

The Early Years at Cedar Grove Friends Meeting in Woodland, North Carolina¹

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The Cedar Grove Friends Meeting in Woodland, North Carolina was not established until 1868. Quakerism had made its appearance in northeastern North Carolina, however, almost two hundred years previous to this, being particularly strong in the counties of Perquimans and Pasquotank. It is doubtful that any record shows the exact date of the coming of Friends to Northampton County, but certainly interest had to be stimulated and efforts had to be incorporated long before a meeting could be established in this county. Since the Rich Square Monthly Meeting was first held in 1760, it is apparent that the history of the Northampton meetings is far from short.

Today the Cedar Grove Friends Meeting in Woodland is one of the strongest meetings in North Carolina in spite of the fact that it is not affiliated with the North Carolina Yearly Meeting.² This meeting is considered conservative, for it continues to hold to many of the practices which have been discarded by the meetings termed as progressive. Certainly, in order to obtain such strength as the Cedar Grove Meeting exhibits, it is necessary that the ideals of Quakerism be upheld. Respect for dependence upon these ideals comes only through the devotion established by long and faithful observation. To get a complete picture of the Woodland Meeting, the history of its parent meeting must be included. Therefore, the first section of this work will give consideration to the Rich Square Monthly Meeting, giving particular emphasis to items of prime historical interest. The remaining sections will deal specifically with the Cedar Grove Meeting.

The settling of Rich Square began in 1750. By 1753 Friends in the area had set up a meeting for worship. Then on May 31³ and June 1, 1760, Friends of Northampton, Edgecomb, and Hertford counties petitioned the Quarterly Meeting of Perquimans County asking that a Monthly Meeting be “settled amongst them” at Rich Square to meet the first Saturday in each month with “a general first day's meeting the day following.”⁴ The request was approved and granted, and a committee was appointed to report this to the Quarterly Meeting.

At the first Rich Square Monthly Meeting on June 7, 1760, there was solemn worship, and clerks and overseers were appointed. A list of early members includes approximately thirty names. Following this meeting wherein officers were appointed, the procedures used in the sessions fell into a routine, there being a particular course of action to follow in various situations. For example, when two people wanted to marry, they first appeared in the meeting and “declared their intention of taking each other in marriage.” Then a committee would be appointed to inquire into the lives, conduct, and “clearness in relation to marriage” of the couple. The committee to work with the bride was appointed from the women's meeting and that to work with the groom from the men's meeting. At a later meeting the committees would report. Then the couple would appear again “desiring an answer to their former proposal”. If the reports had been satisfactory, the two would be “left at their liberty to consummate [sic] their marriage.” Overseers were appointed to attend the wedding to “see that things is conducted decently and according to good order and return and account of their service to next monthly

1 Originally published in *The Southern Friend*, Journal of the North Carolina Friends Historical Society, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1979; reproduced here by permission.

2 That is, not affiliated with North Carolina Yearly Meeting (FUM). --llw

3 Although Cedar Grove Friends of the time, and into the present day, would use Fifth Month and Sixth Month rather than these names for the months, the author has used May and June. --llw

4 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of Women Friends, 1760-1799, I.

meeting.”⁵

There were other regulations regarding marriage. A Friend who married someone who was not a member of the Society was said to have married “outside of unity”, and such an act caused one to lose his membership. From the minutes of the February, 1774 meeting comes the following:

Friends proceedings in relation to such as marry out of the unity of friends may be attended by standing as followeth – First when any person professing to be of our society join in marriage with those of another persuasion. or contrary to the rules approved of and settled amongst us; having first been cautioned against it by the overseers as any other friends, and where any nearer of kin than second cousins in consanguinity shall join in marriage, such shall be testified against without farther dealing and in cases where friends have not been first cautioned the offenders ought to attend the meeting to which they offer their papers of condemnation, where it is practicable, in order that friends may be the more capable of judging of their sincerity, therefore it is incumbent on friends in their several monthly meetings to wait sometime for the probation of such, that they are truly penitent and sensible of their outgoings, before they are received into near communion, or employed in the affairs of the church.⁶

After the yearly meeting of 1772, the query regarding marriage was made to read thus:

Do none make proposals of marriage in less than eight months after the decease of their former wife, or to a widow in less than eight months after the decease of her former husband, and are not the rights of children by former marriages neglected.⁷

