

# The Wider Conservative World

During the 40 years between 1875 and 1915, the role of Ohio YM in the Quaker world completely changed. Prior to this time, Ohio was unable to retain ties with Wilburite bodies, and for the most part other Wilburites were reticent about ties with Ohio, too. After 1875, the new Conservative YMs eagerly sought ties with Ohio Friends. It was during this time that Ohio and Philadelphia YMs came to be the "twin sisters" who provided guidance to the new Conservative bodies throughout the nation.

The first Conservative YMs were founded in 1877. Leading Gurney ministers began holding revival meetings in the mid-1870s. While these meetings were welcomed by some Friends, others were appalled at what was happening. People were calling on others to pray, ministers were reducing or eliminating the time of waiting for divine direction during worship, special "mourner's benches" were set aside for people who sought prayer, and hymnals were appearing. The expression of waiting worship was being entirely set aside. Those who opposed the changes began to correspond, and in 1877 they began to separate. The first Conservative division appears to have taken place in Western YM following a conference in the Sugar Grove Meeting House (which later became the seat of Western YM). A new Iowa YM and a new Western YM were held in 1877.

In 1879, Kansas became the third Conservative YM. The leading force in Kansas YM was Cyrus Harvey, a Civil War veteran who was called into the ministry after his spiritual awakening. Harvey began a Quaker periodical entitled *The Western Friend*, which documented the activities of leading Gurneyite ministers. Harvey, a gifted minister himself, held anti-revival revivals which were well-received. He travelled widely among North American Friends; in 1880, he helped the Otisites and Kingites in New York to resolve their differences and rejoin. He later married the women's Clerk of the Conservative North Carolina YM. He died in eastern Pennsylvania after addressing Philadelphia YM (Hicksite), the first Orthodox Friend to do so.

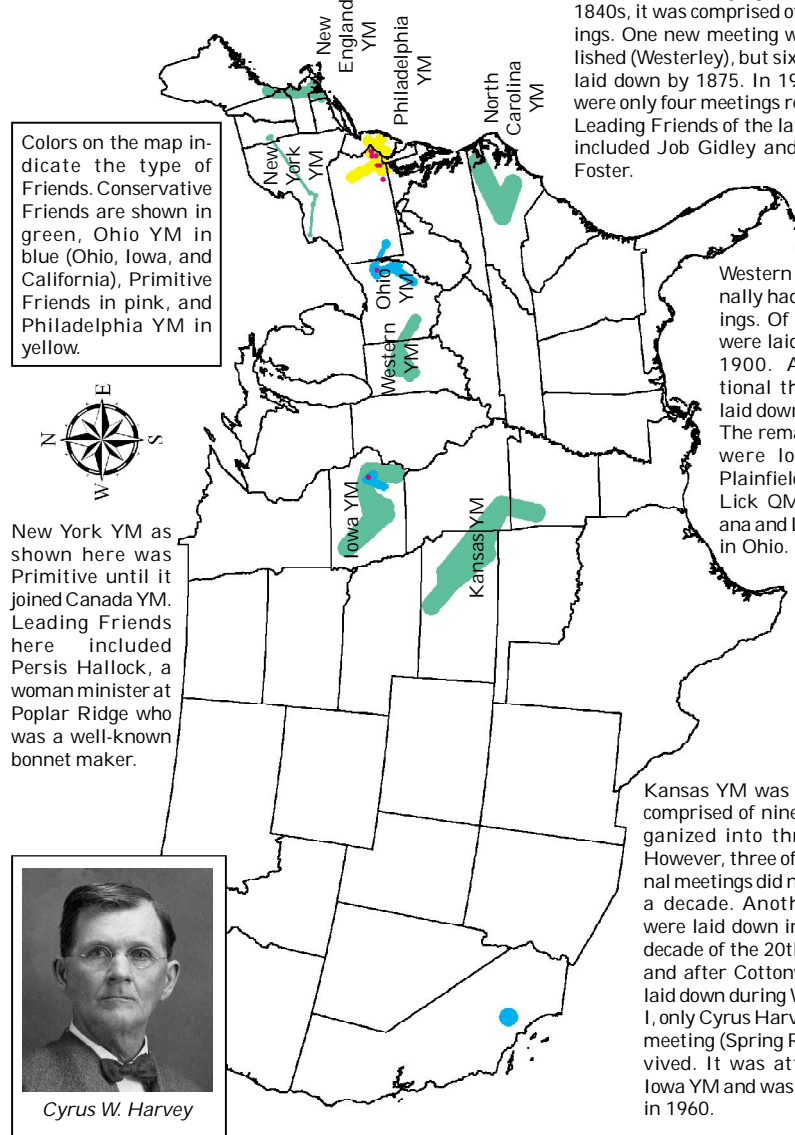
With the passage of time, these three bodies grew as additional Gurney Friends took a stand against the ongoing changes, which by the 1880s included the paying of pastors and occasional use of water baptism. In 1881, Conservative Friends in Canada held their first YM, retaining the former YM Clerk, Adam Spencer.

