

Quakers in Delaware in the Time of William Penn

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THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS had its beginnings in the British Isles amidst the religious and social ferment of the later phases of the Puritan Revolution. The Quaker movement took on tangible form in the summer of 1652 when its dynamic leader, George Fox, journeyed from his home in the English Midlands to carry on a dramatic evangelistic campaign in the area adjoining the Lake District of northern England. During this campaign, hundreds of people were convinced of the validity of the experiential religion of which George Fox testified, a religion involving both inward mystical insights and outward prophetic activity.¹

The new movement quickly attracted adherents throughout England and Wales, with more limited acceptance in Scotland. By 1654, under the leadership of William Edmundson, the Quaker message was being proclaimed in Ireland.² In that island country, which had been brought under increased English domination by military forces under Oliver Cromwell, a number of English settlers embraced the new faith, but there seemed to be little interest in Quakerism among the native Irish inhabitants.³

Within a very few years, Quaker missionaries were traveling eastward across the English Channel to the continent of Europe, finding sympathetic listeners, especially among groups in the Netherlands and in parts of Germany. At the same time, other "Publishers of Truth" were going west across the Atlantic to English settlements in the West Indies and along the North American shore. As early as 1656 they had found their way to Massachusetts and to the Tidewater area stretching from the Chesapeake Bay to southern Virginia.⁴

Although the Delaware Valley later came to be known as the center of Quaker culture in America, the history of Friends along the Delaware did

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¹See William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 2d. ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), 1-110.

²William Edmundson, *A Journal of the Life of . . . William Edmundson* (Dublin, 1715), particularly 8-24.

³Albert Cook Myers, *Immigration of the Irish Quakers into Pennsylvania* (Swarthmore, Pa., 1902), particularly 1-37.

⁴See Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (London, 1911; reissued New York, 1962), 1-44, 263-301.

not really begin until more than two decades after the beginnings of Quakerism in New England and along the Virginia Tidewater. Traveling Friends ministers in the early 1670s reported thriving Quaker communities on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake and in the northern Jerseys, but in between there were many miles of wilderness except for scattered settlements of Swedes and Finns, a few Dutch, and occasional Indian encampments.⁵

There is evidence that at least one Quaker, a certain "Captain Vaeler" (or Wheeler), had appeared at Altena (Fort Christine) north of New Amstel (New Castle) about 1661 during the period of Dutch government, but he was not encouraged to stay.⁶ The Dutch authorities at New Amstel apparently shared the same antagonism towards Friends as that displayed by Peter Stuyvesant and other officials in charge at New Amsterdam. However, during the period of Dutch rule probably a few of the immigrants from Holland who settled in the vicinity of New Amstel were at least willing to listen to what the Quakers had to say.

A band of English soldiers accompanied Robert Carr to New Castle in 1664 to wrest control of the area from the Dutch. Several of these soldiers were later granted land in the vicinity of New Castle and settled there.⁷ These men, before leaving England, must certainly have been aware of the Quaker movement in that country. When George Fox stopped at New Castle in 1672, his reception seems to have been most cordial, and a very satisfactory Friends meeting was held at the home of the governor.⁸

After William Penn had been granted proprietary rights to Pennsylvania in 1681 by the British government under Charles II, Quaker interest in the territories covered by the grant increased markedly. Beginning in 1682 there was a large influx of Friends to the new city of Philadelphia and to Bucks County to the northeast and Chester County to the west. However, the immigration to the lower counties of New Castle, Kent, and Sussex was not so great, perhaps partly because of the feeling that Penn's title to this southern territory was not secure. Also, these lower Counties were not exactly virgin lands. They had been sparsely settled by the Swedes for more than forty years. There were established governmental procedures in force which could not be easily altered.

Nevertheless, a number of Quakers did decide to locate in the Lower Counties between 1681 and 1704. During this time the Lower Counties were a constituent part of the province of Pennsylvania; in the autumn of 1704 the three lower counties set up a separate provincial assembly. Four distinct Quaker settlements developed in New Castle County by 1704. Two of these,

⁵ George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. by Norman Penney (Cambridge. Philadelphia, 1911), 2: 227-28; Edmundson, *Journal*, 93-95.

⁶ Christopher Ward, *The Dutch and Swedes on the Delaware, 1609-64* (Philadelphia, 1930), 332.

⁷ Clinton Alfred Weslager. *The English on the Delaware* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1967), 176-202.

⁸ Fox, *Journal*, 2: 228.

the Newark settlement in Brandywine Hundred and the Centre settlement in Christiana Hundred, included core groups that had emigrated from the same general area in Ulster Province in northern Ireland. Then there was a more heterogeneous group of Friends around New Castle, and another small settlement along St. Georges Creek south of New Castle. Besides these four settlements, there were scattered families of Friends in the southern part of New Castle County and in Kent and Sussex counties. A worship group was authorized to meet at Duck Creek near Smyrna in 1704; and in 1705/6 the Friends at Duck Creek, in cooperation with the Friends at St. Georges Creek, were able to organize Duck Creek Monthly Meeting. The history of these particular settlements and Delaware's earliest Quaker families is the subject of this study.

Newark Meeting

It is likely that Newark Meeting was the first Friends worship group to meet regularly in Delaware.⁹ Samuel Smith, a Quaker chronicler of the eighteenth century, left the following record:

About the year 1682, several families of Friends arrived and settled on the east side of the Brandywine, in New Castle County, viz., Valentine Hollingsworth, William Stockdale, Thomas Connaway, Adam Sharpley, Morgan Drewitt, Valentine Morgan, Cornelius Empson, and others; and held a meeting for worship. . . .¹⁰

However, the worship group at New Castle was the first to receive recognition by an established Friends Meeting. The Quarterly Meeting in Philadelphia recognized the New Castle Meeting in its minutes of 1-2-1684.¹¹

On 12-1-1685 the Friends of New Castle County were allowed by Chester Quarterly Meeting to set up a Six Weeks Meeting. This privilege seems to have been given rather begrudgingly, implying that the Newark Friends had steered an independent course and had set up a worship group on their own initiative, and were not inclined to follow established procedures.¹²

By Third Month, 1686 (the date of the first surviving minutes), the worship groups at Newark and New Castle had united to form a Monthly Meeting for business, which eventually became known as Newark Monthly

⁹ Newark Meeting was located near present-day Carrcroft in Brandywine Hundred.

¹⁰ Samuel Smith, "History of the Province of Pennsylvania," *The Register of Pennsylvania*, 7 (1831): 132-133.

¹¹ Minutes of the Monthly and Quarterly Meeting of Philadelphia [Men's Meeting], 1682-1705, [Men's Minutes] p. 21, Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pa. This was actually March 2, 1684/5. Dates in this paper all follow the old calendar in use until 1752. At that time the year began on March 25, with March being considered the first month of the year. The traditional Quaker use of numerals rather than months has been retained.

¹² Minutes of the Monthly and Quarterly Meeting of Chester [Men's Meeting], 1681-1707, p. 15.

Meeting.¹³ On 6-8-1687 it was decided to hold two consecutive monthly meetings in Brandywine Hundred, with every third monthly meeting to be held at New Castle. However, by 5-6-1689, New Castle Friends were boycotting monthly meetings held in Brandywine Hundred because they felt they were being put under an unjust burden in having to cross the Brandywine Creek twice as often as Newark Friends. For the next four years, all of the monthly meetings seem to have been held in Brandywine Hundred. Then beginning on 8-7-1693, a number of these meetings began to be held at the home of Thomas Hollingsworth, who likely had moved by this time to the vicinity of Centre Meeting in Christiana Hundred.

In those earliest years all meetings for worship and business in Brandywine Hundred rotated among the homes of the members of the Meeting. It may have been after 1700 that the first meetinghouse was built. It is said to have been constructed of poplar logs.¹⁴ It likely stood near the site of the present Newark Union Chapel in the vicinity of the suburban development of Carrcroft. This was on land originally granted to Valentine Hollingsworth, located to the northeast of the present city of Wilmington.

Valentine Hollingsworth was a leading Friend at Newark for the first twenty-five years of the settlement. He had been born in Ireland about 1634 of English parents. Before coming to Delaware he had been a faithful Friend for many years, a member of Lurgan Meeting in Ulster Province. Perhaps he had been among those convinced under the earliest ministry of William Edmundson.¹⁵ Time and again he had had crops and livestock taken by government officials because he refused to pay tithes to the established church.¹⁶

After the death of his first wife, Ann Rea, whom he had married in 1657, Valentine Hollingsworth married Ann Calvert in 1672. Therefore, when he arrived in Brandywine Hundred in the autumn of 1682 to take up a thousand-acre grant of land in the vicinity of Shelpot Creek, Valentine Hollingsworth was accompanied by three older children: a daughter Mary (with her husband Thomas Connaway), a son Thomas, and a daughter Catherine. His eldest son, Henry Hollingsworth, followed the next year. Then there was his wife, Ann, and four younger children: Samuel, Enoch, Valentine, and Ann. The son Enoch died in 1687 at the age of twelve years, but two other sons, John and Joseph, born after the family arrived in Delaware, survived to adulthood. The youngest son, also named Enoch, died in infancy.