In February, 1832, the following was added to the discipline under the head of marriages: “No member of the Society shall marry the sister of his deceased wife, nor no woman shall marry the brother of her deceased husband.”⁸

One of the standard procedures of the meeting was the calling over and answering of the queries. These were treated in the following way:

The queries was called over and answered to by the overseers and things in the main appear tolerable well and if any disorder appears there rests a case on the minds of the faithful to put our Christian discipline in practice for a regulation.⁹

As all know who are acquainted with Quaker practices, the child of Quaker parents was a “birthright” member of the Society, today an associate member.¹⁰ If an adult wanted to become a Friend, he first asked to be “taken under the care of friends”. This “care” was given by the preparative meeting. There was an investigation of the individual's conduct, and of his “sincerity of request”. If the

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of Men Friends, 1831-1873, III.

9 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of Men Friends, 1760-1799, I.

10 There is no “associate membership” in North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), and today in Cedar Grove, as in earlier centuries, the child of Quaker parents is considered a [full] member from birth. --llw

findings by the investigators were satisfactory, the person would be considered in “full unity”.

Some very specific regulations regarding membership were given in December of 1781:

. . . monthly meeting shall have discretionary power to receive children in minority upon the request of their parents after the proper inquiries into the life of the family be made When only one parent comes in by request, the child has no part of the meeting until he can be received by application Should one parent be disowned, future children are still considered to have full right of membership until it is forfeited by their own misconduct.¹¹⁷

So it was that the business meetings were often concerned primarily with regulatory items. Frequently the misconduct of a member caused him to lose his membership. In such cases papers of denial were written against the offender, and he was barred from the meeting. Before a paper of denial was written, a committee would investigate the behavior of the accused. Often this committee worked with the offender so successfully as to warrant his appeal to the meeting for continued membership. If his desire was sincere, and if his efforts proved to be worthy, he was reinstated. It is quite interesting to note the varied reasons for issuing such papers. In the oldest volume of women's minutes (1760-1799) were listed the following misdemeanors: for bastard getting; for divers disorderly practices; for giving her consent to join in marriage with a man not of our Society and contrary to our discipline also for suffering rude and bad company to frequent her house; for disobedience to parents; for swearing; for lying; for not attending meetings and wearing superfluous [sic] dress; for taking strong drink in excess. In one case a complaint was brought against a woman for “not using her husband well and for not attending to her business at home.” It was requested that friends visit with this couple to determine the difficulties and to attempt a reconciliation.

From the men's minutes the complaints vary to some degree. For example, papers were often written for drinking, gaming, fighting, attending shooting matches and horse races. An excerpt from the first volume of men's minutes gives a good picture of the type of case that was often presented to the meeting:

It appears from the preparative meeting that having had an education amongst us but for want of due care and regards to the principle of truth which would have been sufficient to have preserved him in true fellowship hath abused his neighbor's beast in a barbarous manner and reproachfully denied it but since that has made restitution to his neighbor but has not given satisfaction to this meeting and friends think it proper to bear with him till next monthly meeting.¹²

In this period which was the time of the Revolutionary War, there were many who were “complained against” for having taken oaths. Then in May, 1775 the minutes state that written acknowledgment and condemnation of one _____ was produced setting forth his deviation from religious principles in several respects particularly “in attempting to take up the carnal sword by enlisting under officers for that purpose.”¹³

11 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of Men Friends, 1760-1799, I.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

One should note at this point that no outsiders were allowed in the meetings of discipline. A person outside the Society, however, was allowed to attend a business meeting if he requested such from an elder. Often, though, there were visitors from other meetings, the visitors coming from various meetings in America and also from England. When a member of one meeting wished to visit another, he requested a certificate from his meeting to take to the one he was to visit. In a similar manner, there were often epistles from the various Yearly Meetings. In 1796 “We received an epistle from the Yearly Meeting held in London the fifth month, 1796, which was read to good satisfaction.”¹⁴

Regularly delegates were appointed to attend the Quarterly Meeting, the Rich Square Meeting being a part of the Eastern Quarter. These delegates were to “represent the state” of the Rich Square Meeting to the Quarterly Meeting. In the early 1770's a request was made to have a quarterly meeting in the Rich Square area. In August, 1773, however, the minutes read: “. . . circumstances believed to be such as to make the renewing of the petition for a Quarterly Meeting inadvisable.”¹⁵

