

## THE QUAKERS AND THEIR MEETING HOUSES

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“So swift was the gain in strength and number of the sect in this section of Virginia that within twelve short years after the establishment of Cedar Creek Monthly Meeting another was formed known as Camp Creek.”<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the formation of Louisa County and before the coming of the Quakers, large tracts of land were patented on both sides of the South Anna River from North East Creek into the section of the county now known as Green Springs. Unfortunately the early deeds of transfer concerning these lands were recorded in Hanover County and were destroyed by fire during the burning of Richmond in 1865, but many records of the original patents still exist.

Among the first patentees of land in this section of the county were:

Col. Nicholas Merriwether, Christopher Clark and Nathaniel West of New Kent County who in 1716 petitioned the Governor and Council for permission to take up 3400 acres of land in the county of New Kent and the Board being satisfied of their ability to cultivate the same according to law, it was granted;<sup>2</sup>

Philip Ludwell, John Grymes, Esgrs Nicholas Merriwether and Christopher Clark, May 2nd, 1719, requested leave to take up in one tract 15,000 acres beginning at the foot of a mountain at the head of the north branch of the River South Anna running southerly along the foot of the Little Mountain;<sup>3</sup>

On the petition of Arthur Hopkins, Gent., June 11th, 1724, leave was granted him to take up 1,000 acres in one tract lying on Camp Creek;<sup>4</sup>

At a Council held at the Capital December 9, 1724, Charles Hudson was granted 2,000 acres of land beginning at Colo. Merriwethers entry on the South side of the South Anna River thence crossing to the said Camp Creek and up the north side of sd Camp Creek to complete the sd quantity;<sup>5</sup>

At a council held in Williamsburg 14th December, 1726, Henry Power, William Kenny and Will Morris were granted 5,000 acres beginning on Col. Thomson's line on the South side of the South fork of Camp Creek and up sd fork to the main branch of

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1. *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy*, Hinshaw's W.W., Vol. 6, p. 224.

2. *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, III, p. 433.

3. *Ibidem*, p. 502.

4. *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, IV, p. 70.

5. *Ibidem*, p. 79.

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Sycamore Fork of Camp Creek and over the sd fork to Bunches Camp Creek and to join on the land of Capt. Hudson, John Bunch, Col. Merriwether, Capt. Clark and the sd. Thomson;<sup>6</sup>

On the 31st of October, 1724, Col. Nicholas Merriwether was granted land and was issued two patents for 400 acres each, the first called Roundabout and the second, was described as lying on both sides of the South Anna River along Camp's Creek and Hudson's Creek;<sup>7</sup>

January 16, 1727, Christopher Clark Gent., was granted by patent 400 acres on the north side of the South Anna River, adjoining the land of Col. Merriwether;<sup>8</sup>

On the 26th of February, 1727, Charles Hudson Gent., was granted by patent a tract of land lying on both sides of Hudson's Creek on the south side of the South Anna of Pamunkey adjoining the lands of John Bunch;<sup>9</sup>

George Webb was granted on 13th of October, 1727, 2000 acres which lay along the southwest side of the South and Sycamore branches of Camp Creek adjoining Col. Nicholas Merriwether;<sup>10</sup>

There were two tracts granted Charles Hudson on 14 March 1731, lying on both sides of Beaver Creek adjoining the lands of John Dashper;<sup>11</sup>

Abraham Venable Gent., was granted 1500 acres of land on both sides of the South Anna River adjoining the land of Christopher Clark, Col. Merriwether and John Dashper and running down Beaver Creek to the mouth of Treasurer's Run and Harris' branches on the 24th Sept. 1732.<sup>12</sup>

Col. Nicholas Merriwether, the largest of the new land owners in the area, was a leader in Hanover County who advocated the creation of a new county. When Louisa County was finally formed in 1742, he naturally saw to it that his business associates and relatives were named to its first Commission of Justices. In time, Col. Merriwether and the other early patentees of these vast tracts of land found their land broken up among their sons, their grandsons and the new settlers moving up

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6. *Ibidem*, p. 123.

7. *Land Patent Book 13*, p. 200.

8. *Ibidem*, p. 104.