¹³ The earliest record books of Newark Monthly Meeting are: "Newark Monthly Meeting Records" [Men's Minutes], 1686-1739, and the untitled Newark (Kennett) Monthly Meeting [Women's Minutes], 1690-1789. The name of Newark Monthly Meeting was changed to Kennett Monthly Meeting in 1760. These records are kept at the Friends Historical Library, (hereafter referred to as FHL) of Swarthmore College, where microfilm copies are available for research.

¹⁴ John Thomas Scharf, *History of Delaware, 1609-1888*, 2 vols., (Philadelphia, 1888), 2: 889.

¹⁵ Edmundson, Journal, 13.

¹⁶ William Stockdale, *The Great Cry of Oppression* (n.p., 1683), 3, 15, 37, 50, 64, 121, 143, 171.

Valentine Hollingsworth was a recognized leader beyond the boundaries of the local Friends Meeting community. Only a few months after his arrival in Delaware we find his name listed as a representative from New Castle County to the Provincial Assembly, which convened 1-12-1682/83. His name was also included on representative lists for assemblies convening 8-24-1683, 3-10-1687, 3-10-1688, 3-10-1689, 7-9-1695, and 3-10-1700.¹⁷ Valentine Hollingsworth lived until about 1710.¹⁸

When the Hollingsworth family arrived in Brandywine Hundred, they found at least one Quaker family already living in the area, the family of Morgan and Cassandra Drewett. Originally from the vicinity of London, the Drewetts had been among the group of Quakers who came to Burlington, New Jersey, in 1677 on the ship Kent. This family included an older son, Joseph, who died in 1685 at the age of nineteen years, older daughters Elizabeth and Hannah, and smaller children: Benjamin, Mary, and Sarah. An older woman in the Newark Meeting, Mary Thompson, may have been Cassandra Drewett's mother. The Drewetts had moved across the Delaware River to the vicinity of Marcus Hook in 1678. In 1681 they moved farther south to just above "Boute Creek," within what became the boundary of New Castle County.¹⁹

Another Quaker family to settle along the Shelpot Creek at an early date was that of Adam and Mary Sharpley. They had older daughters named Rachel and Abigail, a son, William, and younger children, Benjamin and

The Dixon family came to Delaware from northern Ireland in the 1680s. They had been members of Lurgan Meeting, the same Meeting with which the Hollingsworths had been affiliated. The parents were Henry and Rose Dixon. There was a tradition that Henry Dixon became an innkeeper at New Castle, but it is difficult to find any records substantiating the fact that either the father or the mother came to Delaware.²¹ It does appear, however, that three of their children — William, Dinah, and Rose — were part of the Newark Meeting community. William Dixon was married to Isabel Rea under the care of Lurgan Meeting in Ireland in 1683, but she may not have lived to

¹⁷ Throughout this paper, dates of service in the Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania or on the Provincial Council are derived from: Robert Proud, *History of Pennsylvania . . .* (Philadelphia, 1798: reprint, ed., Spartansburg, N.C., 1967), vol. 1.

¹⁸ For a fairly recent account of the Valentine Hollingsworth family, see George E. McCracken, *The Welcome Claimants Proved, Disproved, Doubtful, with an Account of Some of Their Descendants* (Baltimore, 1970), 248–53.

¹⁹ Will of Morgan Druett, New Castle County Wills, B. 76, abstracted by the Historic Research Committee of the Colonial Dames of America in *A Calendar of Delaware Wills, New Castle County, 1682-1800* (New York, 1911), 10; also see Lewis D. Cook, comp., "Reuben and Mary (Druet) Ford of "Newport" Plantation in Brandywine Hundred." 1–6 (Typewritten mss. in the collection of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia [hereafter GSP]).

²⁰ Will of Adam Sharpley, abstracted in *A Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 23.

²¹ Alpheus H. Harlan, comp., *History and Genealogy of the Harlan Family* (Baltimore, 1914),

come to Delaware. William had married Ann Gregg by about 1690. An Elizabeth Dixon mentioned in the will of Thomas Child in 1694 could possibly have been a child of William Dixon's first marriage.²²

Thomas Pierson, a son of Susanna Pierson, arrived at Upland (later called Chester) in the autumn of 1683. Within a few months he was appointed deputy surveyor of New Castle County, being subordinate to Thomas Holme. Pierson completed his apprenticeship in Bristol, England, in 1675 and sailed to Maryland the following year in the company of William Dixon. He returned to England in 1682, apparently at least in part to attempt to secure property willed to him by his deceased sister's husband. However, when the lawyers ruled that the will was invalid because four of the five witnesses to the will were Quakers who refused to take the required oath, he returned to the colonies.²³

Thomas Pierson served as surveyor in New Castle County for quite a number of years. In 1701 he cooperated with Isaac Taylor in surveying the present circular boundary of northern Delaware as it borders Pennsylvania.²⁴ Pierson married Rachel Sharpley in 1686, but she died the following year. In 1690 he married Rose Dixon. He had two daughters, Susanna and Rose, who married brothers, John and Aaron Mendenhall. These Mendenhall brothers settled in East Caln Township, northwest of Downingtown in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Thomas Pierson spent the last years of his life in the East Caln area. He died about 1722.²⁵

Cornelius Empson came to the Delaware Valley from Yorkshire in 1684. By 1685 he had settled in the vicinity of Shelpot Creek. His first wife, whose maiden name was Mary Sanderson, died 11-30-1688/9. They had at least three children: Richard, Ebenezer, and Sarah. A year after his first wife's death, Cornelius married her sister, Elizabeth Sanderson, contrary to the will of Newark Monthly Meeting. Elizabeth lived only a short time after this marriage. As his third wife, Cornelius married Sarah Wilson of Chesterfield, Burlington County, New Jersey. They had two children: Elizabeth and Mary. Sarah (Wilson) Empson died in 1700. Cornelius Empson's fourth wife was Mary Richardson, a member of Salem Friends Meeting in New Jersey. Of their four children—Charles, James, Ann, and Susannah—only Charles seems to have reached adulthood.

In today's parlance, Cornelius Empson might be called a "big operator." He was continually undertaking new projects. He built several mills at various locations and speculated in land. He was not always successful in these undertakings. Empson was very active in the civic affairs of New Castle County, having first been commissioned justice of the peace and judge of the

²² Jacob and Isaac Taylor Papers, no. 3307, Manuscript Dept., Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa. (hereafter referred to as HSP).

²³ Taylor Papers, nos. 3294, 3295, 3296, 3297, and 3303, HSP

²⁴ Taylor Papers, no. 3315, HSP.

²⁵ See "Record of Concord Monthly Meeting, formerly called Chichester and Concord [Men's Minutes]," 1684–1757, 150, 178, and 206 for minutes referring to Thomas Pierson, who transferred his membership to Concord Monthly Meeting in 1709 and served as Overseer of East Caln Preparative Meeting from 1716 until his death, FHL.

courts in 1685. He was still serving as a justice in 1701. He was also a member of the Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania in 1686, 1693, 1695, 1696, and 1697 as well as judge of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania from 1689 until 1701. He died in 1710.²⁶

William Stockdale, with his wife, Jane, came to New Castle County about 1684/85. There was an older daughter, Dorcas, who in 1690 married James Johnstone of West Jersey. Another daughter, Ruth, died in 1687. There may have been young sons, Jervis and William.

William Stockdale had become a Friend in the earliest days of the Quaker movement in northern England. He was one of the early "Publishers of Truth" who made their headquarters at Swarthmore Hall, near Ulverston, in Lancashire. George Fox records in his *Journal*, "[In] 1655-William Stockdale passed into Scotland."²⁷ Stockdale's sufferings while proclaiming Quakerism in Scotland were recorded in a small book that he coauthored with five other Friends.²⁸ From Scotland, William Stockdale moved on to County Tyrone in Ireland and was affiliated with Grange Friends Meeting and with Charlemont Meeting. His book, *The Great Cry of Oppression*, published in 1683, details the sufferings of Friends at the hands of Irish government officials.²⁹

William Stockdale was appointed a justice of the peace in New Castle County in 1685, in 1689, and in 1690. He served on the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania from the autumn of 1689 through the summer of 1690. Jane Stockdale died in 1688, and in the following year William married Hannah Drewett. Sometime after this marriage, the Stockdale family moved to Philadelphia. It was there, in 1691, that "William Stockdale, an Antient Preacher" led a group of weighty Quaker ministers and elders who challenged the preaching of George Keith.³⁰

William Stockdale's declining years were troubled by poverty. He died in Philadelphia and was buried there on 7-23-1693.³¹ By 1695 his widow had married William Albertson, who lived in the vicinity of Camden, New Jersey.

