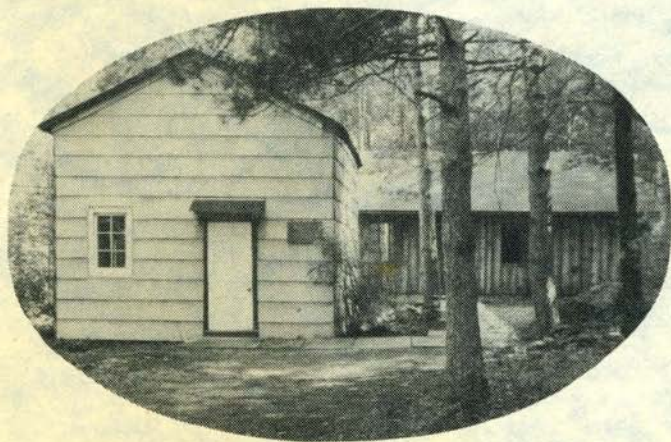
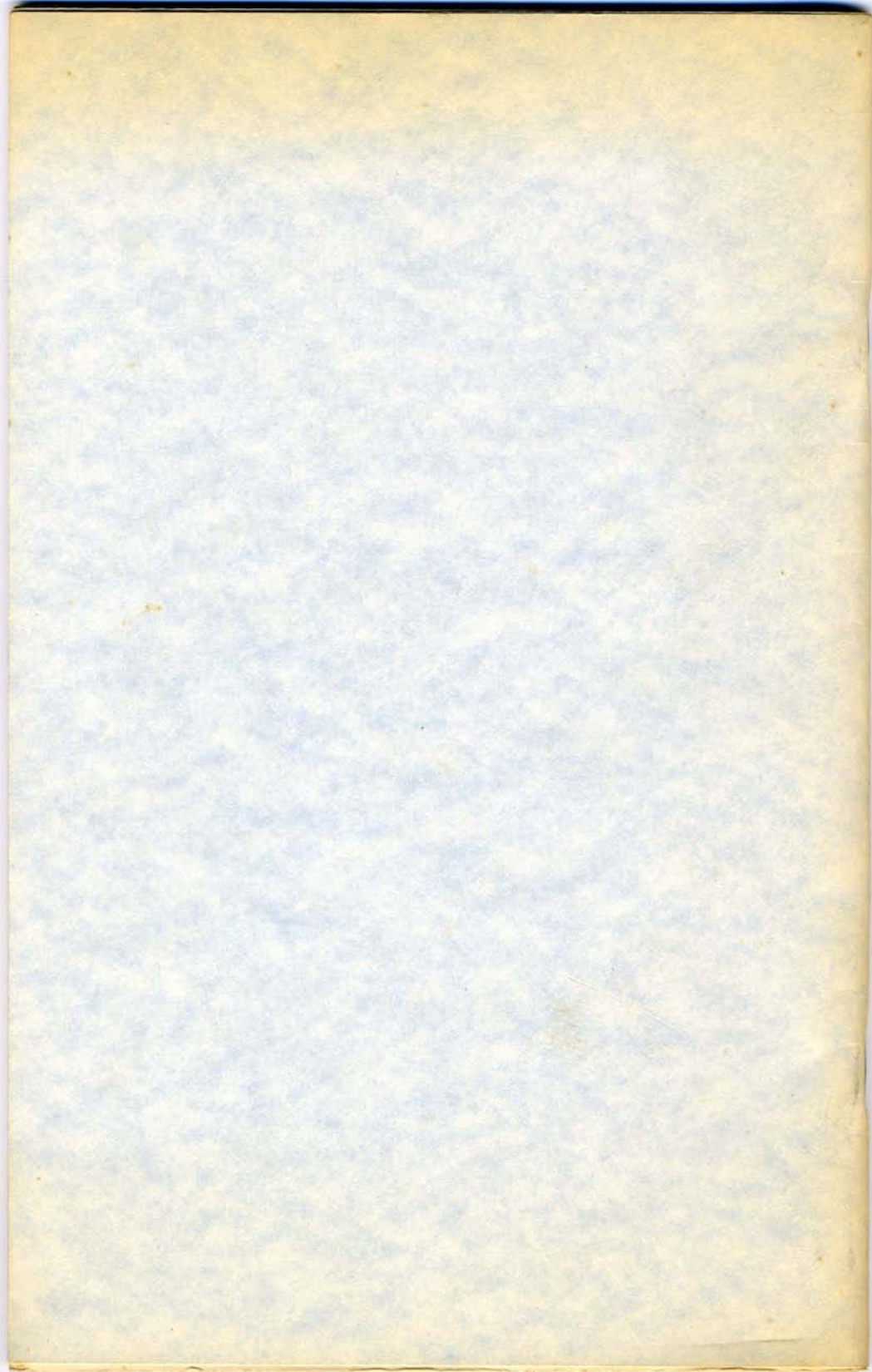


A SHORT HISTORY
of
OSWEGO MONTHLY MEETING



Bulls Head Meeting House



A SHORT HISTORY

Of

OSWEGO MONTHLY MEETING

*Its Name Recently Changed
to
Bulls Head-Oswego Monthly Meeting*

by

Alson D. Van Wagner

1986

Bulls Head-Oswego Monthly Meeting
Clinton Corners, New York

FOREWORD

This piece was written in response to the request, several years ago, by members of Bulls Head-Oswego Monthly Meeting, that I write a history of the meeting. In writing it I have tried to keep in mind those things that these Friends wanted and needed to know about our past in order to build for the future. I have not aimed to produce a scholarly work that might find its way into a local history periodical or year-book. Accordingly there is no bibliography or endnotes.

With this in mind, note that the extent of treatment given to each period increases as the present is approached. Perhaps the recounting of the construction of the new building, only recently completed, is more lengthy than its importance merits. It did seem that it was a story that should be put down somewhere.

For persons wanting a broader treatment of the early history of Quakers in Dutchess County there is the thesis of Dell Upton entitled A History of the Quakers in Dutchess County, New York -- 1728-1828. Bound photocopies of this work are in the libraries of the Bulls Head and Poughkeepsie meetings as well as in the Haviland Records Room in New York City. I am heavily indebted to it. I have read or scanned all of the men's minutes of Oswego Monthly Meeting that are known to exist for the period 1799-1887 and of the joint meeting since then.

A number of persons have assisted in my research and writing. Irene H. Van Wagner, Elizabeth H. Moger, Henry A. Wheeler, Elizabeth C. Smyth, and George F. Van Wagner must be mentioned. The local ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints have made their reading room available for me to read the older minutes which are on microfilm.

The Bulls Head-Oswego Meeting on Ministry and Counsel requested the Monthly Meeting to have this short history reproduced and made available.

9th of 2nd Mo. 1986

Alson D. Van Wagner

THE QUAKERS COME TO DUTCHESS

Dutchess County was not opened to settlement until about 1700. The first settlers were a mixed group of Dutch, largely from the Kingston area, Palatine Germans from present-day Columbia County to the north, and English from New York City and New England. Coming soon after were Quakers from New England and from settlements on Long Island. While the other groups had originally settled along the Hudson River the Quakers first entered the "Oblong", a one and three-quarter mile wide strip along the Connecticut border just east of present-day Pawling.

Who were these Quakers, or Friends, settling into a Dutchess County that was just beginning to be developed into farms and settlements? They were overwhelmingly New Englanders. Some of them were from Long Island, but these families too had come from New England, perhaps 70 to 100 years earlier. More came directly from Rhode Island, eastern Massachusetts and, a little later, from Nantucket Island. Largely these Quakers were not descendants of English Quakers but from families that had accepted the message of George Fox and his early enthusiastic followers who had carried their message to America in the first days of the religious movement. While the other settlers along the Hudson were vainly beseeching their religious bodies to send them pastors from Holland or England the Quakers had no such problem. Even the smallest settlement soon was allowed an indulged meeting for worship to which there were frequent visits by travelling lay ministers. There were no sacred rites that had to be conducted by a priest or pastor and even marriages required neither pastor nor judge. This "do-it-yourself" religion functioned well in these communities where nearly everyone was Quaker.

The inflow started about 1728 but was quite rapid by 1740. In 1742 there were recognized meetings for worship and business at both the Oblong on Quaker Hill and in the Nine Partners grant near present-day Millbrook. The movement continued vigorously enough in the whole area that in 1750 another meeting for worship

was authorized by the supervising monthly meeting to be held at Oswego, near present-day Moores Mills.

At this point it may be well to deal with the name "Oswego" as almost every new acquaintance of our meeting questions it. We do not really know who first applied the name, obviously Indian in origin, to the central area of Dutchess County comprising the upper drainage area of the Sprout Creek. The meaning of the Indian words that were the basis of "Swego" or "Oswego" used by the European settlers is likewise unknown.

Probably it was not the same as the basis for the name of the town and river at the eastern end of Lake Ontario. The name was there before the Quakers came but the hamlet that grew up around their settlement and meeting house was called Oswego Village and later had its own post office until Rural Free Delivery was established.