Other items of business required occasional attention. Early after the establishment of the meeting, one [Friend] was appointed to “prepare a book and register the births and deaths of friends belonging to this meeting and their offspring.”¹⁶ In November, 1764 the men's minutes read:

This meeting orders a subscription to be made and paid out of the public treasury according to the proposals of the printer in London to purchase one volume of the History of the Life and Journal of George Fox for the public use of this meeting which is sixteen shillings starting money the present subscription and the remainder at the receipt of the book.¹⁷

The meeting house often needed repairing, renovation, etc., and such items were cared for by the members.

The conduct, spirit, and faithfulness of the members was an ever present concern. The Yearly Meeting frequently made suggestions in reference to this concern.

The Yearly Meeting Minutes directed to appoint some friends suitable to visit every family belonging to our meeting in order to help strengthen and encourage the weak and those that their hands may be ready to hang down also to stir up the slothful and negligent to more deligence [sic] so that all may be made to come up to their respective duties and think proper.¹⁸

In 1791 the Yearly Meeting had this to offer: “Taking under consideration the matter of friends' settling on Indian lands unpurchased, direct that no friend settle on such land.”¹⁹ It was also directed that a Friend should not move outside the limits of his monthly meeting without applying to and having consent from both the Monthly Meeting and the Quarterly Meeting to which he belonged.²⁰

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

A particularly interesting phase of the concern for conduct is found in the treatment of dress. Already it has been noted that papers of denial were issued occasionally when a person deviated from the simple, plain dress of the Society. An address from the Yearly Meeting of 1826 includes a striking illustration of this emphasis:

This same Yearly Meeting was made aware of the many deficiencies in the society, the most prominent being the neglect of attending religious meetings, particularly in the week, deviations from plainness in dress and address, the neglect of parents in instructing children in the principles and doctrine of the Christian religion, and the neglect of both parents and children in reading the scriptures of truth. In reference to the plainness, a solumn [sic] message was relayed from the Indian Shawnee nation which said that once they had been able to designate members of the society from people of the world by the simplicity of friends' appearances, (this preserving members in time of war) but due to the wide deviation from the practices of friends, they were no longer able to distinguish many of the society.²¹

The suggestion of war in the Indian message leads immediately to one of the strongest concerns among Friends. Pacifism was one of the original ideals of the Society, and there has always been the sincere endeavor of loyal members to uphold this ideal. The first reference to this attempt by Friends of the Rich Square Monthly Meeting is noted in an excerpt from the minutes of September, 1772:

Colonel Allen Jones the commanding officer of this county requests to have a list of all male friends from the age of sixteen to sixty years in order that they may be exempted from being called on to act under militia law.²²

Then in November, 1774 came a paragraph from the Yearly Meeting as inserted in the minutes:

The committee appointed yesterday with the advice and assistance of other friends having met and weightily considered what might be the most advisable for friends to do relating to the commotions now subsisting between Great Britain and America, give it as their advice that agreeable to our principles of active or passive obedience or submission to our superiors, we cannot join with things that we do not know in what or where they will end, and therefore think it will be advisable and safe for friends to keep clear of joining in things that may end in distress and confusion,²³

In April, 1775 new lists were made of those exempt from serving under militia law. The lists included Friends of Rich Square, Jack Swamp, Hertford County, and Bertie County, the numbers from each county being: forty-three from Northampton, two from Hertford, one from Bertie, and one from Halifax. In July, 1776, the month of the Declaration of Independence, the minutes stated that the purpose of bearing arms and shedding blood was contrary to what was believed to be an example and precept of the Lord and his followers.²⁴ Several ensuing items attest to the struggle faced by the Friends. In December, 1777: "Friends cannot consistently comply with the Act of Assembly at

21 Rich Square Monthly Meeting of Men Friends, 1799-1830, II.

22 Rich Square Monthly Meeting of Men Friends, 1760-1799, I.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

Newborn the last session requiring affirmation of Allegiance to the State of North Carolina.”²⁵

Then in August, 1778:

_____ hath so far deviated from the rules of moral rectitude as to have countenanced a man in desertion from the Continental Army, who it is said had enlisted and received the bounty for that purpose.²⁶

