

# **Cedar Grove Preparative Meeting of Friends**

**1868-1968**

**Mary Parker Littrell  
Seventh Month 21, 1968**

## **Memorable Bits and Pieces about Cedar Grove Friends Meeting**

*A paper read at Cedar Grove Meetinghouse by Mary Parker Littrell on Seventh Month 21<sup>st</sup>, 1968.*

Just a little more than eight years ago, many of us who are here today came together at this place to commemorate the bicentennial of Rich Square Monthly Meeting. Today we meet to observe another occasion – this time, the centennial of Cedar Grove Meeting. Perhaps some of you are puzzled at the order in which we observe these two occasions; so let me try to explain how it came about that we seem to have gone backward from two hundred to one hundred.

In the usual structure of Friends Meetings, where there are two or more Meetings in close proximity, these Meetings are designated as Preparative Meetings. These Preparative Meetings make up a Monthly Meeting; the Monthly Meetings make up a Quarterly Meeting within an area, and the Quarterly Meetings make up the Yearly Meeting. Now Rich Square Monthly Meeting *was* settled in 1760, and the Preparative Meetings which comprised the Monthly Meeting were located in Northampton, Hertford and Edgecombe counties. However, at that time there was no Preparative Meeting located at Cedar Grove; and it was not until one hundred and eight years later that Friends in this area took the first step in becoming a Preparative Meeting.

Since Rich Square Preparative Meeting was laid down in 1935, our Monthly Meeting and our Preparative Meeting have been made up of the same membership. So, in a sense, we are one and the same; but Cedar Grove Preparative Meeting has not been laid down, and we do carry on our business as Rich Square Monthly Meeting.

Let us look back now to the year 1868. Perhaps if we take a brief look at that period in North Carolina history and the history of the United States, we can put ourselves back in that time more easily. As you know, the War between the States had ended only three years before, and Andrew Johnson, a native of North Carolina, was President of the United States. The Southerners were experiencing the first terrible years of Reconstruction. In fact it was on Seventh Month the first, 1868, that North Carolina was readmitted to the Union, and on that day W. W. Holden became Governor of North Carolina. (Interestingly, but not directly related to our subject today, he was impeached and removed from office two years later.)

Though most Friends because of conscientious objection had refused to fight in the war, all these events had an important effect on their lives and activities, both civil and religious. Our forebears, amidst the strife of war and the problems of reconstruction, were diligent in their religious faith; and new meetings continued to be settled, like Cedar Grove Preparative Meeting.

So it was that in Fourth Month, 1868, Friends, meeting in a school house near the home of Elijah Outland, were united in requesting Rich Square Monthly Meeting to allow them to have an indulged Meeting. By the time the request had gone to Monthly Meeting, had been sent up to Quarterly Meeting, and had been acted upon and sent back to Monthly Meeting, it was Sixth Month. The authorized indulged Meeting met for the first time in Seventh Month. I would like to read now from the minutes taken from our Monthly Meeting records which show clearly how Cedar Grove Meeting was settled

From the Men's Minutes of Rich Square Monthly Meeting, Fourth Month, 1868:

The subject of setting up an indulged meeting near Elijah Outlands claiming the attention of this meeting Thomas C. Peele Thomes Peele Charles Britton Elias Elliott George H. Parker Henry Copeland sr & William C Outland are appointed to confer together with a similar committee of Womens friends & ascertain what unity friends have with the proposition and report to next meeting.

From the Women's Minutes of Fourth Month, 1868:

. . . Ann Copeland, Sarah Elliott, Elizabeth P. Peele, Martha R. Outland, Deborah A. Peele are appointed with a similar committee of Men friends to know of the unity members have there with & report to next Meeting.

From the Women's Minutes of Fifth Month, 1868:

The committee appointed in last month to enquire in the unity members had respecting an indulged Meeting in the neighborhood of Elijah Outland's report they find nothing to hinder as such the proposition is referred to Quarterly Meeting and the Clerk is directed to assign a copy of the said minutes.

The Men's Minutes read much the same.

From the Women's Minutes of Sixth Month, 1868: An extract from our last Meeting was referred to the Quarterly Meeting which was endorsed and is as follows The written Extract of a minute was received and read in this Meeting and upon a consideration it was referred back to the Monthly Meeting believing that said Meeting had full jurisdiction of the matter herein attended to there was some expression of encouragement and Satisfaction in the proposition. This endorsement is made by direction of the Meeting Extracted from the Minutes of Eastern Quarterly Meeting of Friends held at Piney Woods Perquimmons Co N C 6th Mo 30, 1868

Josiah Nicholson  
Hezekiah E Copeland  
Clerks

This Meeting agrees to grant said Meeting which is to be Opened on fifth day Seckond of Seventh Month next at eleven o'clock by the named friends Elizabeth P. Peele Hannah I Copeland Jane Brown Judith A Parker Deborah A Peele and Anne Copeland who are to have the opening and oversight of said Meeting with a similar committee of men friends. The said Meeting is to be held and report in 6th Mo next [1869]. The said Meeting is to be held on first and fifth days except preparative and Monthly Meetings in granting the request we hope a blessing may rest upon it

From the Men's Minutes of Sixth Month:

. . . William Brown Aaron Parker Robert Outland Jesse Copeland Henry Copeland Sen and William H. Elliott are appointed with a similar committee of Women's Friends who are to have the oversight of said meeting & report in the 6th mo next.