Back to the newly settled Quakers at Oswego -- they continued to be joined by others until in 1758 the group was authorized to hold its own business meeting to prepare matters to be presented at the monthly meetings for business held alternately at Oblong and Nine Partners. In 1757 they were deeded a two-acre plot of land by the owners of the Beekman Patent from whom the Quaker settlers had only leaseholds for their own small farms. On this a meeting house was erected with financial assistance from the monthly meeting. There is reference in the Oblong Monthly Meeting minutes to this house being "near the spot where the other was burnt" so we can assume there had been an earlier building where meetings for worship were held. By the mid '80s the 1757 building was proving inadequate and in need of repairs. Finally approval and financial help came from the Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting and our present old meeting house was built in 1790. Aside from the installation of a heating system, a 19th century porch, and some paint and repairs the old house is probably much the same as when built.

Quaker settlers continued flooding into Dutchess until after 1800. Nearby meetings for worship were allowed at Poughquag in 1771, at Beekman in 1803, at Chestnut Ridge in 1790, and at West Branch in 1792. Present-day names of the locations of these discontinued

meetings are respectively; Gardner Hollow, Arthursburg, Chestnut Ridge, and Porter's farm near the intersection of the Taconic Parkway and Mountain Road. When the request of Oswego Friends to have their own monthly meeting was finally granted in 1799 it included the preparative meeting at Oswego and the group at West Branch.

Still more immigrants kept coming and some of the original settlers were attracted to business opportunities in the western half of the county. Meetings for worship were allowed in Pleasant Valley in 1803 and in Poughkeepsie in 1811. These also were under Oswego Monthly Meeting. Poughquag Preparative Meeting was transferred from Oblong to Oswego in 1803. So by 1820 Oswego Monthly Meeting comprised six preparative or local meetings; Oswego, Beekman, West Branch, Poughquag, Pleasant Valley, and Poughkeepsie. In addition to the 1790 meeting house at Oswego the monthly meeting then had the Poughquag meeting house of 1774, the West Branch house of 1796, the Beekman house of 1809, the Pleasant Valley house of 1810, and the new house of 1820 at Poughkeepsie. The houses at Pleasant Valley, Beekman, and Oswego still stand. The one at Pleasant Valley is the easterly end of the present Grange Hall. The house at Beekman also served as a Grange hall for a number of years but is now privately owned and in very poor condition.

Again we perhaps should digress to explain to the new student of Quaker history the various groups of Friends that are all called "meetings". The basic unit in Quaker organization is the "Monthly Meeting"; it can hold property, it can determine conditions of membership, it can accept and expel members, and it can conduct and certify marriages. Usually two or more monthly meetings in an area are associated as a "Quarterly Meeting" or a "Half Year's Meeting". The largest unit of Quakers acting under one Discipline -- somewhat like a charter or constitution -- is a "Yearly Meeting". Today New York Yearly Meeting includes all the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings in New York State and parts of New Jersey, Connecticut, and Vermont.

In this present account frequent reference has been made to "Preparative Meetings". In the practice of the 18th and early 19th century it was usual for each

stable local group or congregation to be granted Preparative Meeting status and for two or more such groups to constitute a Monthly Meeting. Business of the Monthly Meeting was conducted by the representatives who had been appointed by the several Preparative Meetings in their sessions prior to those of the Monthly Meeting. In the 20th century the Preparative Meeting organization is little used. Today nearly every stable local group of any practical size has Monthly Meeting status.

One other kind of "meeting", the "Allowed" or "Indulged", is merely a group that has been authorized by a monthly or higher meeting to hold a meeting for worship. Formerly such allowance would state just where and at what hour and dates such meetings were to be held.

From the above we see that a history of Oswego Monthly Meeting has to deal with somewhat more than just a quaint old building in the Town of Union Vale and the people in that neighborhood. The list of "Funds" reported on periodically by the Meeting's treasurer contains some reminders of its history and heritage -- of its expansion and contraction.

THE QUAKERS SETTLE IN

While in the early years of the Meeting nearly every family owned a farm, many men, and a few women, also had a trade or profession that would occasion moving from the limits of one meeting to another. And Dutchess County Friends were enticed by new lands opening up to the north and west. When a person moved one also moved one's meeting affiliation. A Quaker was supposed to obtain concurrence of the Monthly Meeting in making the move and approval was more readily given if the move was to a community near an established meeting. If no such meeting existed the newly moved family would find other Quakers or interested families and request their Monthly Meeting to allow a meeting for worship which it was hoped would become a Preparative Meeting. In this way Dutchess County meetings, particularly Nine Partners Monthly Meeting, had attached to them Preparative Meetings in Orange, Ulster, Columbia, Greene, Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Washington, Warren, and Saratoga counties and in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Canada. Many of these meetings later became attached to Monthly Meetings closer

by. Oswego, not established as a Monthly Meeting until 1799, had none of these distant subordinate meetings but many members did move on to the north and west. One interesting case is that of Rufus Hall, the Quaker minister and journal writer, whose journal account is the basis of the widely reproduced painting of the Quaker meeting attended by a quiet party of marauding Indians. Rufus had spent his impoverished youth in Oswego but moved on to Saratoga for the Indian encounter.

In spite of the large number of Friends moving out there were even more moving in. In the period from 1770 to 1790 many Westchester County Quakers were trying to get away from the harassment by both Loyalist and Patriot raiders who scorched that middle ground. Others came from Long Island or Nantucket where their livelihood was cut off by British blockade. While Friends tried to be neutral some were viewed as Loyalist by the Patriots when they refused to sign the Articles of Association. Not only were their livestock and tools confiscated but some were dispossessed of their farms. Some of these few unfortunates left for Canadian provinces at the close of the Revolution. But overall Dutchess Quaker communities continued to fill up until well after 1800. The high point of their growth was reached between 1810 and 1820.

As previously mentioned, the Quakers were not exclusively farmers. At Oswego and Pleasant Valley there were mills operated by water power. Quaker mill owners at Oswego were the Moores and the Bulls; at Pleasant Valley were the Deans and the Farringtons. Poughkeepsie Friends were an increasing group, some having moved their businesses and small manufacturies from present-day Millbrook area to the larger business center. When in the Millbrook area they were members of Nine Partners Monthly Meeting. When they moved to Poughkeepsie they became members of Oswego Monthly Meeting. In addition to merchants, manufacturers, and craftsmen there were school teachers and at least one medical doctor.

The one medical doctor of whom I am aware played a most important part in the history of Oswego and is possibly the most important personage ever associated with it. His name was Shadrach Ricketson. Shadrach was born in the Friends community at Oblong but did not enjoy the privilege of a birthright Friend because his father

had been disowned by the Society for the offense of marrying a non-Friend. When he was 23 years old in 1789 Shadrach was granted his request to become a member. For the next twenty-five years, apparently in relation to his training and practice as a doctor, he moved frequently shifting his membership from Oblong to Creek, to New York, to Troy, and to Oswego in 1814. In 1806 he published the first American book on hygiene and preventive medicine with the descriptive title:

Means of Preserving Health and Preventing Disease:
Founded principally on Attention to Air and Climate,
Drink, Food, Sleep, Exercise, Clothing, Passions of the
Mind, the Retentions and Excretions. In addition to other medical writings he had correspondence with the famous Rhode Island Quaker philanthropist Moses Brown concerning promotion of vaccination for small pox. The publication of his work which modern Quakers are most apt to encounter is the Map of the Meetings constituting New York Yearly Meeting of Friends which was published in 1821. For many members of Oswego Monthly Meeting he is most remembered for the legacy he left Oblong, Nine Partners, and Oswego meetings on his death in 1839. The Ricketson Education Fund has assisted scores of Friends children in getting their education. The full legacy is now in the care of Bulls Head-Oswego Monthly Meeting, the Oblong and Nine Partners meetings having been incorporated into this meeting in the intervening years.

It is tempting for students of Quaker history to linger over this brief Golden Era during the first quarter of the 19th century but Quaker commitment to truth forces us to move on. No longer subjected to religious persecution by the established churches of England and New England and becoming recognized as citizens so orderly and useful that their refusal to share in military duty was reluctantly tolerated the Quakers should have been in a position to grow and prosper. But, instead they now brought on themselves a cataclysm from which they have yet to recover.

THE TRAGIC SEPARATION

The Separation of 1828 is the event that forever changed Quakerism in Dutchess County and in New York Yearly Meeting. 1828 is only the year in which developments climaxed that had been building up for many

years. Some of the principal actors in the tragedy were strongly associated with this area. Hannah Barnard of Hudson had been a key figure of an earlier, somewhat similar separation in Ireland and England. Another important person in that event, and her opponent, was David Sands of Cornwall. Elias Hicks, the Long Island farmer whose name was attached by others to one of the contending groups of 1828, was a frequent visitor to Dutchess County partly from his interest in the Friends Boarding School at Nine Partners. The large school building was just east of the 1780 brick meeting house that, at this writing, still stands in South Millbrook.