From the same report:

. . . and as friends are by a late Act of Assembly subjected to a severe penalty for not furnishing a certain proportion of men to act as substitutes in carrying on of carnal wars and shedding human blood, and a number having already suffered very considerably that on account of which not as yet being collected, it is therefore left to the committee appointed for other services to collect the account of said sufferings in order that they may be carried up to the Quarterly Meeting and also return an account to next monthly meeting.²⁷

Later in December, 1781 it was declared that any Friends “taking a test of fidelity to either Great Britain or America while the war continues after the counsel of the monthly meeting shall be disowned.”²⁸

These items refer to the Revolutionary War. There were further problems when the Civil War came. From a meeting for sufferings of North Carolina Yearly Meeting called to meet at Center in September, 1861 the following address was sent to all Monthly Meetings and to each member belonging to these meetings.

Dear Friends

One object for which we have assembled having been to take into consideration the propriety of appealing to our legislature to continue to grant us that religious privilege and protection which almost without hinderance [sic] or molestation our Society from its rise to the present time has been permitted to enjoy, and now learning that the military law has been enacted in which friends are still exempted as heretofore; we have felt that we have abundant cause for thankfulness to our divine Master for his protective care over us.²⁹

Further reference is not made to this problem.

Mention of the Civil War introduces another concern that has ever been of great importance to Friends. Believing that there is that of God in every man, Friends have worked for equal rights for all men. Hence, the slavery question was a major issue. The Friends treated this in the queries, and from the 1771 Yearly Meeting Minutes comes this paragraph:

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of Men Friends, 1831-1873, III.

No friend in unity shall buy a negro or other slave of any other person than a friend in unity unless upon particular occasions such as may be approved of by the monthly meeting to which they belong. . . and it is earnestly advised that all friends who are possessed with slaves do endeavor to make their lives as easy as they can, and that they do not sell a slave to any person who makes a practice of buying and selling them for the sake of gain, without regarding how the poor slave may be used or the great evil of separating husband and wife or parents and children.³⁰

After the Yearly Meeting of 1772 the query dealing with slavery read thus:

Are all friends careful to have a faithful testimony against the iniquitous [sic] practice of importing negroes, or do they refuse to purchase of those that make a trade or merchandize of them; as of such as are not in unity with friends, excepting it be to prevent the parting of man and wife, or parent and child, or for other good reasons as shall be approved by the monthly meeting, and do they which have them by inheritance or otherwise, use them well in every respect endeavoring to discourage them from evil, and encouraging them in that which is good.³¹

When the country was facing war in 1776, the Friends were struggling too.

It was the unanimous sense of the meeting that all members thereof who hold slaves be earnestly and affectionately advised to cleanse their hands of them as soon as possibly they can, and in the meantime that none of the members of this meeting shall be permitted to buy or sell any slaves or hire any from such who are not in membership with us.³²

A violation of this would merit a testimony against the offender

. . .and if any of the slaves set free by members of this meeting should be intercepted in their freedom, or any attempts made to bring them again into bondage, it is recommended to the standing committee to have that or any other matter respecting them particularly under their care and notice, and to appear on their behalf and take such steps for their assistance and preservation as they may apprehend necessary. . .and any expense that may arise on their accounts, this meeting agrees to repay.³³

It was in 1781 that the regulation was made which stated that Friends who continued to hold slaves would be disowned.

In 1827 a very moving address came from the yearly meeting. This told of the removal of negroes to free governments and of the amounts required for this activity.

. . .if the Father of Mercies should continue to smile on our operations, we shall in a year

30 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of Men Friends, 1760-1799, I.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

or two more, in all probability, be released from the heavier part of this burden, and feel the inexpressible consolation of having plucked from the jaws of slavery, a thousand of our fellow beings and placed them in free governments where they may enjoy the privileges of citizens, and the additional satisfaction of having been instrumental in performing a work which doubtless will have a very striking influence on the community at large and assist in paving the way for the mitigation or removal of one of the greatest evils that ever afflicted the human race.³⁴

The free governments were listed as Liberia, Haiti, Philadelphia, Ohio, and Indiana. This was the final item which dealt specifically with slavery. It is believed that the query regarding slavery remained.³⁵