Nathaniel and Dorothy Cartmill came from Ireland to Brandywine Hundred in 1685. Their son Martin was born during the voyage. Another son, Thomas, was born four years later. They may have originally come from Northumberland in England. Dorothy Cartmill lived to be quite elderly, and in 1740, at the age of 73, she was recorded as living in Orange County, Virginia.³² Martin Cartmill, her oldest son, seems to have moved to that area, along with other Cartmills (or Cartmels) who had first settled in New Jersey.

²⁶ For a study of Cornelius Empson, see John Hollingsworth, "Cornelius Empson, Prominent Delawarean Pioneer, Nation-builder, Lawgiver, Quaker," Typed mss. in library of Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Del. (hereafter HSD).

²⁷ Fox, *Journal*, 2: 331.

²⁸ George Weare, John Hart, William Gray, William Stockdale, William Metcalf, Richard Ismead, *The Doctrines and Principles: the Persecution, Imprisonment, Banishment, Excommunicating of the Saints of Co d.* . . . (London, 1659 [enlarged reprinting of 1657 ed.]).

²⁹ Stockdale, *The Great Cry of Oppression*.

³⁰ George Keith. *An Account of the Great Divisions amongst the Quakers in Pennsylvania* . . . (London, 1692), 2-3.

³¹ "Biographical Sketches . . .," *The Friend* (Philadelphia), 27 (May 27, 1854): 291-92.

³² Liber Q, Folio 234, New Castle County Records. (Referred to in Collections of HSP).

Later generations of the family were not members of Friends, either in Delaware or Virginia.³³

There were other members of Newark Meeting about whom less is known. The name of Robert Vance is found in the earliest Monthly Meeting minutes, and he is recorded as having been buried at Newark in 1687. A young couple, Arthur and Jane Burden, and their son, Joseph, died within a few days of each other in the late summer of 1686. On 1-2-1688/89 a Robert Smith requested a certificate in order to marry "a woman of ye hook meeting" [Chichester]. The name of Ann Grise is found at the head of a list of women Friends in 1690. William Lester's name appears in the minutes of 1692. Edward Green is mentioned in the minutes for 1693. In the same year, the marriage of David Richardson and Joanna Holme was allowed, but by late autumn of 1694 they had both died.

There were doubtless other Friends living in the Brandywine Hundred area at this time whose names do not appear in Quaker records. One of these seems to have been Richard Mankin. Perhaps he lived south of the Brandywine, but he had family connections with the Robinson family of Brandywine and Christiana Hundreds.³⁴ He was a member of the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly in 1689. Cornelius Empson and George Robinson objected when the pastor of Old Swedes Church arranged for Richard Mankin to be buried at Old Swedes on September 1, 1707.³⁵

William Pool, whose will is dated 2nd m. 11th, 1698 and proved May 21, 1698, may have been a Quaker. He mentions "Brother Nathaniel Cartmill," which probably means that he was a brother of Nathaniel's wife, Dorothy Cartmill.³⁶

Allusion has already been made to the will of Thomas Child, a single man who died at the home of Valentine Hollingsworth in 1694. He had come from northern Ireland and was evidently much a part of the Friends communities at Newark and Centre.³⁷

Then there was the Beeson family. They had settled northeast of the present city of Wilmington, not far from the Delaware River. The genealogist Gilbert Cope located a record stating that Edward Beeson had married Rachel Pennington in the Parish of Thressington in Westmorland in northwestern England on November 7, 1652.³⁸ There is no explicit recorded evidence in the Newark Monthly Meeting minutes that Edward Beeson, Sr.,

³³ For a description of the Cartmel family which settled in Virginia, see T. K. Cartmel, "The Cartmel Family," *Shenandoah Valley Pioneers and Their Descendants, a History of Frederick County, Virginia* (n.p., 1909).

³⁴ Will of Richard Mankin, New Castle County Wills, B. 166, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 14; also see will of his son, Richard Mankin, New Castle County Wills, C. 27, also abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*.

³⁵ *Records of Holy Trinity (Old Swedes) Church, Wilmington, Del., from 1697 to 1773* (Wilmington, 1890), 128-30.

³⁶ Will of William Pool, New Castle County Wills, B. 73, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 11.

³⁷ The will of Thomas Child has been preserved in the Taylor Papers, no. 3294, HSP.

³⁸ Gilbert Cope. "Cope Manuscript Notes," Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pa. (hereafter CCHS).

or his first wife were Friends. However, in 1704 when their son Edward arranged to marry Esther Hall under the care of Newark Monthly Meeting, there seemed to be no question of the good standing of the younger Edward Beeson as a member.

In 1701 Cornelius Empson helped engineer a project whereby a group of Friends were to form a new settlement along the present Pennsylvania-Maryland line. This area was given the name of "the Nottingham Lots." Although Cornelius Empson never moved to Nottingham himself, Edward Beeson, Sr., took up a claim there, leaving his Brandywine Hundred land in the hands of his son, Edward, Jr.³⁹

There were three other children in Edward Beeson's older family: William, Ann, and Richard. William returned to England to live. Ann married John Cloud, a member of a Quaker family who had settled in Chichester Township, Pennsylvania. Richard married Charity Grubb, daughter of John and Frances (Vane) Grubb of Marcus Hook. Although there is question as to whether either Richard or Charity Beeson were birthright Friends, they certainly became "convinced" Friends. They were both quite active in promoting the Quaker faith as they accompanied the migration of Friends from Nottingham to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, then on to Berkeley County, West Virginia, and then south to the piedmont of North Carolina. After moving to Nottingham, Edward Beeson, Sr., married again and was survived by two other daughters, Elizabeth and Rachel. He died in 1712.⁴⁰

There were probably a few Friends who lived within the New Castle County boundary but were members of Concord (Pennsylvania) Monthly Meeting. This Monthly Meeting included both Concord and Chichester Meetings, located in what is now southwestern Delaware County, Pennsylvania. Reuben Ford, who married Mary Drewett in 1697 while belonging to Concord Meeting, may have lived in Delaware.⁴¹

There were also families who lived in this general area and seemed to have close ties with Friends but who were not actually members of the Society. One example is the family of John Buckley, Jr. John's mother seems to have been Mary Empson, likely a relative of Cornelius Empson. John's wife, Hannah, may have been a sister of Cornelius Empson's second and third wives, Mary and Elizabeth Sanderson. John Buckley served as a member of the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly in 1697.⁴²

After 1710, when Valentine Hollingsworth and others of the first generation of Quaker settlers had passed from the scene, Newark Meeting ceased to be a focal point for Quaker activities in northern Delaware. Many of the younger generation moved northwest into Chester County in Pennsylvania. Newark Monthly Meeting sessions came to alternate between Centre Meeting

³⁹ For a map and description of the Nottingham Lots, see Edward E. Chandlee, *Six Quaker Clockmakers* (Philadelphia, 1943), 21-30 and end-papers.

⁴⁰ The will of Edward Beeson, Sr., has been preserved in the Chester County, Pa. Register's Office, West Chester, Pa. For other information concerning the Beeson family, see Henry Hart Beeson, *A Genealogy of the Beeson, Beeson Family* (Houston, 1968).

⁴¹ Lewis D. Cook, comp., "Reuben and Mary (Druet) Ford . . ."

⁴² Gilbert Cope, *Genealogy of the Smedley Family* (Lancaster, Pa., 1901), 131.

in Christiana Hundred and Kennett Meeting across the Pennsylvania line. The Quaker families who continued to live in Brandywine Hundred tended to lack the religious zeal of the first settlers. They were inclined to conform to the prevailing lifestyle of the propertied class of their day, which included the keeping of slaves.

However, as long as George and Catherine Robinson lived, Newark Meeting continued to be kept up. Catherine, the youngest daughter of Valentine Hollingsworth's older family, had married George Robinson in 1688. A number of traveling Friends of the early eighteenth century reported receiving hospitality in their home. George Robinson died in 1738. Catherine lived until 1746.⁴³ Newark Meeting was closed in 1754. A few of its last attenders transferred their memberships to the flourishing young Wilmington Meeting nearby, which had been organized in 1738.