Probably no event affecting such a relatively few people has ever generated so much literature as this division of the Society of Friends in the yearly meetings of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and to a lesser extent elsewhere. A simple statement as to the causes and key issues is certain to encounter immediate rebuttal. Here is my audacious attempt: the Separation came about because a considerable group of ministers and elders felt it necessary for Friends to declare certain beliefs about the nature of the Bible, the nature of Jesus Christ, and the role of the Inner Light, while the larger group of Friends denied the need of a declaration or the right of the ministers and elders to require one. Elias Hicks had made statements regarded as unorthodox and dangerous by many. He was a popular speaker, attracting large audiences of Friends and non-Friends. English Friends ministers, cleansed of the more liberal elements at the time of the Barnard affair, attempted to strengthen the more orthodox group by travelling and speaking widely in America. That there was a real threat to traditional Christian or even Quaker held beliefs was to be borne out by developments subsequent to the Separation. In any event each side strongly felt the correctness of their own stand and finally were unable to adjust their differences within one fellowship. Similar differences and stresses have affected Christians and Quakers from the earliest times and continue today.

Unfortunately we can only speculate as to much that went on among Oswego Monthly Meeting Friends prior to the meeting for business in June 1828. The book of minutes that began in 1st Month 1816 has been lost -- we have only the account of the Hicksite faction from the

meeting when the Orthodox group walked out on 18th of 6th Month 1828 until the latter group began their new minute book in 1835. Of course, then as now, many of the most important events and discussions do not appear in Minutes. If ever the missing minute book is found we may be disappointed by how little it reveals of what really went on.

The Minutes of meeting for business that was held in Poughkeepsie on 18th of 6th Month 1828, as recorded in the Minute Book of the faction that retained control of the meeting, record:

"The clerk took his seat at the table and read a minute opening the meeting, then rose and informed the meeting that the Books were not present, and offered for a reason that he had understood there was a division of the Monthly Meeting anticipated; and that in order to give both parties an equal chance, the Books were placed where they would be produced, provided the meeting would come under certain restrictions, . . . He was informed by Friends, they knew of no division of the Monthly Meeting to take place; . . ."

The body of the meeting proceeded to appoint a clerk-of-the-day to sit beside the clerk's desk. After some altercations the regular clerk, together with a few members and visiting Friends, withdrew. To replace him the meeting turned to Shadrach Ricketson, who had at one time served as clerk of the Creek Monthly Meeting, to serve for a year. This faction was the one dubbed Hicksite and was the Oswego Monthly Meeting of which Bulls Head-Oswego Monthly Meeting is the descendant. The group that withdrew with the old clerk became the Oswego Monthly Meeting of which Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting is the descendant. Unfortunately the records of the latter group, before 1835, are unavailable to see how it viewed that tumultuous meeting. We must surmise that the minutes of the meeting were recorded in the Book the old clerk refused to surrender, the book probably completed in 1834 and then lost.

GATHERING UP THE PIECES

The larger Monthly Meeting continued with the Preparative Meetings of Oswego, Poughquag, West Branch,

Pleasant Valley, and Poughkeepsie. The Orthodox meeting was able to retain the Preparative Meeting at Beekman and set up new Preparative Meetings at Poughkeepsie and Oswego. The Orthodox Friends at Oswego were few and after a number of years joined with the Beekman group. Thus we had two Monthly Meetings with the same name, each claiming to be the true continuation of the meeting established in 1799. The only meeting house retained by the Orthodox was that at Beekman which was rebuilt in 1838. A new house was built in Poughkeepsie, which was replaced in 1863, and the latter replaced in 1927. I find no record of the Orthodox group at Oswego acquiring a meeting house -- probably they met in a Congdon home until the worship group was finally discontinued in 1870.

One problem of the pretense of each Monthly Meeting being the one true successor of the pre-1828 meeting was that of membership. While both Yearly Meetings asked the Monthly Meetings to make a determination of those on each side the Dutchess County Hicksite meetings generally ignored the instruction. The Oswego Orthodox Monthly Meeting was much more diligent. Their minutes from 1835 to 1840 were largely occupied with the lengthy procedure of disownment. Disownment was most often for attending the Hicksite meetings. In 1840 they cleaned the slate by disowning 76 adults at one time without the lengthy procedure of committee visitation and the right of appeal. For now I leave the history of the Oswego Monthly Meeting (Orthodox) which became Poughkeepsie Monthly Meeting in 1871.

Aside from answers to the Queries there are few items appearing in the Minutes of Oswego Monthly Meeting (Hicksite). In late 1834 the Poughquag Friends asked to build a new meeting house. In January 1835 the request was granted for a building, 26 x 36 ft and one story high, which was completed by September and located in the Clove Valley, some distance from the old house and burying ground in Gardner Hollow. There were some instances of expulsion of members for marrying non-Friends, although if the offender expressed a desire to retain membership it might be granted. Other disciplinary action was taken for not paying debts, yielding to military demands, attending places of diversion, and other breaches of good Quaker conduct. There was only one expulsion for profession or

non-profession of religious belief. Friends were frequently asked for money for such things as aiding the Indians, relief of the poor in New York City, helping build meeting houses and horse sheds, and assisting Friends who had property confiscated because of refusal to participate in militia training.

As mentioned above responses to the Queries -- questions listed in the Discipline to remind Friends of their religious and moral obligations -- occupied much of the Minutes. Responses to some of the Queries were made in First, Seventh, and Tenth Months but a response to all the Queries plus some additional questions were entered in Fourth Month. This latter report served as a State of the Society report which was transmitted through the Quarterly Meeting to the Yearly Meeting. One of the additional questions was as to whether schooling under care of Friends teachers with suitable schoolbooks was being provided by the meeting. Year after year Oswego reported "no school has been taught agreeably to the Direction of the Yearly Meeting the past year."

The principal loss of property to the Orthodox suffered by the Hicksites at the time of the Separation was the Yearly Meeting Boarding School at Nine Partners. While some of the Hicksite Friends continued to attend the school it was with considerable misgivings. Jacob and Deborah Willetts, who had given outstanding leadership in the school's early history, had established their own private school near the Nine Partners Meeting House. Although the Willetts were active Hicksites the Friends apparently desired a school under their own control. Unable to establish schools at the local level Oswego finally proposed in 2nd Month 1843 that the Quarterly Meeting establish a school. In 3rd Month the Monthly Meeting appointed a committee to look into the matter. In 7th Month the committee reported an outfitted building would cost \$7000 and the Meeting appointed a committee to raise the money. Apparently they failed because in 1845 the Quarterly Meeting asked the Meeting to see how much could be raised. In November the committee reported it could raise only \$410. In spite of the shortfall in raising money a school for girls and small boys was started and in the next year the school was for both boys and girls.

This new school was built on property adjoining the west side of the Oswego Meeting House property. Like schoolboys (and possibly schoolgirls) everywhere they left their initials behind -- some of them in the benches of our old meeting house where they doubtless sometimes attended meetings for worship on First Day and in the middle of the week. The Quarterly Meeting did not directly operate the school but apparently leased to several different operators. Amy Drury, who had previously taught in the school, became principal in 1869 and purchased the property in 1871. In 1878 she sold it back to the Quarterly Meeting. The school, now called the Moores Mills Institute, continued through most of the 1880's under several lessees and closed. Meanwhile the Orthodox had moved their school to the middle of New York State and the school at Nine Partners ceased.

LONG YEARS OF DECLINE

Perhaps the disappointing response to the solicitation of funds to start the boarding school should have been taken as a dire prediction of what was happening to Friends in Dutchess County and in Oswego Monthly Meeting. At that time (1844) there were still five active preparative meetings in Oswego. In 1849 the West Branch group asked to be discontinued, which they were with the remaining membership divided up between Oswego and Pleasant Valley. The meeting house and grounds, except for the burial grounds, were sold. In another twenty-five years, 1874, the meeting of Poughquag was discontinued and the 1835 meeting house in the Clove Valley sold. These meetings had never been large but the situation of Pleasant Valley was more startling.

In 1850, with the recent addition of some West Branch Friends, Pleasant Valley was the largest preparative meeting in the monthly meeting. As was the custom from 1828 until well into the 20th century the monthly business meetings of Oswego Monthly Meeting were being held alternately at Oswego and Poughkeepsie. In conformity to the logic of numbers Pleasant Valley Friends proposed, and the Monthly Meeting approved, holding a third of the meetings at Pleasant Valley. The Quarterly Meeting refused the change. Perhaps it had fore-knowledge as by 1863 Pleasant Valley was only half the size of Poughkeepsie. Some of this relative change

was due to country Friends moving into the city. More of the change was doubtless due to problems at Pleasant Valley. Monthly meeting minutes refer several times to friction in the Valley and a couple of committees were appointed to investigate and correct the problems. One problem seems to have been a particular person whose "communications . . . have a tendency to take off the Solemnity of our religious meetings." He was finally disowned. Whether for that, or other reasons, by 1880 the Pleasant Valley Preparative Meeting was failing to send representatives to Monthly Meeting. By its own request Pleasant Valley was discontinued in 1881.