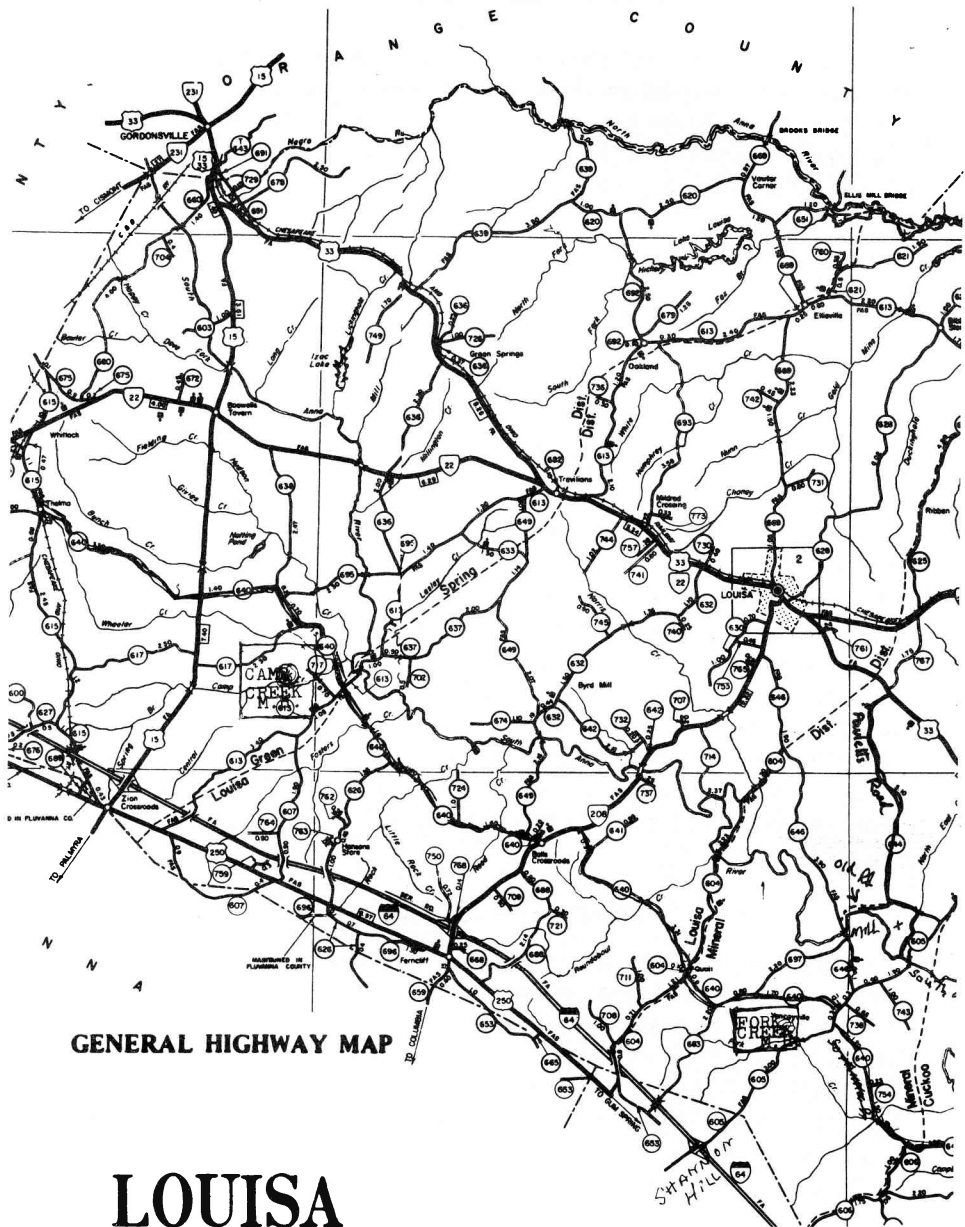
9. *Ibidem*, p. 197.

10. *Land Patent Book 14*, p. 215.

11. *Ibidem*, p. 379.

12. *Ibidem*, p. 426.

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GENERAL HIGHWAY MAP

# LOUISA COUNTY

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from New Kent and Hanover Counties. A number of these new settlers were Quakers, who brought with them their virtues, their piety and their humanitarianism.<sup>13</sup>

During the Colonial Period the Established Church placed its churches and chapels at distances of about ten miles so that the parishioners would not have over five miles to travel to church services. The Quakers established their Meeting Houses with an idea of convenience to the membership and in time, the settlement was in close proximity to the Meeting House. By the last half of the 18th Century, there were roads which made travel easier. A section of a Louisa County Road Map shows the area in which the Quakers settled and the site of the Meeting Houses which were located about fifteen miles apart, between the South Anna River and the Three Chopt Road.