Centre Meeting

The history of the early years of Centre Meeting is closely associated with that of Newark Meeting. A number of the most stalwart members of each Meeting group had come from a close-knit Quaker community in Ulster Province in Ireland. There were also some close family relationships.

A few Friends had settled in Christiana Hundred at the time of the great influx of Quaker settlers in the 1682 period. Included among these was William Gregg and his family. They seem to have come from Ireland but likely had a Scottish background. William Gregg acquired a large tract of land in the area which in more recent times became famous as the center of the du Pont powdermaking industry. There seem to have been four children in the family: John, George, Ann, and Richard. Quaker records give no account of the mother of these children. William Gregg died on 1-7-1687.⁴⁴

While details of the earliest years of the Gregg family in Delaware are quite vague, even less seems to be known about the early history of the Robinson family in Christiana Hundred. During this early time, George Robinson bought 500 acres from William Guest, which he called Wedgeburg. Soon afterwards George Robinson died, but he was survived by his widow, Ann, and sons George, James, John, and Joseph. The genealogist Gilbert Cope believed that the George Robinson who married Catherine Hollingsworth in 1688 had come to Delaware from Ireland by himself and was not closely related to the Robinson family already settled in Delaware.⁴⁵ However, there seems to be some evidence that George Robinson of Newark was one of the four sons of George Robinson, Sr.

James Robinson, who died in 1726, was active in the civic affairs of New

⁴³ "Biographical Sketches . . .," *The Friend* (Philadelphia), 29 (Jul. 30, 1856): 404; 30 (Apr. 11, 1857): 244.

⁴⁴ See Howard T. Dimick, "Triadic Origin of the Gregy Family," *Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine*, 16 (1948): 31-37; also Hazel May Middleton Kendall, *Quaker Greggs* (Anderson, Ind., 1944); also "The Gregg Family," Genealogical manuscript file, IISD.

⁴⁵ Gilbert Cope, "The Robinsons of New Castle County," *Every Evening*, May 19, 1909 (clipping preserved in the genealogical file folder of the Robinson Family, HSD).

Castle County. His name appears on a number of wills, either as witness or executor. He was a brother-in-law of Richard Mankin, Sr.⁴⁶ In his own will, James Robinson describes himself as "brother of George and Joseph Robinson." His will mentions his wife, Cathren, and ten children, including a daughter Ann Hollingsworth and a son Joseph.⁴⁷ While Cope believed that Abraham Hollingsworth, oldest son of Thomas Hollingsworth, had married Ann Robinson, daughter of George Robinson, Sr., it seems more likely that this Ann Robinson was a daughter of James and a granddaughter of George, Sr. It does not appear that James Robinson took any active part in the affairs of the Friends Meeting.

Joseph Robinson, who married Elizabeth Harlan on 9-12-1712, seems to have been a consistent Friend. He could perhaps have been a younger son of George Robinson, Sr., or possibly a son of James Robinson.

Oliver and Elizabeth Matthews and Oliver's father, Thomas Matthews, were other early settlers at Centre. Oliver Matthews was born in the north of England and was described as a "public Friend" (minister). There were at least three sons—Thomas, John, and William—and probably a fourth son, George.⁴⁸

The early leader of the Friends at Centre was George Harlan. Born in the county of Durham in northeast England, he had migrated to Ireland as a young man and become associated with the same Lurgan Friends Meeting to which the Hollingsworths and Dixons had belonged. It was under the care of Lurgan Meeting that he had married Elizabeth Duck in 1678. George and Elizabeth Harlan and their four older children came to Delaware in 1687 and settled east of the present village of Centreville. George's brother, Michael Harlan, probably came at the same time. In 1690 Michael married Dinah Dixon. About 1698/9 George Harlan and family moved north a few miles to Pennsbury Township, across the Pennsylvania line, and located on the east side of the Brandywine. A year or two later the Michael Harlan family moved to London Grove Township in Chester County, Pennsylvania.⁴⁹

Following the arrival of the Harlans, the first worship group at Centre soon was formed. At a session of Newark Monthly Meeting held on 10-7-1687, at the home of Valentine Hollingsworth, Friends living "beyond the Brandywine" were allowed to hold a meeting in that area during the winter season. On 6-2-1690, at the request of George Harlan, the Monthly Meeting "condescends to allow a meeting to be kept constantly over the Brandywine."⁵⁰ The first meetinghouse at Centre was built in 1708.

It was about 1690 that Thomas Hollingsworth, son of Valentine Holling-

⁴⁶ Will of Richard Mankin, Jr., New Castle County Will, C. 27, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 19.

⁴⁷ Will of James Robinson, New Castle County Wills, Misc. I. 89, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 26.

⁴⁸ See *Certain Friends Meetings within Baltimore Yearly Meeting* (Indianapolis, 1976), 45, quoting from a transcript of the records of Gunpowder Monthly Meeting of Friends, Maryland.

⁴⁹ For additional data relating to the Harlan family, see Harlan, *History and Genealogy of the Harlan Family*.

⁵⁰ "Newark Monthly Meeting Records" [Men's Minutes], FHL.

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The family of Alphonsus and Abigail Kirk was an important part of Centre Meeting in its early years. Alphonsus Kirk came to Delaware in 1689 from Ireland, where his family were included in the Lurgan Friends community. On 12-23-1692/3 he married Abigail Sharpley of Newark Meeting. A copy of the marriage certificate has been preserved.⁵⁴

Among the young couples to move into the vicinity of Centre Meeting soon after 1700 were Samuel and Sarah Greaves⁵⁵ and Swithin and Ann Chandler.⁵⁶ The Samuel Underwood family may have been living in the area as early as 1694, having come from Maryland. While it is unlikely that the parents ever became Friends, at least two or three of the children were members. One son, Alexander Underwood, became a prominent minister, living in his later years at London Grove in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and at Warrington in York County, Pennsylvania.⁵⁷

Centre Meeting, after continuing for several generations as a Quaker center, declined in numbers in the late nineteenth century. Except for occasional summer meetings, regular meetings for worship were discontinued about 1905. However, the picturesque meetinghouse, dating from 1796, was

"Wills Proved at Philadelphia, 1682-1692," *Publications of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania*, vol. 1, 1896, no. 2.

⁵² McCracken, *Welcome Claimants*, 252.

⁵³ Will of William Dixon, New Castle County Wills, B. 164, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 14.

⁵⁴ Kennett Monthly Meeting Marriage Certificates, 1692-1821, p. 93, FHL. See also "Genealogy of Alphonsus and Abigail Kieth," mss. vol. in HSD.

⁵⁵ Lewis D. Cook, "The Greaves Family of Christiana Hundred, Delaware," *The American Genealogist*, 56 (1980): 65-72.

⁵⁶ *A Record of the Descendants of George and Jane Chandler* (n.p., 1937).

⁵⁷ "A Testimony from Warrington Monthly Meeting in Pennsylvania Concerning Alexander Underwood," *A Collection of Memorials Concerning Divers Deceased Members and Others of the People Called Quakers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Parts Adjacent, from Nearly the First Settlement Thereof to the Year 1787*. . . (Philadelphia printed, London reprinted, 1788), 238.

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maintained under the care of Hockessin Meeting. In the mid 1950s, largely through the efforts of John V. Hollingsworth, weekly meetings for worship at Centre were resumed. Now, on each First-day, a number of those of the Friendly persuasion find their way to this site in the hills east of Centreville, where Friends first assembled almost three hundred years ago.

New Castle Meeting

When William Penn became proprietor of Pennsylvania, he chose a few officials to have particular oversight of affairs in the Three Lower Counties. Probably the man upon whom he expected to place greatest reliance was William Welch. This man had come to New Castle from England in 1683 with his wife, Sarah, and daughter, Susannah. Soon after his arrival he was given a place on the Provincial Council, where he is recorded as having been in attendance at several meetings early in 1684 and at one meeting in the late summer of that year. It is likely that the first meetings for worship of New Castle Meeting were held in the home of the Welch family.

William Welch died sometime in the autumn of 1684.⁵⁸ The first sessions of Newark Monthly Meeting were held in the home of the "Widow Welsh" in New Castle. The Newark minutes for the Eleventh and Twelfth Months of 1686 allow for the marriage of William's daughter, Susannah, and Robert Turner. This was the third marriage for Robert Turner. He had been a prominent Friend in Dublin before coming to Philadelphia to assume an important position in religious and civic affairs.⁵⁹

Because the early minutes of the Newark Monthly Meeting tend to be brief, and because after early 1689 the monthly sessions were almost all held in Brandywine Hundred or farther away in Christiana Hundred, there is not much information in the minutes about what was going on among Friends at New Castle. Probably Quaker activity in that town dropped to a rather low ebb. There seems to be reason to doubt whether even weekly meetings for worship were held on a consistent basis in New Castle in the early 1690s.