The situation at Poughkeepsie was less discouraging than in the country meetings. While few non-Friends were being added to the membership, transfers from the country meetings of Oswego as well as from Nine Partners, Creek, Stanford, and Oblong meetings and from elsewhere about balanced losses by death and transfers out of the meeting. Although the Poughkeepsie Friends proposed building a new meeting house in 1840 to replace the 1820 structure, no action was taken. The next year they did, after an exchange of property, move the old house around so that it faced quiet LaFayette Place instead of busy Washington Street. Judging by allocation of responsibility for raising the annual Quota for support of the Yearly Meeting, two-thirds of the members of the Monthly Meeting were in Poughkeepsie. When an opportunity came in 1893 to sell a part of the property and the old meeting house for a good price the Meeting decided to do so. The old house was moved to again face Washington Street and proceeds of the sale enabled building a new meeting house of brick facing LaFayette Place. This was completed in 1894.

Today we may question Friends' judgment of 1893 to build a new building in face of the long period of steady, rapid decline in numbers. Two factors may have entered into this rather optimistic decision. First, it was a period of church building and expansion. The Orthodox Friends had: built a new house in Poughkeepsie in 1863, which was enlarged in 1889; built a new house at Clinton Corners in 1890; rebuilt their house at Stanfordville in 1892; and acquired a new house at Millbrook in 1882. Secondly, there were signs of new life and growth among Hicksite Friends nationwide. James M. DeGarmo, who

had been released from membership in Oswego Monthly Meeting in 1863 to join the Episcopalians, noted these hopeful signs in his book, The Hicksite Quakers and their Doctrines, published in 1897. The hopes there may have been in 1893 were not fulfilled as we find that in February 1911 it was proposed to change "Poughkeepsie First-day meeting to an Executive Meeting". This is confusing language but I believe it meant that regular First Day meetings were no longer being held at LaFayette Place.

At this point we might assess some of the reasons for the precipitous decline in membership of the Monthly Meeting from 449 in 1829 to 62 (of whom 20 were non-resident) in 1911. A reason frequently given, for which there is much basis, is that the Quakers of Dutchess County continued to emigrate to the West or to New York City. But much the same emigration took place among the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and others of the area and their numbers increased in the same period. The Orthodox Quakers experienced a decline parallel to that of the Hicksites up until about 1870 but then they reversed that trend. By 1911 there were thriving Orthodox Quaker meetings that were beginning to call themselves "churches" in Clinton Corners and Poughkeepsie. Smaller groups at Millbrook and Stanfordville were at least holding their own. A major difference that developed between the Orthodox and Hicksite groups was the institution of "General Meetings", a Quaker euphemism for "revival meetings", by the former group in the '80's. This was soon followed by resident ministers assuming pastoral services to the old members and to the new ones brought in following the general meetings. Additionally the Orthodox instituted Bible Schools, or First Day Schools, by the 1850's while the Hicksites did not do so until the 1880's. From the Minutes we gather that frequently these schools were operating long before they were taken under the care of a Preparative or Monthly Meeting.

More so than today in 1985, 19th Century Friends were dependent on recognized ministers for the spoken ministry. If no minister was present the silent waiting was frequently unbroken in meeting-for-worship. Oswego Meeting had a small number of such ministers. In this entire period, 1828 to 1911, I find only nine; Rachel Barker, Elizabeth Haviland, Alfred H. Moore, John Wine,

Timothy Farrington, John D. Wright, Alexander J. Coffin, Justice Wright and LaVergne F. Gardner. Often one or more of this small group would be away visiting other meetings, and, of course, until 1880 they were distributed among three, or more, regular meetings-for-worship. In the early days of the meeting there were frequent visits of travelling ministers but in this period we find relatively few mentioned in the Minutes. There may have been some others who attended First Day meeting but I find only a dozen who are noted as attending meeting-for-business in the period 1854 through 1890. Unlike the Orthodox who had visitors from London, New England, Philadelphia, Baltimore, North Carolina, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Canada the Hicksites had only infrequent visits from Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Genesee (Canada). Increasingly members and their children went off to other religious bodies or ceased any religious affiliation altogether. Indeed rare were requests to join Friends.

Before the Civil War both branches were notorious for disowning members for a variety of reasons, principal of which was marrying someone not a member of their branch of Friends. Other bases of disownment were failure to meet business obligations, not attending meetings, attending diversions (such as horse races), and drunkenness. Oswego disowned one member for having a piano in his house and, as noted previously, one for being disruptive in meetings. The actual number of these disownments was not great but the threat doubtless was important in causing requests for release from membership and the falling away from attendance. Two young men from the Poughkeepsie Orthodox meeting were disowned for enlisting in the Civil War. The Hicksite Minutes of 1863 record, in response to the 7th Query, "Clear of bearing arms or complying with military requisitions Except that friends have generally paid what is called the bounty tax." After the Civil War I find no disownments from Oswego for any cause -- on rare occasions names would be deleted whose owners could not be located.

When a member of the Hicksite branch desired to join with another religious body he, or she, would properly ask for a "release of the rights of membership". Often this formality would be ignored and the meeting would take the name off the membership roll when the fact

was discovered. By the latter half of the 19th century an Orthodox Friend could ask for a letter from the monthly meeting that would be accepted by many of the Protestant denominations in accepting the Friend into their membership.

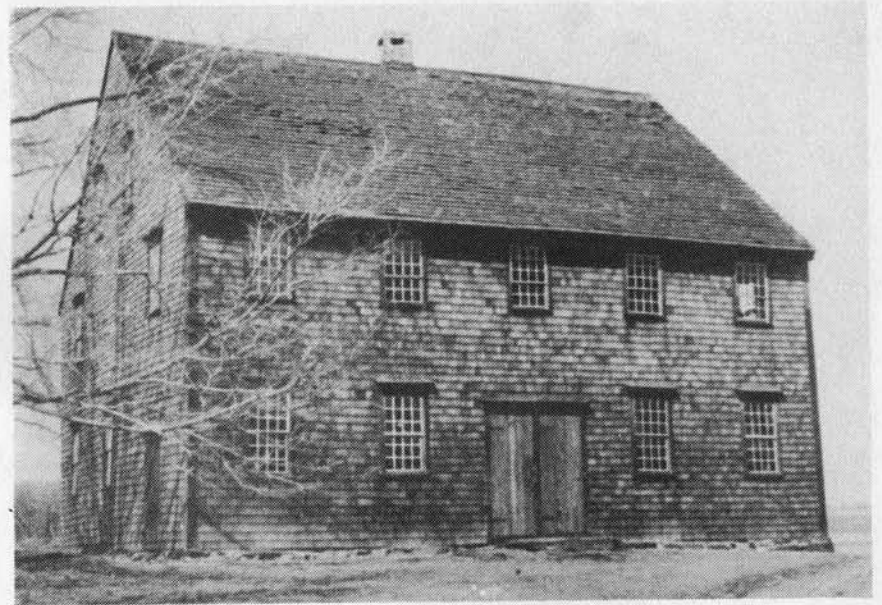
Meetings for business of Oswego Monthly Meeting were regularly held throughout the entire period from 1828 through 1910. During all this time there were only four clerks of the men's meeting after the brief tenure of Shadrach Ricketson. They were Peter DeGarmo, Clark C. Barmore, Gideon Downing, and Edward Barmore -- the last serving 37 years. Men's and women's meetings were held jointly after November 1887 when Amelia Frost was appointed assistant clerk. The social concerns that are often brought before business meetings in the 20th century occupied little of the time. Of these by far the most prominent issue was temperance. Armaments, capital punishment, Indian concerns, and prisons were given some small attention. There is tradition that the Moores and other members provided stops or transportation for the Underground Railroad, but the mention of this illegal activity or of slavery did not appear in Oswego Monthly Meeting minutes. Mostly the Minutes are occupied with housekeeping chores; membership, reporting to Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, raising money to carry on the organization, buying and selling property, appointments to committees, etc.

THE HOLDING PERIOD: 1913 - 1939

The Monthly Meeting now entered into a long period of dormancy which I shall call the "Holding Period", 1913 to 1939. While the listed membership for 1913 was 58 and that of 1939 was 37, 20 of the 1913 list were non-resident but only 6 of the 1939 were so designated. So, we may say membership was low but relatively constant throughout the period -- the precipitous decline had occurred in the 80 years before 1913. Why didn't the trend continue to extinction of the Monthly Meeting? From the record I find five factors that seem to account for its survival. In approximate order of their significance I find the factors to be; the meeting-for-business, property concerns, dedicated persons, meeting-for worship, and hope.

Despite cessation of all meetings for worship except those at Oswego on a somewhat irregular schedule, with few exceptions, meetings for business were held monthly throughout the 27 year period. For many of these years the winter meetings were held at the home of Norman and Elizabeth Green in Poughkeepsie. Summer meetings were generally at Oswego meeting house. Concerns about peace, temperance, Indians, and capital punishment were dealt with more frequently. Many of the social concerns of members were expressed through other organizations as is shown in the State of Society report of 1915. Reports and appointments to Half Yearly and Yearly meetings were made regularly. But financial and property matters required much attention.

