

Ohio Yearly Meeting

During the 1890s, attendance at Ohio YM was the highest that it had been in several years. Friends from Philadelphia YM each year hired a special car that would sit at the Barnesville station through the end of YM week. Hickory Grove QM Friends and Friends from the western YMs arrived by train also.

In 1892, Barclay Stratton, the men's YM Clerk, died between YM sessions – the only time this happened to a men's YM Clerk. Barclay Smith, a Stillwater farmer, served 1892–1899, followed by his nephew Nathan R. Smith. On the women's side, Sarah K. Brantingham served 12 years (1886–1898), after which Sarah Ann Hobson served. Hobson later married Joseph Masters but tragically died just three years afterwards.

Ohio YM's Indian Committee actively assisted the "Sac and Fox" Indians on a 3,000 acre property in Tama County, Iowa. Thomas C. Batty was the leading force behind the Indian Committee during the 1890s. The committee emphasized helping the Indians to learn agricultural practices and learn to read English. A schoolhouse was built in 1890, but the committee reported later that young Indians often felt ostracized if they attended – which kept attendance in the 10–15% range throughout the decade. The committee visited the various families to help them understand that they would be better able to preserve their rights if they were able to read. In 1894, there was a serious drought in Iowa, and Ohio Friends shipped multiple barrels of food to the Indians. In the latter half of the decade, the Indians seemed to find the committee more of a bother than a help, and a very frustrated Ohio YM laid down the committee in 1899.

As always, the Boarding School Committee was an important part of the Ohio YM experience. In 1891, the first student died during the school year – Thomas E. Atkinson. It was a heart breaking event, and the superintendant and matron at the time (Barclay and Hannah Stratton) resigned at the end of the school year. Attendance fell by one third as a result of a decision by Hickory Grove QM to open its own boarding

school (today's Scattergood Friends School), but later in the decade young Friends from Western YM boosted attendance. The school committee struggled with what to do about parents sending items to their children at school, as students from poor families felt inferior. The committee banned parents from sending items such as attachable collars and food. Electric lights were installed in 1895, and new heaters were installed in 1896. The laundry building burned in 1898 and was rebuilt; fire extinguishers were purchased in 1900. That same year, the doors were switched to open out rather than in, and a new building was built with an exercise room on the upper floor and a laboratory on the lower floor.

Friends' primary schools remained a concern. In 1892, Ohio YM directed MMs to take new steps to increase attendance at these schools under the care of MMs. Some schoolhouses were built or rebuilt, doubling the number of schools, and funds were made available to assist in paying teachers and covering the expenses of poor Friends, but in fact the percentage of young Friends attending these schools remained in the 52–57% range throughout the decade.

In the late 1890s, Ohio Friends again discussed a transfer of Hickory Grove QM to Iowa YM. Asa Branson, a minister at Flushing, was particularly interested in knowing why HGQM Friends did not want to be transferred. Eliza McGrew, a member at Short Creek (and a later women's Ohio YM Clerk) spoke with the Assistant Clerk of Hickory Grove QM (Joseph E. Meyers) and recommended that he speak with Branson. By this time, Branson was almost totally deaf, and Meyers thought that it would be easier to communicate by sending him a letter. Branson was surprised by the contents of the letter and shared it with other Friends. Gradually, tidbits from Meyers's letter were shared around the YM. Many Friends, including Peter Dyhr (a minister at Hickory Grove) believed that Meyers was unnecessarily harsh on Friends in Iowa YM. When Meyers's term as Assistant Clerk of HGQM ended, he was not reappointed.

1890 to 1900

