

Ohio Wilburites

The decade of the 1870s began on a low note, with the weakened Springfield QM being laid down, followed by the loss of the Boarding School property at Mt. Pleasant. Edward Stratton, men's YM Clerk, recorded a piece of ministry in 1871 in which someone stated "the unslumbering Shepherd of Israel is still watching over us for good" as a reminder that the difficult times would eventually pass. The situation improved in the latter portion of the 1870s, with a new Boarding School, the new YMH at Stillwater, and many new Friends coming into fellowship as a result of the Conservative divisions.

Springfield QM was finally laid down in 1872. The YM committee to provide assistance asked for an additional year in 1870. When it reported in 1871 that it was time to lay down SpQM, however, the YM asked it to return one more year. It did, and in 1872 it was absorbed into Salem QM.

Ohio YM created a new committee in 1872. With the increasing size of the meetings in Iowa, there was a need for Quaker books. Iowa Friends continually asked Ohio Friends to supply them with books. In 1872, a concern for "a more general circulation of the Approved Writings of Friends" led to the appointment of the Book Committee. The original charge of the Book Committee was to find homes for old Quaker books and make current Quaker books available. By the end of the decade, it had distributed 2,600 books and 800 pamphlets to various families. In 1879, Hickory Grove QM asked Ohio YM to prepare textbooks for local Friends schools. In the end, the books were prepared in conjunction with the Tract Association of Friends.

In 1874, Ohio YM lost control of the Mt. Pleasant Boarding School property. After six years of litigation, the Ohio Supreme Court granted control to the Gurneyites and gave the Wilburites 40 days to vacate the property. The school committee removed items that had been purchased since 1854, including a "modern" woodburning cooking range purchased in 1870. At yearly meeting in 1874, it was agreed to build a new boarding school near the Stillwater MH. Stacks

of school books and supplies were stored at Asa Garretson's house in the meantime. The Main was built during the summer of 1875 and was nearing completion at the time of YM. Classes began in the new school building on 1/3/1876. It was "modern" for its day, with gas lighting, running water, and the latest chemistry gadgets. Increased attendance overwhelmed the water system, so in 1877 a windmill was built to pump water into a 40 barrel reservoir while a new pipe system provided water for laundry services.

Ohio YM constructed a new yearly meeting house at Stillwater in 1878. The loss of the Mt. Pleasant Boarding School property also meant that Ohio Friends were not able to board in the school building during yearly meetings, and the M4S appointed a committee in 1874 to consider accommodations during YM time. In 1876, Ohio YM appointed a committee to consider changing its location; it recommended rebuilding the Stillwater MH. The YM approved, but a temporary snag was hit later when it was decided to ask Stillwater Meeting if it would be okay to tear down their meeting house and rebuild it. The plans were adjusted to meet some needs of Stillwater Friends, and the Charleston Fund gave the largest payment in its history to help cover construction costs. The section on the southwest corner of the building was called the "clothes room," built at a cost of \$200. The women's YM made cushions for all benches in 1879.

Conservative Gurneyites began to open their own yearly meetings in 1877. They contacted Friends in Hickory Grove QM, but there was an immediate problem. Hickory Grove QM Friends were still hurting from the fact that these new Conservative Friends had participated in the unnecessary disownment of HGQM Friends back in 1854. As a result, HGQM convinced Ohio YM to print a pamphlet on the distinguishing views of Friends. It was not clear until later that this document was intended to be used locally against the Iowa Conservative Friends. In the meantime, Conservative divisions were taking place in Indiana and Kansas as opposition to the new trends among Gurneyites increased.

1870 to 1880