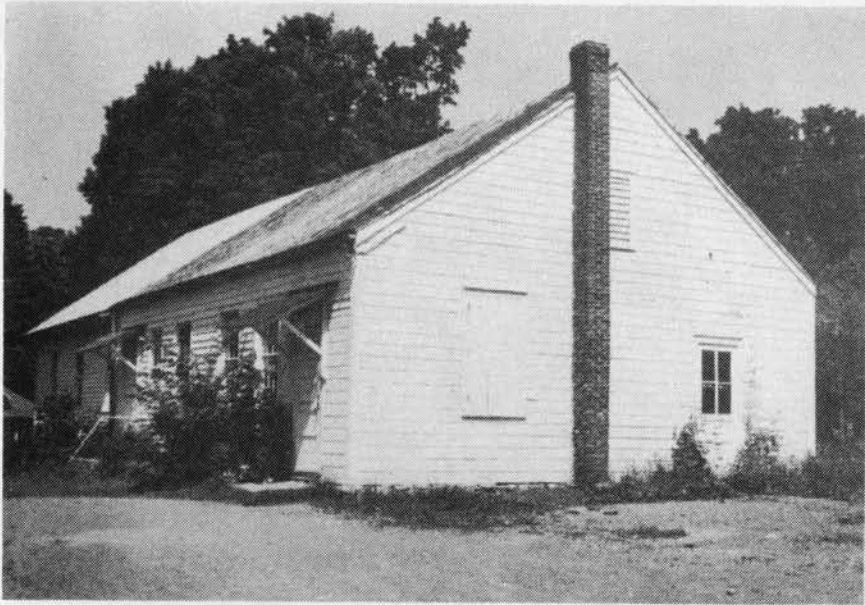
Poor in numbers of members the Meeting was rich in numbers of properties. In 1913 it had title to the following: the 1790 meeting house at Oswego and its adjoining burial ground; the 1810 meeting house at Pleasant Valley and its adjoining burial ground; the 1893 brick meeting house at 14 LaFayette Place in Poughkeepsie; the burial ground on Quaker Lane in Poughkeepsie; the burial ground at the site of the original meeting house at Gardner Hollow; and the burial ground adjoining the site of the long-vanished West Branch meeting house in the town of LaGrange. In addition there were invested funds -- the Shadrach Ricketson Education Fund and several small funds for cemetery care. Had there been a strong Quarterly or Half Yearly Meeting to which it might have passed on these possessions the meeting might have more easily given up the struggle for survival. But the other meetings of Nine Partners Half Yearly Meeting were somewhat weaker than Oswego. Creek and Nine Partners were close to giving up and Greenfield-Neversink was only the durable realm of the Smith family. There was no place for these possessions to go other than to the Yearly Meeting. Perhaps such considerations were not very spiritual but it seems certain they kept the small group together. Some reductions of the care of property were achieved by: sale of the Pleasant Valley meeting house, but not the burial ground, in 1922; sale of the Quaker Lane grounds in 1922; turning over the care, but not the possession, of the Oswego burial grounds to a cemetery association in 1928; sale of an unused portion of the Gardner Hollow grounds in 1932; sale of an unused portion of the Pleasant Valley grounds in 1946; and



Oblong Meeting House - 1764
Quaker Hill, Pawling, N.Y.



Nine Partners Meeting House - 1780
Route 343, Millbrook, N.Y.



Pleasant Valley Meeting House - 1810
As Grange Hall with addition to rear
Quaker Hill Road, Pleasant Valley, N.Y.

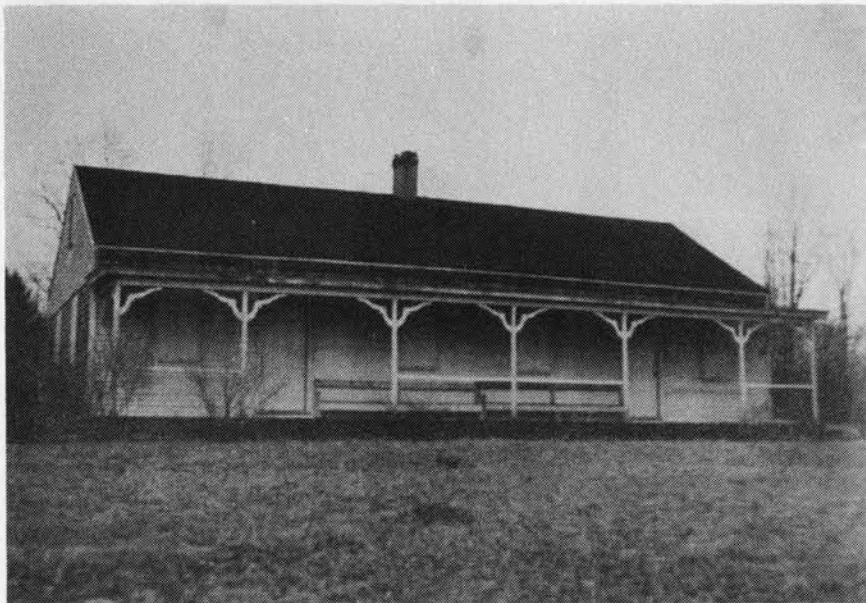


Poughkeepsie Meeting House - 1894
As Parish House (since razed) for St. Joseph's Church
Lafayette Place, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Ruth Halstead
with her
brother, George



Adeline Holden Wheeler with her children



Oswego Meeting House - 1790
Moore's Mills, Dutchess County, N.Y.



Bulls Head Meeting House - as in 1960
The former school house moved to site in 1957
Bulls Head Road, Clinton Corners, N.Y.

finally, after several considerations since 1922, sale of the LaFayette Place meeting house and property in 1949.

Whether the little meeting could have held together over these years even with the regular business meetings and cares of property to hold them without three or four faithful persons is a question. If there were only one such person it was Ruth Halstead who became clerk in 1926 and served in that position until 1951 except for five years, and during those five years she was frequently clerk-of-the-day. Her minutes were full and clear and doubtless it was she that saw meetings were held regularly. It was she who most often attended Half Yearly and Yearly meetings as well as the conferences at Cape May. Her father George S. Halstead, her brother George D. Halstead, Mattie Moore, Sara Belle Wells, and George D. Bedell were others of the stalwarts.

While the factor that should properly be considered the primary reason for existence of a Friends meeting is here ranked in fourth place it must not be overlooked. From the Minutes it is difficult to be certain of how completely regular were the meetings for worship at Oswego during these 27 years. In the 1915 Directory of New York Yearly Meeting meetings are given as every week at Oswego and once a month at Poughkeepsie. We do know that in later years regular meetings for worship were held at Oswego only during the period from May through September and the once-a-month meetings at Poughkeepsie were discontinued by 1928. The level of vocal ministry might be measured by the concern to schedule outside speakers at the summer meetings at Oswego. These speakers were frequently Friends prominent in the Yearly Meeting, Friends General Conference, or American Friends Service Committee. Sometimes they were ministers serving as pastors in local Orthodox Friends meetings. At the close of the warm weather series of meetings average attendance would be reported -- often only 8 to 20 persons.

Finally, we must list a very real reason for continuation of this small group of Quakers as "hope". In spite of the temptation to dwell on the golden era of the Society of Friends, to hark back to old customs, and to bitter memories of the Separation we find the group looking forward to greater numbers and a more vital,

effective fellowship. Notices in newspapers were made of special and regular meetings. Annual meetings featuring nationally known Friends were held at Oblong, Creek, Pleasant Valley and Crum Elbow with assistance of the Yearly Meeting Advancement Committee. Sara Belle Wells started a First Day School at Oswego. Usually several members would attend the conferences at Cape May returning inspired and renewed. By 1940 the period of dormancy showed signs of ending.

THE OLD YIELDS TO THE NEW

In 1939 admission of three new members from outside old Dutchess County Quaker families initiated trends that made the next twenty years a period of greater changes in the Oswego Meeting than any like period of its existence aside from the Separation of 1828. The three were Delancey and Evilena VerPlanck and Clarinda Richards. Delancey, by oral or letter reports, reminded nearly every monthly business meeting for the next 16 years of every current Quaker concern. Peace, international government, refugees, American Indians, interned Japanese, peacetime conscription, plight of the negroes, and many more good causes were constantly kept before Oswego Friends. Clarinda, with a summer home near the old Gardner Hollow burial grounds, was only seasonally present but brought contact with a wider area of Quaker service. In 1940 George and Winifred Badgley joined the meeting bringing another dimension of Quakerism to the Meeting in that they held "dual membership". That is they were then members of both an Orthodox and a Hicksite meeting, expressing the growing desire of both sides for reunion.

But, the really pivotal addition to the fellowship came shortly after the close of World War II. Henry and Adeline Holden Wheeler came to take up farming and make their home on the Holden family property on the Bulls Head Road in the town of Stanford. Henry had recently completed his alternative service as a conscientious objector. While the Holdens were members of Chappaqua, Adeline's father, Stephen, was familiar to Dutchess Friends from his appearances as a speaker at annual meetings at the old meeting houses and she and her brothers were active in Young Friends Fellowship. Immediately the Wheeler home became a place for

occasional gatherings for Friends worship and discussions. Furthermore the informal hospitality at this home caused it to become a way station for travelling Friends of their wide acquaintance. The strength of personalities of these two, Henry and Patsy (as Adeline was usually called), and the location of their farm some 15 miles from the old meeting house, have determined much of the subsequent history of Oswego Monthly Meeting.