The Quaker Meetings, around which all Quaker life revolved, were open to the public and were held every First day (as Friends called Sunday, to adhere to Biblical precedent and avoid pagan distortion of Christian life) and one other day during the week. They were held either at a private home or at a meeting house, the times and places being determined at the Monthly Meeting for business, which ordinarily included several groups of Friends who worshipped together. Every meeting for discipline or business devoted some time to worship. The Monthly Meeting appointed trustees to hold titles to meeting houses and other property. It kept graveyards, supervised marriages, provided aid for those in "low circumstances" and reproved improper conduct on the part of its members. It received and issued epistles and the several kinds of communication from one Meeting to another known as "certificates". The most important functions of the Monthly Meeting were those of preserving good conduct among the members and aiding the brethren in need.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Camp Creek Meeting**

In the early Quaker records there is mention made of a meeting at Greenspring, but no further reference is made and it is the opinion of the present writer, that they were one and the same, for they were in close proximity, and they were timed for this sequence.

The Quakers had moved from the lower counties, Charles City, Henrico, New Kent and Hanover, and settled on lands which had been acquired by their parents and grandparents.

There are no minutes of the Monthly Meeting at Camp Creek, but it is

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13. *Douglas Register. Cedar Creek Monthly Meetings, 1739-73.*

14. *A People Among People*, Sydney V. James, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963.

*The Quaker Family in Colonial Virginia*, J. William Frost, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1973.

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recorded that Charles Moorman and Thomas Moorman were overseers of the Camp Creek Meeting in 1740, which leads to the certainty that the Meeting here was established before this time.

### **The Camp Creek Meeting House**

There was a place of meeting at Greenspring and later at Camp Creek. the date of the erection of the Meeting House is not known, but it was on the land of Charles Moorman who married Rachel, daughter of Capt. Christopher Clark.

On April 10th 1764, Charles Moorman of Louisa County, Trinity Parish, conveyed by deed to John Davis and Christopher Johnson trustees, "one certain acre of land in Trinity Parish on which sd acre the Meeting House or place of Worship of the people called Quakers is situate."

It was directed in the deed that, "the Meeting House should be exactly or as near as may be, in the center thereof, which meeting house is generally called or known by the name of Camp Creek Meeting House."

Charles Moorman gave "the people called Quakers free access and use of the sd acre at all times for the purpose of Worship or for the Regulation of Church Discipline".

This deed was acknowledged in Louisa Court by Charles Moorman on the 10th of April 1764.<sup>15</sup>

The language of the deed leaves little doubt that the Meeting House had been built here for a number of years. In time it was deserted because the members had moved to other places.

After the Camp Creek Meeting became decimated by removals, the oversight of the meeting was returned to the Cedar Creek Meeting in Hanover from which it had been derived. The minutes of this Church records the establishment of the Cedar Creek Meetings in 1721 with John Harris and Thomas Stanley, the first overseers.

### **Fork Creek Meeting**

Fork Creek arises from springs along the ridge which is the boundary line of Louisa County and Goochland County and Fluvanna County. There are two divergent branches which unite to form the main stream, flowing east, until it changes its course abruptly to flow south, then emptying into the South Anna River.

In 1744, it is recorded that Francis Clark was overseer of the Fork Creek Meeting, which was a satellite meeting of the Cedar Creek Meeting in Hanover County. This date fixes the beginning of the Fork Creek Meeting which continued for many years. In 1768, Charles Clark was

15. *Louisa County Deed Book C½*, pp. 11-12.

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named overseer.

There are no minutes of the Fork Creek Meeting now in existence as far as known.

### **The Fork Creek Meeting House**

The increase in the number of Quakers in this area led to the establishment of a place of meeting and worship. This was as early as 1740.

The meeting house long since gone was built of logs and was a simple building, without any architectural plan other than for use, as most of the Quaker Meeting houses are known to have been.

The location of the site of this early place of worship was found, fortunately, in a deed and plat annexed to a tract of 383 acres of land conveyed in 1800 by Robert West and Mary his wife and William Clark to Thomas Jennings, which lay along the upper branches of Fork Creek and showed the main stream above the angle, and the change of direction.

Of particular interest is the plat made by John Edwards, the deputy Surveyor, for Louisa County, on which he indicated two pointers, or corners, of the tract of land on which the old meeting house stood.

These two pointers of the Church tract as shown on the plat and also given in the description in the deed leaves no doubt as to the site.

A study of the geography of the creek, and a present day road map indicates that the tract on which the church stood was above the present day Shannon Hill Road and west of the crossing of Fork Creek on that road.

By actual measurement, the meeting house, using the distances on the plat, stood 325 yards from the angle or turn in direction of the creek, below this change in its course, which would place the site close to Shannon Hill Road.<sup>16</sup>

This place of meeting was abandoned when the membership gradually declined, with the members moving to new settlements to the west. The ones who remained were placed under the care of the parent meeting at Cedar Creek, and at sometime before the date of the deed in 1800, the church building had disappeared.

The abutting landowners to this tract of land, were names found among the Quaker families in this area Hailey, Clark, and Johnson.

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16. *Louisa County Deed Book T*, p. 121 *et seq.*