Edward Blake was the leader of New Castle Friends during this period. He was also prominent in civic affairs. He served as a member of the Provincial Assembly from 1687 to 1694. His first wife, Sarah, died in 1687, and he married Hannah DeCou, widow of Jacob DeCou of the St. Georges Creek Friends settlement, in 1689. Edward Blake died in 1695. A son, Edward, and a daughter, Sarah, survived him.⁶⁰

New Castle Friends appear to have been scattered over a wide geographical area. In 1687 an attempt was made to establish a weekly meeting for worship at White Clay Creek. This effort did not continue for more than a few months. On 8 mo. 5th 1689, New Castle Meeting requested that a meeting for worship be allowed at the home of John Alloway, but by the time of the

⁵⁸ Will of William Welch, New Castle County Will, A. 83, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 8.

⁵⁹ Myers, *Immigration of the Irish Quakers*. 257-62.

⁶⁰ Will of Edward Blake, New Castle County Wills, B. 42, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*. 10

next Monthly Meeting the Alloways had moved away." Evidently another Friend, John Brewster, lived in the same vicinity as the Alloways.⁶²

One of the first Quaker settlers in Delaware was John Cann. His name is included in the list of passengers on the ship *Griffen*, which brought the first contingent of Friends to Salem, New Jersey, in 1675. John Cann was listed as taxable in the records of New Castle County in 1677, and his wife Mary testified in the New Castle Court in the same year. After holding several positions in the government of New Castle County, John Cann was a member of the Provincial Assembly in 1682–83 and served on the Provincial Council in 1684 and 1685. John Cann's daughter Mary married James Claypoole, who held the position of Clerk of Court in New Castle. Although both James and Mary were from Quaker families, there is no record that they took any significant part in Friends' activities. John Cann's sons, William and John, were both Episcopalians. John Cann, Sr., died in Philadelphia on May 2, 1694.⁶³

George Hogg may have been living in New Castle County from almost as early a date as John Cann. In 1680 he owned 600 acres in Christiana Hundred adjoining Oak Hill, several miles northwest of present-day Wilmington. He, like other Friends of the period, participated in governmental affairs. He represented New Castle County in the Provincial Assembly in 1696. He was probably married three times. His first wife, whose name seems not to be known, was likely the mother of his children. His second wife was Dorcas (Walliams or Williams) Land, widow of Samuel Land. In 1716 George Hogg married Ann Humphrey of Radnor. Of his four children—George, John, James, and Sarah—John was a landholder in New Castle County but probably never married. James moved to Kent County. George married Hannah Coall from England in 1705 and had children, Elisabeth and George. Sarah Hogg married George Gregg, son of the pioneer William Gregg, and had a son, John. George Hogg, Sr., died in 1721.⁶⁴

Thomas Snelling was another Quaker in the New Castle area who had been on the scene for a long time. He was one of the persons granted a patent to land on Bread and Cheese Island in 1668. His name appears on a list of taxables in New Castle County dated March 25, 1678.⁶⁵ In November 1686 his name appears in the minutes of Newark Monthly Meeting on a list of those subscribing to Yearly Meeting stock. He had a daughter, Mary.⁶⁶

James Crawford was one of the British soldiers granted land by Sir Robert

⁶¹ John Alloway's name was included on the list of those taxable in New Castle County as of March 25, 1678 (Scharf, *History of Delaware*, 1: 153).

⁶² Will of John Brewster, New Castle County Wills, C. 158, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 23.

⁶³ For a detailed study of John Cann, see William Ferris Cann. "The Story of John Cann, 1645–1694, of Delaware and His Descendants." mss. vol. in HSD.

⁶⁴ See Mildred Hoge Richards, *The Descendants of Samuel Hogg of Wilmington, Delaware* (Tucson, 1959).

⁶⁵ Scharf, *History of Delaware*, 1: 153 and 2: 915; also see: *Original Land Titles in Delaware Commonly Known as the Duke of York Record. . . 1659 to 1679* (Wilmington, Del., [1903]), 33.

⁶⁶ Will of John Ball. New Castle County Wills, B. 30, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 11.

Carr following the Dutch surrender of Delaware to the British in 1664. He died in 1683, leaving a widow, Judith, and three children: John, James, and Mary. There seems to be no record that James Crawford, Sr., considered himself to be a Quaker, but in 1686 Judith Crawford married Edward Gibbs, a Quaker from Maryland. The marriage was allowed by Newark Monthly Meeting. Edward and Judith Gibbs lived in the area between New Castle and St. Georges Creek.⁶⁷ The Friends minister Thomas Story records that a meeting was appointed in the Gibbs home during his travels in Delaware in 1699.⁶⁸ James Crawford, Jr., was a member of Georges Creek Meeting.

Thomas Wollaston was another soldier who was granted land as a reward for his service under Sir Robert Carr. He lived in Mill Creek Hundred and also had landholdings in White Clay Creek Hundred. Thomas Wollaston died in 1686, leaving his widow, Martha, probably older daughters, Mary and Anna, and several very young sons: Thomas, Richard, William, and Jeremiah.⁶⁹ As is the case with James Crawford, we can only surmise that he had inclined toward the Quakers, perhaps having been influenced by George Fox during Fox's visit to New Castle in 1672. In the years following 1700 the Wollaston name begins to appear in Newark Monthly Meeting minutes. In 1710 William Wollaston married Charity Sharpley; in 1713 Thomas Wollaston married Eleanor Kinsey; and in 1716 Jeremiah Wollaston married Catherine Robinson.

The Richardson family was associated with New Castle Meeting from a very early date. John Richardson brought his family to Delaware from England in 1682. He served in the Provincial Assembly in 1697. He had a daughter, Mary, who married James Anderson, and two sons, John and Richard. Richard Richardson moved to Kent County, while John Richardson, Jr., built up the family holdings in the area now known as Richardson Park. This younger John Richardson married Ann Ashton of the St. Georges Creek Friends settlement in 1704.⁷⁰ They had twelve children, and some of their descendants were active in Delaware Quaker affairs for several generations.⁷¹

In the earliest records of Newark Monthly Meeting, we read the names of other Friends who probably lived in the vicinity of New Castle but about whom little seems to be known. In 11th month 1686 John McCombs contributed to the collection of money to be forwarded to the Yearly Meeting of Friends in New Jersey. On 5-3-1687, Phillip David was allowed to marry Joan Morris of Frankford Meeting. On 12-2-1688, Joan Davis was granted permission to marry William Holmes of Salem Monthly Meeting.

It can be assumed that New Castle Meeting had a strong infusion of new vitality about 1695 when John and Rebecca (Perkins) Hussey arrived in New Castle from Hampton, New Hampshire. They were accompanied by perhaps

⁶⁷ Scharf, *History of Delaware*, 2: 1017; see also 2: 1002.

⁶⁸ Thomas Story, *The Journal of the Life of Thomas Story* . . . reprinted in *The Friends Library* . . . (Philadelphia, 1846), 10: 131.

⁶⁹ *Records of the Court of New Castle on Delaware, 1676-1681* (Lancaster, Pa., 1904), 395-97.

⁷⁰ Kennett Monthly Meeting Marriage Certificates, 1692-1821, p. 73, *FHL*.

⁷¹ See Clinton Alfred Weslager, *The Richardsons of Delaware* (Wilmington, 1957).

ten of their large family of children. Five married daughters remained in New England.⁷²

John Hussey, Sr., was a son of Christopher and Theodate (Batchelder) Hussey. He was a grandson of Stephen Batchelder, a noted nonconformist preacher in early-seventeenth-century England who had spent some time as a refugee in Holland because of his religious views. It appears that John Hussey, Sr., was a "public Friend," and his son, John Hussey, Jr., was also an approved minister. John Hussey, Sr., served in the Provincial Assembly in 1696. He died in 1707.

Theodate, the oldest daughter of John and Rebecca Hussey, had married Benjamin Swett on May 9, 1682. Benjamin Swett, with his family, seems to have accompanied the Husseys to New Castle, but Theodate may have died before the move was made or soon afterwards.⁷³ Benjamin Swett's grandson, also named Benjamin, helped maintain the New Castle Meeting during its declining years.⁷⁴

Bathsheba, another daughter of John and Rebecca Hussey, had married Thomas Babb while still in New England. Thomas and Bathsheba Babb settled in Brandywine Hundred. Bathsheba Babb, who died in 1713, seems to have been endowed with some of the same religious fervor as her Hussey and Batchelder forebears. However, the Babb descendants who continued to live in Delaware apparently lacked some of this religious enthusiasm.⁷⁵

Three of the sons of John and Rebecca Hussey—Christopher, John, and Jedediah—lived to marry and have families. Most of the descendants of John Hussey, Jr., joined the Quaker migration to the frontier.