The changing meeting still had matters of property and organization to attend even though more important things were happening. In 1949 a fence was erected to the west of the meeting house to define the property line. We have mentioned sale of the LaFayette Place Meeting house -- \$5000 of the proceeds of this sale were set up as a maintenance fund that has generally paid for needed repairs at Oswego. However when the need was felt to have year around meetings for worship and for First Day School the lack of modern heat at the old meeting house was realized. After renting the former meeting house, now Grange hall, at Pleasant Valley for the winter of 1952 - 53 an oil furnace was installed at Oswego. A gift from a new member supplemented what could be spared from the maintenance and general funds to pay for it.

At this point we should note some organizational housekeeping principally of historical interest but necessary in understanding some Oswego affairs. In 1939 the remaining members and small funds of Creek Executive Meeting were united with Oswego upon approval by the Half-Yearly Meeting. In 1950 Nine Partners Executive Meeting, its funds, and its one living member were likewise taken in. In a couple of months the member died but Oswego was left with the other two-thirds of the Shadrach Ricketson bequest so its Education Fund now totalled \$3000. It was also the holder of the small Thorne Fund for the aid to Friends in need.

Some other property matters were taking place that were not at the direction of the Monthly Meeting. About 1955 the group of Friends and others occasionally meeting at the Wheeler home got the idea of relocating the long unused Upper Bulls Head District School building to a spot on the Holden property and converting it into a meeting house. Work by members and other volunteers

proceeded slowly. In July of 1957 the Trustees reported they had approved a deed of the building and property on which it stood from the Holden family for the "use of the Upper Dutchess Friends Group." The November monthly meeting minutes report that the "Bulls Head Road Meeting House" was in use. Apparently conversion was not complete but I believe there have been very few Sundays since that November on which a meeting for worship has not been held on that spot.

The Bulls Head Road location was not the only location of emerging Friends activity under the care of Oswego Monthly Meeting during these years. For the ten years beginning in 1944 there is mention in the minutes of a small worship group in the Vassar College area. Around 1955 there came to be a group in the Millbrook area using the old Nine Partners brick meeting house for worship meetings. This group, as with the Upper Dutchess group that drew from the Bard College community, and the Vassar group, consisted partially of young families connected with private schools and colleges. Given the frequent change of residence of these families it was extremely difficult to establish any permanence of such small groups. Late in the '50's the Wheelers were joined by another farm family, Benjamin and Dorothy Collins and sons, so that it was this center of activity that survived and eventually drew remaining members from other centers into the Bulls Head fellowship. In spite of the new heating system at the old Oswego meeting house, activity declined so that minutes of April 1956 note that there were no longer any regular meetings for worship or business being held there. Ralph Connor, whose home was in the Oswego area, had joined the meeting in 1953 and given generously of service and means to the Meeting. He now transferred his membership to Poughkeepsie.

As we have noted many of the new members and attenders were from young families. This naturally brought a desire to have some religious education program or First Day schools. Attempts to have such programs met variable success depending on the number of children in any one age group and on the availability of a place to meet. Monthly meeting minutes mention active programs from 1950 to 1953, again in 1954-5. Programs were going at Millbrook and Bulls Head by 1959 that led into a new era of meeting life.

The transfer of responsibility for the life of the Meeting may be indicated by the persons appointed to its offices. Ruth Halstead who, as already noted, was effectively clerk for 25 years was succeeded in 1951 by German-born Frederick Wehmeyer. After less than two years Adeline Wheeler took on this responsibility to be succeeded by Dorothy Collins in 1959. In 1955 George Halstead completed years of service as treasurer when he turned over the books and accounts to Ralph Connor. While I have never found any record of bitterness the disappointment of the Halsteads in changes that had come about can probably be measured by the fact that neither ever set foot in the new location for meetings for worship and business at Bulls Head.

While these developments were occurring in the Oswego Monthly Meeting changes were occurring at the regional and yearly meeting levels. These latter were fully as important in shaping the future of the local Friends. We have noted the willingness of Oswego Friends to welcome the pastors of Orthodox Friends meetings as speakers and resource persons. From the late '40's we find minutes concerning a Peace and Service Committee that was a joint committee with the Orthodox Friends at Clinton Corners. In 1953 Oswego and other Friends belonging to the Hicksite Nine Partners Half-Year's Meeting were invited to sessions of the Orthodox Cornwall-Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting. In return Oswego extended an invitation to the latter group to hold their meeting at the old meeting house on August 11, 1957. The Millbrook worship group then co-operated with the small Nine Partners Monthly Meeting in hosting the November 1957 meeting of the Quarterly Meeting. Finally the long sought reunion of the meetings torn apart in 1828 came about at the Cornwall Meeting House in August of 1959. The Nine Partners Half-Year's Meeting, consisting of Oswego and the smaller Greenfield-Neversink group, joined Cornwall-Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting to form Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting. Thus returned the name of the regional meeting of which all the meetings, or their antecedents, had been members in 1800. The two New York Yearly Meetings had reunited in 1955. Orthodox and Hicksite finally became terms principally of historical significance.

Completion of fitting out the old school house on Bulls Head Road as a place for holding meetings for worship throughout the year marked a most significant event in the history of Oswego Monthly Meeting. Quakers have traditionally not assigned importance to place in holding individual or group worship. Meeting houses have not been dubbed "sanctuaries". Nevertheless a special place belonging to a worshipping fellowship as a usual location for holding meeting-for-worship does seem to enhance the experience and cement the group. Important as the Wheeler home had been, and continued to be, the "new" meeting house gave a sense of identity and permanence the "Upper Dutchess Friends" had not had before.

Meanwhile there were developments at the nearby pastoral Quaker meeting, the Clinton Corners Friends Church, that strongly shaped the coming years of Oswego Meeting. Faced with steadily declining numbers the Orthodox Friends at Clinton Corners had decided as early as 1890 to bring into their meeting, or "church", other Protestants who might not accept traditional Quaker testimonies. This move proved quite successful in terms of membership, enabling building a church-like building in 1915. Retaining and enlarging the older meeting house the Church was the center of a lively Christian Endeavor Society and other community activities. The pastors serving the church were generally Quaker in membership or conviction and the Quaker practice of not observing outward sacraments such as baptism and the Lord's Supper was followed. In an unspoken understanding, in return for these concessions from the community church members, the Friends were expected not to closely identify the church with such unpopular testimonies as pacifism, nor to expect extensive use of silent waiting in the meetings for worship.

In the 1950's the understanding at Clinton Corners became increasingly unsatisfactory to both the community and the Quaker elements. The static or declining membership was attributed by some to the Friends oriented pastors who expressed Friends social concerns, were generally liberal in theology, and who declined to administer the outward sacraments. Some

members who identified themselves as Friends, participated in Friends affairs on the Yearly Meeting and wider levels, and who had children for whom they desired Quaker training found the understanding too confining. As previously mentioned there had been a joint Peace and Service Committee for the Oswego and Clinton Corners meetings for several years. There was also a Couples' Club which included members of both meetings, as well as others. When the Clinton Corners Friends concluded a new arrangement was needed it was natural they should turn toward their friends at Bulls Head,-- and they did.

Beginning in July 1960 Clinton Corners Friends began transfer of membership to Oswego Monthly Meeting. First there were the Tuttles and the Van Wagners, followed shortly by the Boices and the Wings. Mary DeGarmo Van Wagner's six Tuttle and Van Wagner grandchildren made the fifth consecutive generation of her family connected to the Meeting. The Boice and Wing names likewise appear often in accounts of Dutchess County Quakers. In addition to significantly increasing its membership, acceptance of these transfers re-cemented the meeting to its roots.

The seven children added to the Sunday School by these new members made possible a livelier program each Sunday in the old Wheeler farmhouse. This soon attracted the Landesman and deVeer families who had been meeting in the brick meeting house at Millbrook. While this resulted in closing the meeting there it also meant further strengthening of both Sunday School and Meeting-for-Worship on Bulls Head Road. It must be admitted, that fully as attractive to the youngsters as instruction in Friends and Christian teachings, were the opportunities to play in the Bentley Farm barns and get rides on Midnight, the horse. Henry Wheeler's love of children was fully returned and made him effective as the host farmer, Sunday School teacher, and model. In January 1962 the Minutes note there were 20 children from 10 families. As might be expected in any small meeting the numbers of children declined in following years as they went off to school or families moved. A graded program became impractical and discussions before worship, with entire families participating, were being tried by the late '60s.

The new adult members from Clinton Corners were already seasoned and active in Friends affairs and immediately began to assume responsibility in their new meeting. In fact the next three Clerks were all drawn from this group. Of course, having been accustomed to conducting affairs in a meeting with Orthodox traditions, they also transferred some ideas of how to handle meeting affairs. Soon after their entrance Oswego adopted the practice of accepting children as Associate members as well as full members at birth or at request of their parents. The more organized Friends of the Orthodox tradition found the highly informal handling of finances by those of the Hicksite tradition rather unsettling. While we find the Minutes referring to a suggestion of adopting a budget in 1961, and a suggestion that a finance committee be appointed in 1968, it was not until March 1973 that we find a finance committee proposing a budget adopted by the meeting!

