

Some Interesting Ohio

Benjamin Hoyle (1797–1875)

Benjamin Hoyle was a leading minister in Ohio YM in the middle of the 19th century. He was the longest serving Clerk of Ohio YM. Because he was serving as Clerk at the time of the 1854 division, Ohio YM was sometimes called the “Hoyle Yearly Meeting” afterwards.

Born in England, he moved to Ohio with his father John Hoyle and stepmother Ann Hoyle. They settled at Smithfield. Only 19 when the family relocated, Benjamin soon showed promise as a young Friend. He was appointed Clerk of the men’s Stillwater QM at the age of 31 and Clerk of the men’s Ohio YM at the age of 38.

Hoyle worked in various capacities. He was primarily a farmer. In the 1830s, he operated a business making using steam power to manufacture farm machinery. He served several times on road improvement projects.

In 1834, Henry Hull died in Hoyle’s house. Hull had been sick while attending Ohio YM that year but had a concern to visit Stillwater. Hoyle took him to his house. Hull was so weak that he was not able to make it to Stillwater, but he drafted an essay to young Friends while at the Hoyles’.

Hoyle travelled widely among Friends. His most famous travel was to New England in the early 1840s. He and Abigail (Hunt) Stanley of North Carolina YM angered the New England Gurneyites because they took the time to visit John Wilbur to hear his side of the story during the process of his disownment. New England YM did not endorse the minutes of Hoyle or Stanley and forbade them from holding called meetings during that travel.

Hoyle’s 20 years of service as Clerk of the men’s Ohio YM (1838–58) was the longest term of service and one of the most difficult. He attempted to find middle ground during the Gurneyite controversy unsuccessfully. After 1854, Hoyle believed that there was a chance of reconciliation with the Gurneyites, although it never came to pass. After he was replaced as YM Clerk, Hoyle skipped some YM sessions to allow the wounds of the 1850s to heal. The last year he attended, he gave ministry in which he stated that some of his best spiritual openings had taken place while he was working silently in his fields, commuing with Christ Jesus. Hoyle’s ministry that day made a deep impression on many young Friends, who mentioned it several times later.

Joseph Edgerton (1797–1865)

One of the largest memorials/journals published by Ohio YM was the one for Joseph Edgerton. It was edited by his daughter Eunice Thomasson. The book is remarkable because it does not give an adequate sense of the spiritual depth and prominence of its subject. At the time, Elisha Bates was the only Ohio minister who was better known outside Ohio YM, but Edgerton’s influence on Ohio Friends surpassed Bates’s.

Edgerton was born in North Carolina in 1797. His parents, James and Sarah Edgerton, moved to Ohio in 1805. Joseph was eight years old at the time; his name was inadvertently left off their certificate. Joseph married Charity Doudna in 1818 and settled near Ridge Meeting.

Edgerton served Ohio Friends in many capacities. He travelled widely among Ohio Friends and visited most Orthodox meetings in North America. Like Hoyle, he was mistreated by the New England Gurneyites in the 1840s. He served as Clerk of the Ohio M4S from 1840 to 1856, during which time he worked with Hoyle to limit the harshness of feelings between the Gurneyites and Wilburites. Following the death of B.W. Ladd, Edgerton was chosen to serve as Clerk of the YM of Ministers & Elders (1851 to 1857). In 1865, Edgerton moved to Coal Creek, Iowa, where he died later that year. Five of Edgerton’s children were later recognized as ministers, and one of his decendants is currently recognized (Burton Doudna).

Friends of 1850 to 1875

Rachel Patterson (1811–82)

Rachel Patterson was a minister at Somerset and then at Springville, Iowa. A niece of Joseph Edgerton, Patterson became active in the divine vineyard in her 20s. She was appointed Clerk of the women's Stillwater QM at the age of 31 and recognized as a minister soon thereafter. She and her husband Tilman Patterson were the core of the meeting at Somerset, located on the north side of the village. At the time of the Gurneyite division in 1854, Rachel Patterson was appointed the new women's YM Clerk. During her service, Tilman was blinded in one eye, and they moved to Iowa. They continued to be active in Ohio, making many trips by train to Barnesville. Patterson was one of the Primitive-leaning Friends who did not join Ohio General Meeting. At the time of his death, Tilman Patterson was the longest serving member of the Ohio M4S.

Ann Branson (1808–1891)

Ann Branson was the leading women's minister of the mid-19th century in Ohio. Her life was limited by her usually sickly health. Ann never married, and U.S. Census records indicate that she lived with various families throughout her life. Branson, daughter of Jacob Branson and niece of Jacob Holloway, was recognized as a minister in 1838. She travelled widely throughout the Wilburite world (including Philadelphia YM). She had a sharp sense of right and wrong as well as a spiritual ability to know things that she had no information about, two traits that frightened some Friends. Everett Hartley was told by a relative that Ann had a high pitched voice and spoke very loudly in ministry. She was particularly interested in writing memorials for other Friends, serving as editor for memorials for several family members.

Joshua Maule (1806–1887)

Joshua Maule was a remarkable Friend from Concord Meeting who was a leader among the Ohio Primitive Friends and left behind one of the most popular journals of the 19th century.

Maule was born in the house adjacent to the Radnor Meeting House in Pennsylvania. His father operated a small school there. In 1828, Maule initially joined the Hicksites, but his father talked him into switching to the Orthodox. In 1831, Maule relocated to Ohio. He operated a small business making farm tools at first. In 1835 Maule opened a general store on the road leading northwest from Wheeling; he made a fortune in his business. He purchased a machine that carbonated water, and throughout the remainder of his life travelling ministers stopped at Maule's store to purchase this drink for their travels. As usual in those days, Maule had a small post office in his store.

Elements of Maule's character are not well known. He was a short man whose clothing was all light gray or dark brown. He was a very pleasant person to deal with in business. He had good

relations with the local Hicksites and Gurneyites, and a travelling Englishman wrote in his diary that the place was called Mauletown rather than Concord. Maule's behavior in Quaker circles, however, made it seem he was seeking attention. He wrote many letters and went up to speak with important Friends, and on occasion he went to the very expensive extent of publishing his own letters.

Maule had a spiritual awakening in the 1840s. his brother-in-law, Thomas B. Gould, was Clerk of New England YM for many years. While on a visit there, he was stricken by the ministry of John Wilbur and became Ohio's greatest advocate of Wilbur. Maule in particular took up the cause of the Primitive Friends and was active in the 1862–63 division that created Ohio General Meeting. After serving as Clerk of that body, however, Maule left it to become a founder of the "Remnants." In his last days, Maule worked with a Friend from New Zealand to prepare his journal for publication, the only Ohio Friends journal to be published during the life of the subject.