Jan Garretson, whose wife's name was Ann, had lived in the New Castle vicinity since the time of the Dutch control of the area. He had come to Delaware from Gelderland in Holland, sometime between 1657 and 1664. His will, which was dated 1694, mentions three sons, Garret, Casparius, and Cornelius, as well as daughters.⁷⁶ While there is no record that Jan Garretson was a member of Friends, his sons Garret and Casparius were members. Garret Garretson married Charity Hussey, a younger daughter of John and Rebecca Hussey. Casparius Garretson seems to have married Ann Cox, likely a close relative of William Cox, in whose home the first gatherings of

⁷² For one account of the Hussey family, see Asahel H. Pettit, *The Pettit Family in America* (Portland, Ore., 1906), 114–28, but data concerning later descendants of John and Rebecca (Perkins) Hussey seems confused.

⁷³ Will of Benjamin Swett, New Castle County Wills, C. 169, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 22.

⁷⁴ Will of Benjamin Swett. New Castle County Wills, K. 201, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 78.

⁷⁵ For data relating to the Babb and Hussey families, see contributions by Clara Wallace Eyre in the Babb Family manuscript folder, CCHS.

⁷⁶ Will of John Garretson, New Castle County Wills, B. 13, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 9; also see Don H. Yoder, "John Garretson of Redland Valley," *Garretson News*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 6–8.

Hockessin Meeting were held in 1730. After the death of Casparius Garretson, Ann (Cox) Garretson married Nathan Hussey, son of John Hussey, Jr. Thus the Garretson and Hussey families became much intertwined.

The Lewden family should also be mentioned in connection with the early history of New Castle Meeting. On August 6, 1695, John Lewden acquired land at Christiana Creek. In 1729 he bought an island in the Delaware River that came to be known as Lewden's Island. He lived until 1744 and was survived by three sons—Joseph, John, and Josiah—and by a daughter, Hannah Richardson. Two other daughters seem to have preceded him in death.⁷⁷

In 1705 New Castle Meeting constructed a meetinghouse in the town of New Castle on land donated by John Hussey, Sr. The Meeting was apparently a stable institution until the mid 1730s. At that time some of its more distant members found it convenient to join with the new worship group that was being formed at Hockessin, while others were attracted to the new Meeting in nearby Wilmington. Also, a large contingent of the Hussey and Garretson families was migrating to York County in Pennsylvania, where they helped organize Newberry Meeting as a subordinate Meeting of Warrington Monthly Meeting.⁷⁸

When Wilmington Monthly Meeting was set off from Newark Monthly Meeting in 1750, New Castle Meeting had Preparative Meeting status in the new Monthly Meeting. However, after this time the interest in maintaining a separate Meeting at New Castle seemed to wane rapidly, and New Castle Meeting was laid down in 1758. The meetinghouse and burial ground were preserved for many years, the building not being taken down until 1885.⁷⁹

Georges Creek Meeting

Farther down the Delaware River from New Castle, along St. Georges Creek near the present town of St. Georges, a small Quaker settlement developed, which sometimes has been forgotten.

Robert Ashton was considered to be the leader of the Friends at St. Georges Creek during most of the period covered by this study. However, there seem to have been two or three Friends families settled in that area before Robert Ashton arrived in Delaware.

Available evidence indicates that the Robert Ashton family came to America on the ship Shields & Stockton, which "sett sail from Hull on the 8th day of the 3rd month 1686 and landed at New Castle in the territories of

⁷⁷ For a detailed study of the Lewden family, see Robert P. Elmer, "Lewden and Allied Families," notebook on file in HSD.

⁷⁸ See various issues of the periodical *Garretson News*, 1941-1959?, for details relating to Newberry Meeting and for genealogical data pertaining especially to the Garretson and Hussey families.

⁷⁹ Scharf, *History of Delaware*, 2: 872.

pennsylvania in the 5th month following.⁸⁰ The Ashtons were likely accompanied by the brothers Isaac and Jacob DeCou and their families. Robert Ashton was a native of Yorkshire in England. His sister, Susanna, had been the first wife of Isaac DeCou. The DeCou family had lived in the vicinity of Tudworth in Yorkshire for two or three generations. Their forebears had been refugees from the Huguenot persecution in France.⁸¹

In partnership with Isaac DeCou, Jacob DeCou, and Richard Darkin, Kobert Ashton purchased a tract of land known as "Chelsey" on the south side of St. Georges Creek. Isaac DeCou died the winter following their arrival, and his widow and children relocated in the vicinity of Burlington, New Jersey. Less than two years later Jacob DeCou also died. Jacob's widow, Hannah, married Edward Blake of New Castle early in 1689, and her two surviving children, Hannah and Abraham, accompanied their mother to live in New Castle. In this way, the Ashtons soon came into possession of most of the Chelsey land tract.

Robert Ashton kept in contact with Friends of Newark Monthly Meeting to the north, but his family also maintained ties with the Salem Meeting across the Delaware River. Two of the Ashton daughters, Susannah and Sarah, married men from the Salem settlement.⁸² It has already been mentioned that a third daughter, Ann, married John Richardson, Jr., of the New Castle Meeting on 7-7-1704. Robert Ashton's sons, John and Joseph, were active in Friends affairs.⁸³

Of those families already settled along St. Georges Creek before the arrival of the Ashtons and DeCous, it appears that the family of Thomas and Ann Laws may have already been Friends. The three daughters—Ann (Laws) (Humphreys) Ashton, Mary (Laws) (Howie) McCoole, and Jane (Laws) (Hide) (Ireland) Thomas—all were members of Friends in their later years. The will of Thomas Laws is dated February 24, 1687.⁸⁴ A son, John Laws, died in 1717, unmarried."

Ellis Humphreys, who married Ann Laws, had acquired land on St. Georges Creek as early as 1675.⁸⁶ He had sons: Kichard, Ellis, and Leonard. Following his death, his widow married John Ashton.

⁸⁰ Extract from the Birth and Death Records of Salem Monthly Meeting of Friends, Salem, New Jersey, quoted in *The Genealogy of the DeCou Family*, comp. by S. Ella DeCou and John Allen DeCou (n.p., 1910), 10.

⁸¹ *Genealogy of the DeCou Family*, 3-77.

⁸² Minutes and Marriage Records of Salem Monthly Meeting of Friends, June 30, 1692, Feb. 24, 1693, abstracted in William Wade Hinshaw, *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy* (Ann Arbor, Mich, 1938), II: 51.

⁸³ See "Ashton." 2 vols., comp. by Thomas Butler, Collection of GSP.

⁸⁴ Will of Thomas Lawes, New Castle County Wills, Misc. I. 282, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 8.

⁸⁵ Will of Joseph Laws, New Castle County Wills, C. 88, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 20.

⁸⁶ "Ellis Humphery Land," *Walter Wharton's Land Survey Register, 1675-1679* . . . Ed. by Albert Cook Myers (Wilmington, 1955), 50-52.

Benjamin and Susanna Gumley were other early Delaware Quakers. On May 14, 1687, Benjamin Gumley and Thomas Snelling were named as guardians for the children of Hannah Prime.⁸⁷ The Gumleys lived at Blackbird Creek in New Castle County.⁸⁸

It is likely that Hannah Prime, for whose children Benjamin Gumley and Thomas Snelling were named guardians, was considered to be a Friend. Her son, Ralph Prime, is mentioned in Duck Creek Monthly Meeting minutes as early as 1708.

Philip England had come to Philadelphia from England in 1683. His first wife having died, he married a widow, Elizabeth Hatton at Elizabeth's plantation in New Castle County on 10-1-1688, under the care of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting. Elizabeth's first husband was William Hatton, and they had two daughters, Rebecca and Martha. Soon after the Hatton family had come to Delaware from Lancashire in 1684, it appears that the daughter Rebecca married Joseph Harris. Following his death in 1688, Rebecca married Joseph England.⁸⁹

While Philip and Elizabeth England kept their official residence in Philadelphia until Elizabeth's death in 1708, Joseph and Rebecca England made their home in southern New Castle County. Joseph took an active part in civic affairs, being elected to the Provincial Assembly in 1692, 1695, 1698, and 1700. He also was a concerned Friend. By 1703 a meetinghouse had been constructed at St. Georges Creek, and Joseph England, William Hor. and others were warranted ten acres of land enclosing the meetinghouse to be used as a burying ground for the people called Quakers.⁹⁰ When Duck Creek Meeting was established in 1704, Joseph England transferred his interest to the new Meeting, which met at a location closer to his home.