The meetings for business were often occupied with reports and action relating to Friends concerns. Foremost of these concerns was peace. From 1962 onward there apparently was Oswego representation at every annual Peace Institute of New York Yearly Meeting. In the years from 1965 through 1968 there was frequent reference to the war in Viet Nam. While most members endorsed the sending of medical supplies for relief of both sides in the conflict, united meeting action was not often taken because a small group felt we should not be aiding the forces fighting Americans, even with medical supplies. Dorothy Boice continued leading in the gathering, preparation, and shipment of clothing to the American Friends Service Committee that she had been doing before her transfer of membership from Clinton Corners. Oswego was among the first to aid the Chaplaincy Fund of the Dutchess County Council of Churches. Support for a young member who was appealing the Draft Board's refusal to grant him conscientious objector status was a concern of several sessions.

Property affairs occupied much less of the attention of the meeting. The only new building acquired during the period 1959 through 1969 seems to have been the out house at Bulls Head at an outlay of \$10. There was expense at Oswego to replace rotted beams and flooring in the west section in 1963. Immediately afterwards the marriage of Ralph Connor's daughter Sally

occasioned the interior painting of the same section. The principal improvement at Bulls Head was the installation of electric lighting and heat completed in 1966.

From time to time another property matter was called to the attention of Bulls Head Friends. The first mention I find in the Minutes was in May 1962 when Dorothy Collins proposed establishing a Building Fund. In February 1964 there was a suggestion of adding onto the meeting house. The following July the Meeting was notified of a bequest of Jonathan Holdeen* of some securities which eventually were liquidated for about \$1400. With this amount the Meeting set up a building fund named the Stephen Holden Fund in accordance with the wish of the donor. \$836 of this was used to install the electricity but the balance was left for the future.

An action of the last session of the Nine Partners Half Year's Meeting, before its merging into the Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting, was approval of setting up Bulls Head Preparative Meeting to share clerk and treasurer with the Oswego Monthly Meeting. Recognizing the fact, as well as the form, we find minutes from 1962 and on for some years being headed "Bulls Head Preparative and Oswego Monthly Meeting meeting at . . .". A hope that there could again be a regular vital meeting in the old meeting house is evidenced by this form.

The period of optimism about the future of the meeting that followed the rather sudden growth by transfers from Clinton Corners and from Millbrook gradually gave way to a more somber appraisal. For a time visitation to neighbors without church affiliation in the Bulls Head community was tried. The neighbors were friendly but not inclined to join in Sunday morning worship or discussion groups. Hope that the visit of Rachel Davis DuBois with her "Quaker Dialogues" might help bring a magnetism that would attract a larger group did not materialize. In the State of Society Report of 1968 we find, "It is difficult to foresee any great growth in membership or in activities because of the

* This variant spelling was used by Stephen Holden's brother.

location of the meeting house, the scattered membership." This dissatisfaction with the meeting's inability to widen its membership did not extend to appreciation of the fellowship as can be seen by the 1966 Report, "Our small group can be compared to a family, with change brought by the going and coming of its members. But always the entity remains and from the heart and core of our meeting for worship flows the strengthening of the Spirit needed to renew and nourish our religious life."

The year 1969 was a pivotal one for Oswego Monthly Meeting. On April 9th, Adeline Holden Wheeler, affectionately known as Patsy by her host of friends, died suddenly. As correctly stated in the extensive memorial minute adopted by the Meeting, "Without her loving concern Bulls Head Meeting would never have come into being or continued to live. Our sense of loss of her rare and beautiful personality is almost unbearable." Had her death taken place ten years earlier it might well have meant the end of the meeting. But now the meeting had established a sense of place and had gathered a number of dedicated persons. And in the few months preceding its loss the meeting was seeing another influx of life that would lead to further growth.

THE RURAL MEETING OPENS TO THE WORLD

In 1968 Barbara and Stephen L. Angell, Jr., had built a new home across Bulls Head Road from the meeting house. In March of '69 their letters of transfer were accepted by the Meeting, although they had been already serving on committees. This was the beginning of additions to the membership by transfers from urban and suburban meetings, a near flood for the next three years but continuing significantly up to the time of writing this story. As with the group coming in from Clinton Corners a decade earlier, many were experienced Friends already actively participating in Friends affairs. In addition some of them had connections and service on a national or international level. Two of the families, the Cadburys and the Holloways, also rented or built on the Bentley Farm strengthening the feeling of community for the meeting. This was despite the fact the Hansons, Apsays, Carters, and Lofts located many miles away -- Massachusetts, Red Hook, or Connecticut.

About the same time some new members were accepted by transfer or request who lived in the area of the Oswego meeting house. Consequently in October of 1969 a request was granted to again hold meetings for worship in the old house. Elizabeth Soley and the Breneman and Holstedt families with help from Dorothy Alley Abel, a non-member whose family had long been attached to the Meeting, formed a core around which it was hoped a strong meeting could be developed. The early hopes were never realized. By August 1973, with some of the stalwarts moving away, the Meeting concluded to discontinue regular meetings at Oswego for the time. In September 1975, with the addition of the Charles and Joyce Rich family, another effort was launched and regular, but sparsely attended, worship meetings were continued for a year. After a year, Thomas Trayner reported for the oversight committee that it "felt that in order to have the Meeting operative there would have to be about five families dedicated to being there each Sunday." Since 1976 the historic house has been used only for special events such as the marriage of Thomas and Janet Angell in 1979, or Quarterly Meeting. Repairs to roof and sills, painting, etc. have been done, sometimes with volunteer labor, financed by the Building Maintenance Fund. The building could be put into regular service on short notice.

As noted many of the newer members as well as the older ones were already active in Friends affairs at the beginning of this period. As a result there has been a rather uniformly high level of participation in Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting and New York Yearly Meeting. In 1969 there were 12 members of the meeting plus 3 others, who later became members, appointed to Yearly Meeting committees or offices. In 1982 there were 14 members appointed to such, and of these 7 are included in the 1969 appointees. Henry Wheeler had been Clerk of the Yearly Meeting, Stephen Angell had been Clerk of Representative Meeting, and Mary Cadbury had been Clerk of the Witness Co-ordinating Committee. Six other members, as of 1982, had headed one or more committees or served as assistant clerks.

Fortunately the meeting had not been afflicted with "Yearly Meeting Friends", the kind that accepted Yearly Meeting appointments but were seldom seen at home.

However we must note that at least two members resigned membership or appointments citing "failure as a loving fellowship", in one case, and a similar sentiment in the other. These disappointments caused much self examination by meeting members but no satisfactory resolution. Could the heavy involvement away from home result in neglect of needs nearer by? At least the danger was recognized.

In its care of ministry, Ministry and Counsel frequently, if not regularly, planned single events or a series of gatherings for discussion and study of Friends principles and history, the Bible, or revisions of the Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice. Sometimes these gatherings followed Sunday worship, other times were at homes of members. When at homes the discussions frequently followed "pot-luck" meals that added the benefits of bringing members and attenders to a more profound understanding of each other, socially and spiritually. An innovation to Bulls Head, already tried by other meetings, was the institution of "an after-meeting time for sharing" on an experimental basis in May 1977. With general adherence to the admonition "It should be done in the nature of a worship sharing experience where response to thoughts expressed is no necessity and all debate is to be avoided" fears that the practice would detract from the meeting-for-worship seem not to have been realized. The practice has continued to this writing.

Any program of religious education during the 1969 through 1982 period was of fairly short existence. Following an all-ages program at the beginning of the period there seems to have been no program other than a concern that the meeting for worship begin with "the young in mind". In the fall of 1974 a program was initiated following a covered-dish meal for families with children. By 1976 the program was dropped for lack of continuity in attendance and there was a call for volunteers to care for children in neighboring homes during the meeting for worship. In early 1978 parents with children were conducting their own program and informed the meeting in May that it need appoint no religious education committee. A committee was appointed in 1979 and in the fall the meeting started to hire someone to care for the youngest children during meeting

for worship. At this time space was equipped in the Bentley Farm carriage house for both child care and a program for children of school age. Cooking facilities in the new building put in use in 1981 encouraged the children to bake for a cookie sale for benefit of a project in South Africa. In spite of increased attendance the Religious Education Committee still reported a problem of irregular attendance.

Another type of gathering in homes that became established in this period became known as a "Meager Meal". The name may be more alliterative than descriptive because the simple meals were generally ample and tasty. The concept was that those joining together for these inexpensive meals would make a donation of an amount equal to what they would have spent for a restaurant meal or a good dinner at home. Usually the gathered donations were given to some program for relief of hunger, either locally or world-wide. These events resulted in many hundreds of dollars raised for such causes. The programs following the meals educated and sensitized the participants to the plight of the needy. Such "a simple meal" was proposed by the Peace and Social Action Committee in December 1974 and similar ones were held several times a year thereafter.