While we are quoting from the records of Rich Square Monthly Meeting, I would also like to quote something which holds other interest for us and took place during 1868:

From the Men's Minutes of Third Month, 1868:

Albert W. Brown and Lydia J. Parker informed this Meeting in writing that they intended marriage with each other if permitted Elijah Outland Jesse Copeland are appointed to make a necessary inquiry relative to other marriage engagements and report to next Meeting.

Albert Saunders & Julia Parker informed this Meeting in writing that they intended marriage with each other if permitted & he is expected to produce to our next Meeting a certificate setting forth his rite of membership & clearness relative to other marriage engagements.

To attend the Albert Brown and Lydia Parker marriage, the following were appointed: Thomas C. Peele, Jordan Baugham, Martha Baugham, and Elizabeth Peele. To attend the Albert Saunders and Julia Parker marriage, the following were appointed: William Brown, George H. Parker, Jane Brown, and Sarah Outland. In the minutes we find that "they attended thereto and it was accomplished to good order," in each case. Today there is one survivor of the children born to the union of Albert W. Brown and Lydia J. Parker: Margaret Brown Taylor, who lives near Westtown, Pennsylvania. The other couple referred to in the minutes were the parents of Mary J. Peele, a long and valued member of our Meeting, who died in 1962.

Another minute of interest, but five years later, reminds us that inflation had not set in at this time. It is taken from the Men's Minutes of Third Month, 1873:

Elijah Outland produced an acct for keeping the Meetg house at Cedar Grove the last year to the amt of four dollars which the Meetg accepts and directs the treasure to pay

Now let us get back to the progress being made in becoming a Preparative Meeting. When the indulged Meeting was apparently firmly established and continued "to keep to the honor of the society," the next step was to become a Preparative Meeting of Rich Square Monthly Meeting. The request was first made in Fifth Month, 1873, but was turned down because all was not in order. This fact is mentioned here because we feel that it is important to remember that Friends have always attended diligently and carefully to matters of discipline, and records have been kept to the best of the ability of clerks. In this case, the indulged Meeting did get things in order, and the next request was granted by the Quarterly Meeting in Eighth Month, 1873. A Meeting for worship and a Preparative Meeting were approved.

During the years between 1868 and 1873, Monthly Meeting was held often at Cedar Grove, even as early as Eleventh Month, 1868, at the school house already referred to. But by First Month, 1869, a meeting house had been built, and Monthly Meeting convened here First Month the 16<sup>th</sup>, 1869.

The right and title of the land where Cedar Grove Meeting- House stands was donated as a gift by Cornelius and Sarah Outland "for consideration of the love we the said Cornelius Outland and his

land of "3 Acres and 8 Rods More or less" is to belong to Friends as long as it is used as a site for a Meeting House.

As we look around us today and observe the structure which we call the meeting house at Cedar Grove, it is difficult for some to envision or know what it was once like. According to our records, the building was first repaired in 1900. Here is another example of the deliberateness and slowness with which Friends conduct their business. The committee to see about the repairs was appointed in Seventh Month, 1897, but it was not ready to make a report until Eighth Month, 1900. Among the repairs, in addition to routine things, a porch was built, and some carpet was laid. The bill for the work was \$125.32.

Since that time, many changes have taken place; but there are some things which many of us especially remember as we reminisce. We remember the shutters which were used to make it possible for men and women to hold separate meetings for business, as was the custom; and that at times when there were matters which required joint action, the shutters were raised. The practice of conducting separate meetings was discontinued in 1928. We remember the wood stove with its decorative bunches of grapes, and most of us admit to having counted the grapes more than once when we were children. Many of the older members recall when they always went down to the spring to get a cool drink of water between First Day School and Meeting. Friends are admonished in the Advices to be kind to all God's creatures, even toward the brute creation. As evidence of this concern, shelters were built during horse-and-buggy days on the Meeting House grounds to take care of the horses, and some of our members remember these structures. Once our gallery had only one long bench on each side of the divider; today it has a considerably altered appearance.

Certainly in addition to the physical things, and more importantly, we remember the names of Friends who have been so much a part of the Meeting that their spirits seem to hover around us, names too numerous to mention individually, lest some be omitted, but names that have not only been an important part of Cedar Grove Meeting, but also an important influence in the community. Yes, when we try to recall something of the past one hundred years in relation to this Meeting, we can call the roll of Baughams, Brittons, Browns, Copelands, Elliotts, Futrells, Griffins, Outlands, Parkers, and Peeles; and most of us will be related to one name or another, or more than one. If we glance at our roll today, however, we find names which are different, such as Boyd, Heath, Hodgkin, Jenkins, and Reece; and names carried by younger members as a result of marriage out of the Meeting, such as Harvin, Littrell, Pruden, and Sams. But the old must be refurbished with the new, or else we perish!

I have not tried to give you a history, but just enough to show how Cedar Grove Friends Meeting had its beginning, followed by a few points of reminiscence. Today, in the comfort of our air-conditioned Meeting House, with its cushioned benches, and to the right and left, our comfortable and functional library and Sabbath School rooms, we hope and we think we have followed the admonition of Friends to adhere to simplicity. We admit to a degree of pride, not so much in anything that we have done, but in the heritage which is ours. I should like to close with the same words which we used in concluding the history of Rich Square Monthly Meeting: "We earnestly desire that we may hold fast to that which is true in order that we in turn may leave for the generations yet to come principles as profound and sure as those which have been bequeathed to us."