YM.

The circle of correspondence of Evangelical Friends was made more official late in the century. The four evangelical YMs formed the Evangelical Friends Alliance. Soon thereafter, they assumed new names; Ohio YMG became the "Evangelical Friends Church – Eastern Region; Oregon YM became Northwest YM, and Kansas YM became Mid-America YM. Within the newly named YMs, the QMs were renamed Districts and reorganized.

In the late 1980s, a movement began to "realign" Quakerism in North America. The idea posited that all Christian meetings would enter into fellowship and all the unprogrammed meetings enter into a second fellowship. The idea ignored the presence of Ohio YM, which was not compatible with either proposed group. While the topic was hotly debated across the continent, no one appeared to be concerned about Ohio Friends. In the long run, however, the only result of all the turmoil was that California YM assumed the new name of Southwest YM and switched affiliation to join the Evangelical circle.

Evangelical Friends have been heavily involved in missionary activities in Africa and Latin America. Some Latin America members later removed to the United States and have established Spanish-speaking meetings in Philadelphia. These meetings retain the scriptural use of "church" for the gathered body and do not use the term to describe their meeting houses.

1854 to 2013

Springfield was one of the two original strong Gurneyite QMs. It was originally comprised of three fairly large MMs. The QM was re-named Damascus QM in 1867 and then renamed the Northeastern District in 1971. In the 20th century, the QM opened meetings in the Canton area.

The map shows Ohio YMG as of late 1854.

The Gurneyites drastically altered the Salem MH on Pershing Street in the 1870s, then demolished it and built a large MH on Jennings Avenue.

The Gurney Redstone QM was comprised of two small meetings: the majority of Redstone MM and the minority of Westland MM. Both meetings were small, and the QM was laid down in 1864 after ten years and one day in existence.

Short Creek QM was one of two large QMs of Ohio YMG. Its Flushing MM was renamed Freeport MM in 1875 after Flushing meeting had been laid down; it was then renamed Guernsey MM after Freeport meeting was laid down. Guernsey MM was laid down in 1927. Short Creek MM lost its local meetings at Concord and Short Creek in 1863, Harrisville in 1872, and West Grove in 1947. That MM survives at Mount Pleasant, where the Yearly Meeting House was abandoned for a Gothic meeting house nearby.

The main force behind the Gurney meeting at Chesterfield was Arnold Patterson. The meeting felt ignored by Ohio YMG, and in 1866 it switched affiliation to Indiana YM. After Chesterfield meeting was laid down in 1887, some members (including Arnold Patterson's widow) rejoined Ohio YM.

The Howland Meeting House was one of the earliest with a modern design in the Eastern Region. The congregation left EFC-ER in the 1980s.

Damascus YM House (1866–1973)

Westland MM 1, Redstone MM 2

Upper Springfield MM 30, 31, 35, Marlborough MM 22, 18, 19, Garden MM 21, 23, 49, Sandy Spring MM 38, Smithfield 15, Short Creek MM 12, 11, 37, Flushing MM 40, 17, 27, 41, 10, Chesterfield MM 43, 46

Salem QM, Salem MM, New Garden MM

Springfield QM

Short Creek QM

Redstone QM