Ties among the Conservative groups began immediately. Leading ministers of the earlier groups visited the new bodies, and a visiting minister from one of the other YMs was in attendance at Ohio YM almost every year. Caleb Gregg joined Iowa YM, even though there was not a Conservative Meeting near his home. Visitation grew especially after Ohio YM began to recognize these bodies in the 1880s. Conservative Friends began to send their children to Olney, intermarriage began to occur, and Conservative Friends eagerly obtained any literature that Ohio and Philadelphia YMs published.

The last of the Conservative YMs to be established was North Carolina. The division there began in 1903 when that YM adopted a new "Uniform Discipline" approved by most Gurney bodies. Those whose voices had not been heard met separately in 1904 as a YM. Soon thereafter, Gurneyites contemptuously locked the doors of meeting houses to keep out Zebedee Haines, a travelling minister from Philadelphia YM. Meetings in central North Carolina separated at this time, establishing Southern QM.

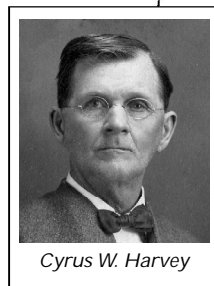
The growth in numbers of Conservative Friends ended around 1890. After that time, most Conservative bodies faced serious membership losses. The weighty Friends of the earlier generations were not replaced, which meant that many meetings had little or no speaking during worship in places like Kansas YM after Cyrus Harvey died. In 1929, the surviving meeting of Kansas YM was attached to Iowa YM. New England, Philadelphia, and Canada YMs merged with other bodies in the mid-20th century, and the Primitive Friends died out. As a result, the three surviving bodies in this historic fellowship were Ohio, Iowa, and North Carolina YMs.

# 1875 to 1915



Colors on the map indicate the type of Friends. Conservative Friends are shown in green, Ohio YM in blue (Ohio, Iowa, and California), Primitive Friends in pink, and Philadelphia YM in yellow.

New York YM as shown here was Primitive until it joined Canada YM. Leading Friends here included Persis Hallock, a woman minister at Poplar Ridge who was a well-known bonnet maker.



Cyrus W. Harvey

New England YM was in a seriously low state a century ago. In the mid-1840s, it was comprised of 14 meetings. One new meeting was established (Westerley), but six had been laid down by 1875. In 1915, there were only four meetings remaining. Leading Friends of the latter years included Job Gidley and John W. Foster.

Western YM originally had 15 meetings. Of these, six were laid down by 1900. An additional three were laid down by 1920. The remaining six were located in Plainfield & White Lick QM in Indiana and Laura QM in Ohio.

Kansas YM was originally comprised of nine MMs organized into three QMs. However, three of the original meetings did not survive a decade. Another three were laid down in the first decade of the 20th century, and after Cottonwood was laid down during World War I, only Cyrus Harvey's home meeting (Spring River) survived. It was attached to Iowa YM and was laid down in 1960.