The Peace and Social Action Committee assumed and was given many tasks. Prior to cessation of the war in Viet Nam and of registration for military service such concerns were frequently before the meeting. There was also attention to counseling and support for young men subject to registration. Legislative matters of concern to Friends that needed expressions of support or opposition were brought to the attention of members. A project to sponsor a Vietnamese refugee family was abandoned when the assigned family went elsewhere. Regular shipments of relief clothing continued. A concern for prisons and prisoners gradually grew beyond the committee's surveillance to become a most important part of meeting concern and a major commitment of a number of members and attenders. Begun in 1975 the annual "Barn Sale" also became an assigned responsibility of the Committee even though the proceeds came to be regularly given to the Yearly Meeting Sharing Fund.

Just noted was the large part of meeting life that came to be occupied by prison concerns. A major share of this effort was participation in the Friends meetings at Green Haven and Wallkill Correctional Facilities. The effort was initiated by a committee of Nine Partners Quarterly Meeting but it came to be largely a small number of members and attenders at Bulls Head, notably Margaret Currie and Mary Grey Legg, that provided steady support.

Closely allied in nature of work and persons involved was the initiation of the Alternatives to Violence Project. In this writer's opinion this is the most creative movement to come out of the Society of Friends in many decades. While obviously the concept has a much wider, desperately needed application, conduct of the Project has largely been in the prisons. Not only have prisoners been instructed in avoiding the problem that resulted in their imprisonment, but a number have been qualified as "trainers" themselves to conduct training sessions. Outside of the prisons, training in non-violent techniques has been given to law enforcement agencies and to organizers of demonstrations. Lawrence Apsey and Stephen L. Angell were among initiators of the Project that was organized under the sponsorship of New York Yearly Meeting. Other members of Oswego Meeting also became qualified trainers.

At the beginning of this section we noted how incoming members opened the meeting to a wider world. The period also featured some of the older members getting experiences outside the United States. In 1974 Shirley and Dean Tuttle accepted a three-year assignment to the Friends Girls School in Israeli-occupied Palestine, she as principal, under Friends United Meeting. At about the same time Henry and Marjorie Wheeler spent a similar period teaching in an American school in Pakistan. Timothy Wheeler, after a period doing alternative service in Guatemala, came to work and marry in Honduras.

Routine business matters still occupied some attention in the meetings for business. Many members served as clerks and assistant clerks of the meeting, usually serving for only two or three years at a time. One appointment remained constant for over 22 years

despite the frequent changes of clerks and committees. Harry Hoffman maintained the accounts and kept income up to expenditures by nudging, usually gently, members when the meeting's checking account was running low. During most of his term he had no assistance of any finance committee. Careful handling of the several funds made money available when repairs or scholarship help was needed. The meeting always managed to meet its assigned share of quarterly and yearly meeting budgets. In June of 1978 the books were passed over to Valerie J. Suter. This being the time of availability of higher rates of interest Valerie, after consulting with the Finance Committee, consolidated the various funds in order to produce more income from investment.

One very notable piece of business was the change of name of the meeting after 181 years as Oswego Monthly Meeting -- plus another some 50 years as a worship group or preparative meeting. Some members, particularly the newer ones, had for some time been irked by always having to explain to their friends and other Quakers that their meeting was not located at the east end of Lake Ontario. Those who valued the meeting's history resisted a move to change the name to "Bulls Head Monthly Meeting". At the April 1980 business meeting it was agreed to adopt the name "Bulls Head-Oswego Monthly Meeting". This outcome also had the advantage of keeping alive the hope that someday there would again be a Quaker community around the 1790 meeting house.

THE MEETING EXPANDS ITS HOME

Even in 1957 the Upper Dutchess Friends recognized that a rustic, converted district school house would not provide an adequate home for a thriving meeting. After remodelling was completed in 1959 it was necessary to use the Bentley farm house for Sunday School. Other meeting gatherings were held in members' homes, sometimes creating inconvenient and crowded situations. After Dorothy Collins' proposal of May 1962 that a building fund be set up and after the bequest of Jonathan Holdeen shortly provided \$1400 for that purpose, there ensued a decline in number of children in the Sunday School and in meeting attendance. This made the need less urgent and the possibility of realizing expanded facilities less likely. A suggestion in 1975

for drilling a well was not approved by the meeting. Cushions, benches, chairs, and tables moved from Oswego increased comfort and capacity at the Bulls Head meeting house and nearby homes slightly. Informal suggestions that something be done toward building generally met either skepticism that meeting approval was possible or the sentiment that attention to property matters would supplant more important meeting activities.

The minutes of the February 1979 meeting for business state "Question was raised as to the adequacy of the Bulls Head meeting house for future needs of the meeting. Should consideration be given to expanding the facility particularly with a view to the future needs of children in the meeting? It was agreed to refer this matter to the trustees for further consideration with the suggestion that they involve other meeting members who might be interested -- what purposes should such an extension serve and what might be included in such plans." At the March meeting Christopher Cadbury presented a chart analyzing various possibilities and their costs. A general invitation for interested persons to meet at the Van Wagner home in May resulted in an ad hoc committee of Chris, the Van Wagners, Stephen Angell, Robert Suter, Alice Ulm (an attender), John deVeer, and Jonathan Boice. Their first business was to propose temporary facilities to house the Sunday School for the coming year. The Monthly Meeting approved weather-proofing the carriage house on Bentley Farm for this purpose and it was done.

Under the careful guidance of Chris Cadbury the ad hoc committee explored many questions related to providing new facilities. An early consideration was whether they should be located on the meeting house plot without removal of the reversion clause in the deed for the property. In spite of the Holden family's inability to agree to such a change the meeting finally decided to take the risk that some day it might lose its investment if another location became necessary for its meeting place. Reluctance of some members to risk slighting of important activities because of attention to raising money and giving of voluntary labor for the building project was overcome by assurances that every effort would be taken to avoid such conflict. By January of 1980 the group interested in building had so far been

joined by members of the Meeting that we have the minute, "A need is felt for a place for the Sunday School to meet, for meeting gatherings, for committee meetings and for Quarterly Meeting hospitality." The members of the ad hoc group were appointed as a Building Committee with the addition of Marjorie Wheeler and Valerie Suter. Henry Muller was later added to the committee.

A special called meeting in March approved going ahead with a building separate from the old meeting house with a floor area of about 900 square feet to cost about \$25,000. It was hoped to reduce the cost by about \$9000 worth of volunteer labor. Approval was given to canvassing members and friends of the meeting for their intentions of donation of money and labor over a three year period. In April a Building Fund was established and in May approval was given for transferring \$4000 to it from the General Fund (which included the Stephen Holden Fund). Also by May the Building Committee, in consultation with Gardiner Angell, architect, of Scarsdale Monthly Meeting, had agreed upon a one-story building with 26 foot by 36 foot dimensions. It was to contain a large gathering room, a Sunday School room, a rest room, and a kitchen area. An application to the Friends General Conference for a \$1500 grant and a possible loan of \$7000 eventually resulted in a \$2500 grant, the loan proving unneeded.

Work was started shortly and optimism was so high at the early progress that by July an invitation had been extended to the Quarterly Meeting to meet in the new building in May 1981. The project received a tremendous boost when an offer of assistance from a group from another monthly meeting was accepted. On August 16, 1980, Charles Burch, Colle Davis, and Robert Simkin of Poplar Ridge Monthly Meeting led Bulls Head workers in erecting the roof and ceiling trusses and applying the roof sheathing--all in a nine-hour day. Volunteers came forward so that before snow fell the last shingle was nailed on the roof and work could proceed during the winter.

To list those who did some work on the project would be very nearly to list the whole membership plus some others. Because of their recent retirements Dean Tuttle, Irene Van Wagner, and Alson Van Wagner were able to put in the most time. Largely plans for the building

were drawn up by Alson incorporating the concepts developed by the Building Committee. From time to time, Gardiner Angell checked the plans and progress of the work. Chris Cadbury, in addition to guiding the committee, gave much time and labor. The Wheelers, the Suters, the Mullers, James Boice, Tom and Janet Angell, Richard Collins, John deVeer were among the most generous of their time and skill.

The invitation to the Quarterly Meeting had to be changed from May to August at which time Bulls Head did host that body in an unfinished but usable building. From that time on regular meeting events, Sunday School, and even a Thanksgiving dinner took place while finishing details were slowly applied by the volunteers. In fact many features had yet to be added a year later, at the end of 1982, when the special Building Fund reporting was concluded by the treasurer. The final financial report showed \$22,407 spent with \$16,201 raised by contributions. The balance came from the \$4000 from the General Fund, the \$2500 from the Meeting House Fund, and earnings from interest, which fortunately were very high during the building period.

Largely the fears that taking on the building project would harm other meeting activities proved unfounded. In fact there seemed to be a stimulation of nearly every program. The Sunday School, while not large, progressed well. After-meeting socials cemented friendships among members and attenders and gave a chance to meet visitors. Scheduling of committee meetings and meeting functions no longer waited on invitations to meet in homes. Because the Building Committee carefully designed the building to require a minimum of maintenance and utilities the new facilities have not unduly increased the running expense of the meeting.

It is a happy circumstance that concluding this "history" does not conclude the story of Oswego Monthly, now Bulls Head-Oswego Monthly Meeting. It does remain to be seen if the many strengths of this fellowship can meet the challenges of changes coming much more rapidly than in the somewhat more than two centuries of its existence up to now. As we have seen, the past and present have sometimes been held together by a very small thread.