Thomas England, while he is not mentioned in Philip England's will, was probably either a son or close relative of Philip England. Thomas England married Hannah DeCou, daughter of Jacob DeCou and Hannah DeCou, who later married Edward Blake. Thomas and Hannah England lived in Philadelphia during their later years, but they had extensive property holdings in lower Delaware.

From an early date, some members of the Georges Creek Meeting lived in Appoquinimink Hundred. Among those was the large family of Alexander and Margaret Adams. They had moved into the area from Monmouth County, New Jersey, about 1703. Daniel Corbit, the ancestor of the noted Corbit family of Odessa, may have come to Delaware as early as 1705.

⁸⁷ Will of Hannah Prime, New Castle County Will probated May 14, 1687, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 9.

⁸⁸ *Original Land Titles in Delaware Commonly Known as The Duke of York Record . . . 1649-1679* (Wilmington, 1903), 33.

⁸⁹ Will of William Hatton, New Castle County Wills, Misc. I. 174, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 8. Abstracter's reading of names listed in will may not be accurate.

⁹⁰ Scharf, *History of Delaware*, 2: 1006.

As late as 8-2-1703, Georges Creek Meeting was considering affiliation with Newark Monthly Meeting to the north.⁹¹ However, after the organization of Duck Creek Monthly Meeting in 1705, Georges Creek Friends decided to affiliate with the new group. They submitted their decision to Duck Creek Monthly Meeting on 4-17-1706.⁹²

Georges Creek Meeting continued for many years as a viable Preparative Meeting of Duck Creek Monthly Meeting. However, by 1765 the number of Friends in the St. Georges Creek area had become much reduced. In 1781 a new meetinghouse was authorized to be built in Odessa. The Meeting was transferred there and became known as Appoquinimink Meeting. The membership of this Meeting was split by the Orthodox-Hicksite separation among Friends in 1827. The Orthodox Friends at Odessa became members of the Orthodox Meeting in Wilmington. The Hicksite Friends, who kept control of the meetinghouse, faded away with the death of John Alston in 1874. The quaint little meetinghouse was reopened in 1939, and meetings have been held there on a limited basis since that time under the care of Wilmington Monthly Meeting.⁹³

The Early Friends in Lower Delaware

Prior to 6-7-1704, when Chester Quarterly Meeting authorized the establishment of a meeting for worship at Duck Creek near present-day Smyrna, there were no worship groups south of New Castle that had been formally recognized by the larger community of Friends. However, there had been scattered families of Friends living in lower Delaware for about as long as there had been Friends living in northern New Castle County, and it is likely that a number of informal worship groups had developed in the region. This certainly had been the case at St. Georges Creek.

There were traveling Friends ministers who passed through lower Delaware from time to time and who appointed meetings in the homes of those sympathetic to Friends. The journals of at least two of these traveling Friends have been preserved, those of Thomas Story and Thomas Chalkley.⁹⁴ These writings give evidence that there was much religious ferment among Friends in the region in the period immediately preceding and following 1700. New people were brought into the Quaker fellowship and worship groups were strengthened and increased in number.

There had been a Quaker presence in Lewes from as early as 1678. William Clark [or Clarke] settled there at about that time. He was one of six businessmen living in the vicinity of Dublin, Ireland, who had joined together

⁹¹ Newark Monthly Meeting Records [Men's Minutes], 1686-1739, p. 20, FHL.

⁹² Duck Creek Monthly Meeting Men's Minutes, 1705-1800, Rev. copy, p. 2, FHL.

⁹³ See John Sharpless Walker. *A Story of the Odessa Quakers* (n.p., 1967), a pamphlet narrating the history of Appoquinimink Friends Meeting.

⁹⁴ Thomas Story, *Journal*, reprinted in *Friends Library*, 10: 130-32; Thomas Chalkley, *A Collection of the Works of Thomas Chalkley* (Philadelphia, 1790), 47-49 and other passages.

in 1677 to purchase a proprietary share in West Jersey lands from Edward Bylling. William Clark arrived in New Jersey late in 1677, but he soon made his way across the Delaware River to what is now Sussex County, Delaware.⁹⁵ On 11-15-1679 William Clark of the Whorekill on Delaware Bay was married to Honor Hulings at Robert Zane's house in New Salem, New Jersey, under the care of Salem Monthly Meeting. It was likely a second marriage for both.

William Clark was serving as justice of the peace in Lewes in 1680, and through the years he had many other official duties there. When William Penn became proprietor of Pennsylvania, William Clark was given many responsibilities under the new government. In 1683 he was serving as one of the King's justices, and in 1690 he was appointed by the Pennsylvania Assembly as provincial judge representing the Lower Counties. At various times from 1683 until 1703 he served on the Provincial Council, being president of the council in 1686. He spent so much of his time in Philadelphia that he decided to build a house there. This came to be known as the Clarke House, one of the grandest mansions in the city. William Clark died in 1704/5 at New Castle, shortly after having served as Speaker of the first Delaware Assembly. In 1708 his widow married Thomas Bedwell.⁹⁶

While William Clark was considered to be the most prominent Quaker in Lewes during his lifetime, it appears that the Fisher family was primarily responsible for the continuing presence of Quakerism in Lewes. John and Margaret Fisher and their sons Thomas and John had arrived in the Pennsylvania colony in 1682. John Fisher, Sr., acquired property in the vicinity of Lewes, believing that the new city of Philadelphia was being built too far upstream on the Delaware River to become a viable port. However, he spent much of his time in Philadelphia, where he was involved in governmental matters. His career in the new land was brief, since he died in 1685/86.⁹⁷

Thomas Fisher was probably scarcely seventeen years old when his father died, but he soon took charge of the family affairs. In 1692 he married Mary Maude, daughter of Joshua and Elizabeth Maude. They had four daughters and three sons. Thomas Fisher was a member of the Provincial Assembly in 1697 and in 1700.

On 6-16-1712 Thomas Fisher and Cornelius Wiltbank attended Duck Creek Monthly Meeting and requested that a Meeting be settled in the

⁹⁵ It is difficult to locate an exhaustive biography of William Clark. See various references in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* including 61 (1937): 328 and 75 (1951): 133; also Will of William Clark of Sussex . . . , "Abstracts of Wills and Administrations of Sussex County," *Publications of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania*, 11 (1932): 217.

⁹⁶ For a description of Clarke Hall, see John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in the Olden Time*, 1: 374-75; *Correspondence between William Penn and James Logan* (Philadelphia, 1872), vol. 2, p. 35. These latter volumes were drawn from *Memorials of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, vols. 9 and 10.

⁹⁷ For an extensive account of John Fisher and his descendants, see Ann Wharton Smith, *Genealogy of the Fisher Family* (Philadelphia, 1896), particularly 9-36.

Lewes area, to meet at Lewes one week and at the home of Cornelius Wiltbank the other. However, Thomas Fisher probably became ill shortly after this and died in 1713/14. A recognized Friends Meeting was not established in the area until 1720 when Cold Spring [or Cool Spring] Meeting was organized. It was located about eight miles outside of Lewes. The Meeting was discontinued in 1817.

Jane Maude, sister of Thomas Fisher's wife, evidently lived in the Lewes area most of her later life.⁹⁸ She was four times married but probably had no surviving children. Her fourth husband was Cornelius Wiltbank, who has just been mentioned. The Wiltbank family were of Swedish background and had lived in the Lewes area for many years. Cornelius Wiltbank represented Sussex County in the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly in 1698.

Elizabeth Maude, the widowed mother of Mary (Maude) Fisher and Jane (Maude) Wiltbank, had in 1676 married Dr. Thomas Wynn, also a Quaker. He was a member of the first Provincial Assembly in 1683 as a representative from Philadelphia and became its first Speaker. In 1685 Thomas and Elizabeth Wynne became residents of Lewes.⁹⁹

The Rowland and Miers families were associated with the Lewes Quaker community from early times. Samuel Rowland had come to Sussex County from England in 1682.¹⁰⁰ His son, Thomas Rowland, married Sarah Miers, daughter of John and Mary (Haworth) Miers. James Miers, son of John and Mary, married Margery Fisher, sister of Thomas Fisher. As the years went by, the Fisher, Rowland, and Miers families became even more interrelated.