The keen interest in education that Quakers were noted for was evident in the oldest records read for this work. Frequently sums were called for in order to pay for the purchase of books. In April, 1831 the minutes record the appointing of a committee to consider the subject of having schools under the care of the Monthly Meeting. Then in December of the following year the Yearly Meeting sent the plan for the Boarding School which is now Guilford College. The plan included not only a description of the location, property assets, the number to be enrolled, the terms of boarding and tuition, rules and regulations for government, and type of instruction, but also regulations pertaining to the communication between children and parents, the bedtimes and risings of students, and personal habits to be established.³⁶ The Rich Square Monthly Meeting approved the plan and began the subscription of funds. After this reports were regularly included giving an account of the progress made by the school. In 1857 an item from the April minutes indicates that the Meeting sanctioned the opening of a first day school, and that a committee was appointed to manage this school.

Just as the Rich Square Monthly Meeting was established by the Perquimans Meeting, so were requests made by the Rich Square Meeting for the establishment of others. Such a request was granted in February of 1794.

It appeared by extract from the minutes of the Quarterly Meeting held near Little River in Perquimans County in the second month last that said meeting hath established a monthly meeting to be held at Jackswamp [sic] on the first seventh day in each month agreeable to the request of the Rich Square Monthly Meeting.³⁷

The concerns of the Jack Swamp Meeting were much the same as those cited from the Rich Square Meeting. In December, 1797 the meeting noted deficiencies which existed in the group.

. . .in particular the distillation, trading in and frequent use of spiritous liquors, and the unnecessary frequenting of taverns and places of diversion also the neglect of duty to those of the black people under friends' care, and the want of love and unity among

34 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of Men Friends, 1799-1830, II.

35 Though the Queries no longer explicitly mentioned slavery, the 1869 revision of the Discipline still contained a section with that heading (p. 68-69), expressing Friends "continued concern to prohibit our members from holding in bondage our fellow men." --llw

36 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of Men Friends, 1831-1873, III

37 Jack Swamp Monthly Meeting Minutes of Men Friends.

friends also that pernicious practice of tale bearing and destruction.³⁸

From this meeting at Jack Swamp also comes an item expressing concern for those of the Society who held government offices, for it was believed that “those stations will have a tendency to draw the minds from the simplicity of truth.”³⁹ The life of the Jack Swamp Meeting was short as compared to the other meetings of its area. In March, 1826 the records state that the Monthly Meeting at Jack Swamp was to be discontinued.⁴⁰

Then in March, 1833 a “friend expressed concern that a meeting be appointed in Murfreesborough.”⁴¹ His concern was favorably considered and he was left “at liberty to pursue his prospects.” No further mention of the Murfreesboro meeting was noted. One should understand, however, that such an appointment as this was of a temporary nature being requested for the consideration of some current concern, not for the actual establishment of a meeting.⁴²

The first mention of the Cedar Grove Meeting in the records of the Rich Square Monthly Meeting came on April 18, 1868: “. . .the subject of setting up an indulged meeting near Elijah Outland’s claiming the attention of this meeting.” A committee was appointed to meet with a similar group from the women’s meeting to investigate the feeling of members in regard to this question. This committee reported the following month, stating that nothing was found to hinder the setting up of an indulged meeting near Elijah Outland’s. Thus the Cedar Grove Meeting had its beginning. In June, 1868 the Monthly Meeting minutes read: “By receipt of an extract from our Quarterly Meeting we find this meeting is at liberty to grant the indulged meeting near Elijah Outland’s which meeting is to open on fifth day second of seventh month.”⁴³ Hence, the meeting was established. Overseers were appointed, these being William Brown, Aaron Parker, Robert Outland, Jesse Copeland, Sr., and William H. Elliott. The attention of the Rich Square Meeting was claimed in September, 1868 by “the subject of procuring a right and title of the land on which our meeting and schoolhouse is located near Elijah Outland’s.”⁴⁴ Elijah Outland, James W. Copeland, Eli C. Copeland, and John Peele were appointed to look into the matter and to report at a later meeting. This committee reported in August, 1869 that the deed to the lot on which the Cedar Grove Meeting House stood had been procured.

