

Ohio Friends

The first decade of the 20th century brought new challenges for Ohio Friends. An effort to strengthen Pennsville QM began and lasted 20 years. Several members of the earlier generation passed during the decade, some of whom had been vocally opposed to recognizing the new North Carolina YM. At the end of the decade, the Boarding School burned, and Ohio Friends worked with diligence to rebuild it.

Although the situation in Pennsville was increasingly dire, Friends actively worked to remedy the situation. Pennsville MM notified the QM on 2/22/1900 that it was time to lay down the MM. The QM committee to visit Pennsville did not have unity on how to move forward, recognizing that laying it down would result in the QM having only one MM. The QM finally laid down Pennsville MM on 5/26/1904 and attached Pennsville Meeting to Chesterfield MM. In 1906, Ohio YM appointed a committee to visit and encourage Pennsville QM. The committee made many visits to the area, visiting the three meetings, families, and individuals. One result of the first visit of the committee was a decision to repair the Plymouth MH. The work was complete by late 1906, but attendance remained low. Esther Fowler, a minister who had grown up in the neighborhood, visited family and friends to no avail. After the deaths of Benjamin J. Hobson (1907) and Edmund S. Fowler (1908), Plymouth was never held regularly. In 1910, the YM committee reported it "can but regret that as much indifference ... should exist" in the QM.

Although worship at YM time had always been exceptional, there had been two particular times of worship during which the worship was less profitable. At that time, the first session of YM took place on Seventh Day, and worship the following morning at Stillwater was considered to be the poorest of the week. The other time of worship that weighed on the minds of Friends was the closing session of the YM. The YM appointed a committee in 1901 "to preserve order" during the worship on First Day morning. A similar committee was appointed in 1909. On the last day of YM in 1908, an elderly Friend men-

tioned some words by Benjamin Hoyle many years earlier in which he said "there ought to be a weighty solemnity at the close of the Yearly Meeting, the silence of which should speak louder than words, and it is becoming of some to bear their burdens rather than give expression too freely thereto at this time."


Friends of the time remarked about the passing of so many weighty Friends during this decade. Six ministers and 34 Elders died. While the average age of the deceased Friends was 77, the loss of so many experienced Friends was difficult. Among those who died were ministers Hannah H. Stratton, Asenath Bailey, Peter N. Dyhr, Mary Thomasson, Asa Branson, Sara Ann H. Masters, and Mary E. Lee; and elders Rebecca B. Steer, John W. Smith, Theophilus Morlan, Sarah K. Brantingham, Hannah G. Tatum, Israel Steer, Rosella Binns, Martha R. Binns, Cyrus Brantingham, Nathan R. Smith, Benj. J. Hobson, Edmund S. Fowler, Evan Smith, Thomas H. Conrow, William Pickett, and Edna Dean.

Some of the newly deceased Friends had been vocal in their opposition to recognition of the new North Carolina YM. The division took place there in 1903-1904. The first epistle from NC reached the 1905 Ohio YM, and the committee appointed to consider it believed that the time had not yet arrived for recognition. Ohio sent a committee to visit North Carolina Friends, which continued into the next decade.

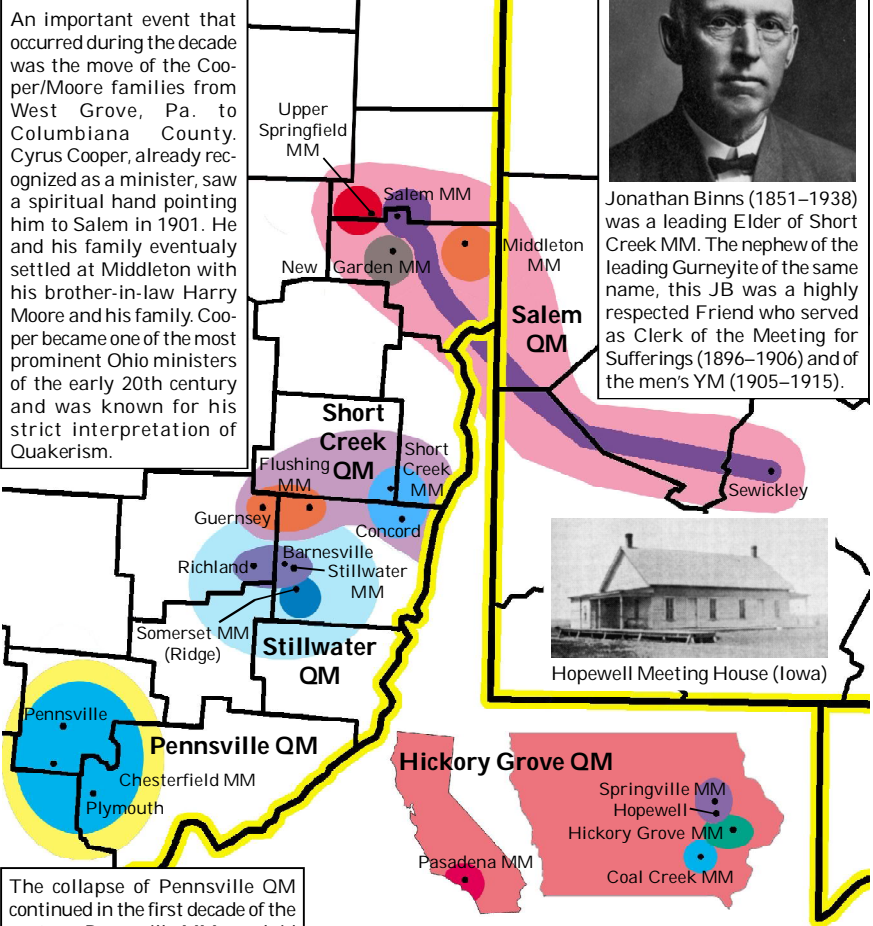
A major tragedy at the end of the decade occurred on 3/31/1910 when the Boarding School burned. J. Wetherill Hutton helped organize students who carried out almost everything on the first floor, but most belongings on the higher floors were lost. William L. Ashton called the M4S to meet a week later, at which time a committee was appointed to rebuild the building and solicit financial assistance. This committee reported at YM time that it removed the third floor of the earlier building to meet new state codes for schoolhouses. New dorms were constructed for students, and the main building was opened for school again in the fall.

1900 to 1910


An important event that occurred during the decade was the move of the Cooper/Moore families from West Grove, Pa. to Columbiana County. Cyrus Cooper, already recognized as a minister, saw a spiritual hand pointing him to Salem in 1901. He and his family eventually settled at Middleton with his brother-in-law Harry Moore and his family. Cooper became one of the most prominent Ohio ministers of the early 20th century and was known for his strict interpretation of Quakerism.



Jonathan Binns (1851-1938) was a leading Elder of Short Creek MM. The nephew of the leading Gurneyite of the same name, this JB was a highly respected Friend who served as Clerk of the Meeting for Sufferings (1896-1906) and of the men's YM (1905-1915).



The collapse of Pennsville QM continued in the first decade of the century. Pennsville MM was laid down in 1904 and attached to Chesterfield MM, leaving the QM with a single MM. Carl Patterson came forth in the ministry during these years, and his influence helped Chesterfield survive.



Hopewell Meeting House (Iowa)

Dorothy S. Ashton was a prominent Friend of her day. She served as Matron at the Boarding School (1896-1901 and 1906-08) and as women's YM Clerk (1904-06 and 1911-12). Ashton helped popularize black clothing among Ohio Friends (replacing the earlier blue and brown colors) and was also one of the earliest prominent Ohio Friends to recognize Christmas.