Philip and Sarah (Gush) Russell were Quakers who had come to the Pennsylvania colony from Bristol, England, in 1683. In 1685 Philip Russell was granted a license to keep an inn at Lewes. He was among those who first formed the Assembly of the Lower Counties in 1704. There seems to be little information available concerning the Quaker activities of Philip and Sarah Russell while they lived in Delaware, but it is known that their son Joseph was first appointed representative of Cold Spring Meeting to Duck Creek Monthly Meeting in 1721.¹⁰¹

Norton and Rachel Claypoole and their young family also seem to have been part of the small Quaker circle at Lewes. Norton, brother of the more noted James Claypoole of Philadelphia, had arrived in Lewes in 1678. His wife and young son came three years later. Norton Claypoole was a member of the Provincial Assembly in 1686. He died in 1688.¹⁰²

Samuel Preston was an important Quaker leader in southern Delaware during the closing years of the seventeenth century. He was born in 1665, probably at "Preston" on the Paxtuxant on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

⁹⁸ McCracken, *Welcome Claimants*, 557.

⁹⁹ McCracken, *Welcome Claimants*, 558-87.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, *Genealogy of the Fisher Family*, 22.

¹⁰¹ George Ely Russell, "Philip Russell of Lewes, Quaker," *American Genealogist*, 56 (1980): 88-91.

¹⁰² Rebecca Irwin Groff, *Genealogy of the Claypoole Family of Philadelphia, 1588-1893* (Philadelphia, 1893), 20-55. See also numerous references in C. H. B. Turner, comp., *Some Records of Sussex County, Delaware* (Philadelphia, 1909).

He had been reared as a Quaker in that locality. On July 6, 1688, he married Rachel Lloyd at the home of Francis Cornwell in the county of Sussex in Delaware. Rachel was a daughter of Thomas Lloyd, deputy proprietor of Pennsylvania.

Samuel Preston became a justice in Sussex County in 1689 and was sheriff from 1690 to 1693. He represented the county in the Provincial Assembly in 1693 and 1701. In 1699 he accompanied the Friends minister Thomas Story on a religious journey. Samuel Preston had moved his official residence to Philadelphia by 1703. There he was engaged in the mercantile business and was also involved in governmental affairs, serving as mayor of Philadelphia in 1711/12. He died in 1743.¹⁰³

Joseph Booth, described as living near "Muskmillion Creek" [Mispillion Creek], was among those convinced of Quakerism under the ministry of Thomas Story.¹⁰⁴ Joseph Booth had come to Delaware from Scituate in New England. He was an early settler in Sussex County and had married Frances Spencer at Lewes on November 28, 1690. He served in the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly in 1695, 1700, and 1701. Joseph Booth became one of the most zealous of Quaker evangelists in southern Delaware. He was instrumental in establishing the Friends Meeting at Murderkill [Motherkill] where he was a member. He also encouraged the formation of the Cold Spring Meeting.¹⁰⁵

We have already made mention of the Hatton and England families who were among the earliest Quaker settlers in the vicinity of present-day Smyrna, Delaware. The earliest minutes of Duck Creek Monthly Meeting, centered at Smyrna, include the names of other Friends who had probably been living in the area for some time prior to the organization of the Monthly Meeting in 1705. The first clerk of Duck Creek Monthly Meeting was Absalom Cuffe. His wife, Martha, was a daughter of Philip England. There was an elderly woman member at Duck Creek, Eline Gouldsmith, who named in her will her nieces Rebecca England and Martha Cuffe.¹⁰⁶

The Duck Creek Monthly Meeting minutes for 11-16-1709/10 mention a certificate being sent to Philadelphia Monthly Meeting concerning "the realty of Rebekah Freeland being the daughter of Mary Hall, wife of William Freeland, late of Kent County." William Freeland was a member of the Provincial Assembly from Kent County in 1687, 1690, and 1692. Philadelphia Quaker burial records, under the category of "Deaths of Persons not Friends," list William Freeland as having been buried in Philadelphia on 1-12-1698.¹⁰⁷ The aforementioned Mary Hall, probably his second wife, was likely a Friend

¹⁰³ Story, *Journal*, reprinted in Friends Library, 10: 130; *Colonial Families of Philadelphia*, ed.

John W. Jordan (New York, 1911), 72-73.

¹⁰⁴ Storv, *Journal*, reprinted in *Friends Library*, 10: 130-31.

¹⁰⁵ "Testimony from Duck Creek Monthly Meeting in Kent County on Delaware Concerning Joseph Booth," *A Collection of Memorials* . . . , 88-89.

¹⁰⁶ Will of Eline Gouldsmith, New Castle County Wills, B. 169, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Birth and Death Records, abstracted in Hinshaw, *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy*, II: 443.

and seems to have been related to the Hatton family. Susannah Freeland, who married Timothy Hanson, Jr., at the Philadelphia Friends meetinghouse on 9-9-1704, seems to have been a daughter of William Freeland and his first wife, Susanna Richardson who was a daughter of John Richardson of Kent County, a member of the Pennsylvania Provincial Council in 1683-84.¹⁰⁸

The brothers Caleb and Hasadiah Offley were included among other early members at Duck Creek. Then there was the family of Thomas and Hannah Shaw. Hassadiah Offley's will indicates that Thomas Shaw was his nephew. Other families included those of Ralph and Martha Prime and of John and Jane Wood. The names of William Sterne and Margaret Cohone also appear in early Duck Creek minutes.

The first Duck Creek Meetinghouse was built on the outskirts of Smyrna near the site where the first burial ground is still to be found. By the beginning of the nineteenth century a new meetinghouse had been built within the town of Smyrna. The Duck Creek Meeting was closed about 1850. The meetinghouse in Smyrna was sold in 1865, after having been occupied by soldiers during the Civil War and left in a dilapidated condition. After having been occupied by the Smyrna seminary for a number of years, the building burned in 1876.¹⁰⁹

In 1707 a Friends Meeting was organized that included Friends living on both sides of the border of Kent and Sussex counties. Eventually this Meeting became known as Murderkill [Mutherkiln] Meeting, with a meetinghouse located near Magnolia, Delaware.

Beginning about 1730 Friends living along Mispillion Creek formed a separate Three Runs Meeting that seems to have functioned at least intermittently throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century. In 1790 a new meetinghouse was constructed at Milford, and a Meeting was kept up there until about 1833.

The earliest Friends in the region of the Murderkill and Mispillion creeks included John and Elinor Robinson, Waitman and Lydia Sipple, Timothy and Susanna Hanson, Nathaniel Hunn, Edward Needham, Ellis Ostem, John Edmonds, Robert and Ann (Edmonds) Porter, Mark Manlove, and Matthew Manlove.

In 1712 Friends living in east-central Kent County formally organized Little Creek Meeting, although there had probably been a worship group there since 1705.¹¹⁰ The burial ground of the Little Creek Meeting is still maintained two miles west of the village of Little Creek, and the shell of the meetinghouse, now used for storage purposes, is still standing across the road from the burial ground.

¹⁰⁸ Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Minutes and Marriage Records, abstracted in Hinshaw, *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy*, II: 557; *Comly Family in America (Philadelphia, 1934)*, 845-49, 867-81, 983.

¹⁰⁹ Will of Hasadiah Offley, New Castle County Wills, C. 54, abstracted in *Calendar of Delaware Wills*, 20; Frank R. Zebley, *The Churches of Delaware*, (Wilmington, 1947), 193-94.

¹¹⁰ Chalkley, *Works*, 49.

Of the Friends who became active members of Little Creek Meeting, Joshua Clayton, along with his brother John, had purchased on June 15, 1698, a tract of 200 acres on Walker's Branch of the Dover River. About this time he married Sarah (Needham) Bedwell, daughter of Ezekiel and Sarah (King) Needham and widow of Henry Bedwell.¹¹¹

The family of John and Rachael Cowgill did not move to the Little Creek area until about 1712. They were from Bucks County, Pennsylvania.¹¹² Two of their sons married daughters of John and Sarah Clayton. Descendants of the Cowgill family helped maintain the Quaker witness in southern Delaware for many generations, even to the present day.

In 1805/6, Friends erected a new building at Camden, a few miles south of Dover. A Friends school flourished there for many years, and beginning in 1814 regular meeting for worship was held there. After Murderkill Monthly Meeting had been torn apart by the Orthodox-Hicksite separation of 1827, and after Little Creek Meeting was laid down in 1865, Camden Meeting continued as the only surviving Meeting of Duck Creek Monthly Meeting. The hip-roofed meetinghouse in the village of Camden still serves as the center for Quaker activity in southern Delaware.

Conclusion

In barest outline we have endeavored to sketch something of the beginnings of the Society of Friends in early Delaware. Surely even this brief study reveals the fact that the early Delaware Friends exercised an influence far out of proportion to their numbers. If it accomplishes nothing else, it is hoped that this short sketch will establish some basis for a more thorough investigation of the life and accomplishments of the people called Quakers in the Three Lower Counties of the province of Pennsylvania.

¹¹¹ McCracken, *Welcome Claimants*, 135-43.

¹¹² McCracken, *Welcome Claimants*, 125-27.