Following the establishment of the meeting at Cedar Grove, the Monthly Meeting was held alternately at Cedar Grove and Rich Square. The committee of overseers for Cedar Grove reported regularly to the Monthly Meeting. In July, 1870 they reported that the meeting had been “pretty well attended; and they believe it has been the cause of a great deal of good.”⁴⁵

The minutes of March, 1872 indicate that a Sabbath School had been opened and was in operation at Cedar Grove.

Cedar Grove school was in session about five months during a portion of spring and summer. Number of children enrolled ninety-one, averaged sixty. Number of teachers

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Rich Square Monthly Meeting of Men Friends, 1799-1830, II.

41 Rich Square Monthly Meeting of Men Friends, 1831-1873, III.

42 The wording here points toward holding a one-time meeting for worship in Murfreesboro.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

seven, one superintendent. The School was kept open near two hours each Sabbath by the superintendent or one of the teachers. Object lessons and blackboard exercises were confined to the gospel and texts were recited by the children bearing on the lesson. The fall term was kept up eight weeks with forty students. The exercises nearly as in summer. The winter term was kept open ten weeks with twenty-five students which has been quite interesting.⁴⁶

The Cedar Grove Meeting as heretofore discussed was an indulged meeting. In September, 1873 an extract was received from the Quarterly Meeting which granted

...the privilege of setting up a meeting for worship and a preparative meeting at Cedar Grove. Meetings for worship are to be held on first days and fifth except on fifth days of Quarterly and Monthly Meeting weeks. Preparative meetings are to be held on fifth days preceding the second seventh day of each month.⁴⁷

A committee was appointed to attend the opening of the Cedar Grove Meeting. Later this committee reported that the Cedar Grove Meeting was opened on October 9, 1873. As is obvious, very little specific information is given regarding the actual establishment.

For approximately twenty years the Meeting continued with only routine questions and concerns. The usual careful attention was granted to discipline and to the other influential [sic] issues dealt with a[t] length previously. Then the minutes of April, 1892 indicate that a Quarterly Meeting had been set up in the Rich Square-Cedar Grove area. There was a request that the Quarterly Meeting be held alternately at Rich Square and Cedar Grove. The committee appointed to investigate this reported in May that such an arrangement was approved by Friends of the Meetings.

By this time the question of paid ministry had become an issue. In June, 1892 a document was recorded which registered the feeling of the Rich Square Monthly Meeting concerning this question. This document indicated that those of this meeting thought that no tax should be proposed to pay for evangelical work. "In conclusion, we are convinced that this system is but a step into a hireling ministry; therefore we are conscientiously opposed to paying any part of said tax."⁴⁸

As the preceding item which dealt with a tax indicates, many of the members of the Rich Square Monthly Meeting were not willing to accept new, progressive policies. The very next major issue faced brought the separation of certain Friends from the Rich Square Monthly Meeting, hence from the North Carolina Yearly Meeting. The minutes of the 1902 Yearly Meeting state: "The 'Constitution and Discipline for the American Yearly Meetings of Friends' again receiving our consideration, was adopted, and goes into immediate effect."⁴⁹ This action fostered the following observation:

The adoption of the 'Uniform Discipline' by the North Carolina Yearly Meeting introduced principles of faith and modern practices which conservative members felt

46 Ibid.

47 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of Men Friends, 1873-1903, IV.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

were a departure from the doctrines and practices of early Friends.⁵⁰

Many of the members of the Rich Square Monthly Meeting were of this conservative group. Hence, there was a breach among the members.

The Yearly Meeting appointed a committee to work with the Rich Square problem. The report of this committee is included in the 1904 Yearly Meeting minutes. This report began thus: "The committee has given prayerful consideration to a question referred to us and have sought to proceed therein under divine guidance and in the spirit of love."⁵¹ This committee had requested that an adjourned session of the Rich Square Monthly Meeting be held near the time of the Quarterly Meeting. This request was refused, but a meeting was appointed at Cedar Grove on August 26. Herein "the matter of the Uniform Discipline was taken up and explained, the differences between the old and the new, or Uniform, discipline pointed out, as well as the scope and function of the Five-Years' Meeting."⁵² An earnest appeal was made to the Friends of Rich Square, requesting that they reconsider their position "and not allow the dividing spirit to have the upper hand."⁵³

The Quarterly Meeting convened shortly after the meeting of August 26. Here the question was again discussed.

The manner in which the discipline was made by means of representatives of all the Yearly Meetings in correspondence on the American Continent was referred to, and repeated considerations of the said discipline by our Yearly Meeting were mentioned.⁵⁴

"All the labor of love and earnest entreaty seemed to have little or no effect upon those Friends who were leaders in the separation."⁵⁵ These leaders called a second meeting which was to be a Quarterly Meeting. The reaction to this is expressed in a paper read in the Women's Meeting:

Inasmuch as some members of this Monthly Meeting have taken action contrary to the long-established usage of Friends, presuming to hold a Quarterly Meeting, and having proceeded out of harmony to the Yearly Meeting, we, as a committee, by appointment of the Yearly Meeting, hereby make this appeal to all the members of Rich Square Monthly Meeting to act in harmony with the Yearly Meeting and Quarterly Meeting to which it belongs.

This meeting was set up as a meeting for worship in 1753, and as a Monthly Meeting in 1760. It has ever since continued as a part of Eastern Quarter and North Carolina Yearly Meeting. North Carolina Yearly Meeting alone of all other Yearly Meetings has continued in unity without separation.

We appeal to you in the love of Christ who prayed that we might be one, that this spirit of discord and lack of unity may disappear from among you.

50 "Introduction", Rich Square Monthly Meeting of Friends, Northampton County, North Carolina.

51 Minutes of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1904-1913.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

To further this end, and by the authority vested in us as a committee, we hereby state that Rich Square Monthly Meeting is continued in harmony with the Society of Friends of North Carolina Yearly Meeting and all who are willing so to act in harmony with North Carolina Yearly Meeting are cordially invited to remain until the business of Rich Square Monthly Meeting is enacted. We sincerely hope that no one will wish to leave.⁵⁶

The Majority of the Rich Square members, however, withdrew their affiliation with the North Carolina Yearly Meeting. The statistical report included in the 1905 Yearly Meeting Minutes indicates that the Eastern Quarter lost a total of 176 members in the year of the separation. Of this number, 162 were lost by discontinuance of names. These are believed to be the separatists.

The Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes of December, 1903, disclosed the difficulties of separation:

There being some unsettled business between us and some other Friends, who have withdrawn from our meeting, the meeting appoints John B. Griffin, Elias Elliott, and T. P. Outland and also recommends the names of E. T. Snipes and W. H. Brown as being suitable Friends to serve on said committee; to meet some of the Friends who have seceded from us at some proper time and place, and try to compromise (if it can be done in a reasonable way) the question, where are the two meetings to be held in the future? If no reasonable compromise can be made, they are to act as they think best, and report to a future meeting.⁵⁷

The Yearly Meeting Committee previously mentioned had found after the withdrawal of certain Friends that both meeting houses, Rich Square and Cedar Grove, were in the hands of the separatists. "The committee. . . after careful consideration were united in judgment that a division of the property would be preferable to a lawsuit. . ."⁵⁸ In compliance with this, the committee appointed in December, 1903 made this report in January, 1904:

A compromise had been made, to the effect, that the Friends who have withdrawn from us, take the property at Cedar Grove and the Friends loyal to North Carolina Yearly Meeting take the Meeting property at Rich Square.⁵⁹

This was considered satisfactory. The committee, however, was to continue to settle business and make reports to the Meeting. The Friends who had withdrawn were to be allowed to use the west room of the Rich Square Meeting House if they wished.

A month after this report on the division of the property, Elias I. Elliott was appointed to get the deed for the lot on which the Rich Square Meeting House stood. This was to be obtained from E. P. Outland, a separatist. In March it was reported that the deed had been procured and turned over to the Trustees. All relations were ended after the September, 1904 action by the Rich Square Meeting: "It is the judgment of this meeting, that we inform the separatist Friends, that we wish for them to

56 Ibid.

57 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1903-1949.

58 Minutes of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1904-1913.

59 Rich Square Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1903-1949.

discontinue holding any meetings, at our meeting house at this place.”⁶⁰ Then in October, 1904 the separatists met with “like-minded” members of other Monthly Meetings and organized a new Yearly Meeting at Cedar Grove Meeting House in Woodland, North Carolina. This Meeting has been held every year since its organization.

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⁶⁰ Ibid.