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RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) IN CANADA :  
East Farnham Monthly Meeting, Quebec

MG 17, G 3

Finding Aid No. 1309 / Instrument de recherche no 1309

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Canada

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MG 17, RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) in Canada : East Farnham  
G 3 Monthly Meeting, Que.

Microfiche, 1822-1911. 50 fiche. Finding Aid No. 1309.

The Farnham Meeting of Friends was a Monthly Meeting of Ferrisburg Quarterly Meeting (Orthodox), which belonged to New York Yearly Meeting. It was established by Vermont Friends who, because of the unpopularity of Quaker attitudes towards the War of the American Revolution, left New England and settled at Allen's Corner (later East Farnham) in Brome County, Lower Canada. Unofficial meetings for worship began about 1814 and were formally authorized by Ferrisburg Monthly Meeting in 1821. The first meeting house was built in 1823. The Preparative Meeting was established in 1826 and the Monthly Meeting set off in 1842. It was eventually laid down in 1902.

The original records, which are in the Archives of New York Yearly Meeting of Friends, were microfiched in 1983 for the Canadian Friends Historical Association, Toronto, Ontario. The Public Archives of Canada acquired a copy of the microfiche in 1983 through the courtesy of Jane V. Zavitz, Librarian of the Friends Collection at Pickering College, Newmarket, Ontario.

Finding Aid No. 1309 contains an historical account of the Farnham Meeting derived from The Story of the Farnham Meeting ... , 1820-1902, by S.A. Zielinski (Fulford, P.Q. : 1961), and a table of contents for the microfiche. A summary of the registers of births, marriages, burials, removals, and members, in the collection is provided by the Guide to Parish Registers (Thematic Guide No. 1206).

Records of the Farnham Meeting of Friends (Orthodox), which was the only Quaker meeting in Quebec before the establishment of the Montreal Meeting in the mid-twentieth century. The records consist mainly of the minutes of the Preparative Meeting (Men, 1826-1878, and Women, 1822-1878) and of the Monthly Meeting, 1842-1902 (which include the Ministers and Elders Preparative Meeting, 1845-1902). Also included are the Treasurer's Book, 1853-1903, and registers of births, marriages, burials, removals, and members, 1839-1911.

May 1984

7-9653

J.P. Birkett

Pre-Confederation

EXCERPTS FROM : THE STORY OF  
THE  
FARNHAM MEETING

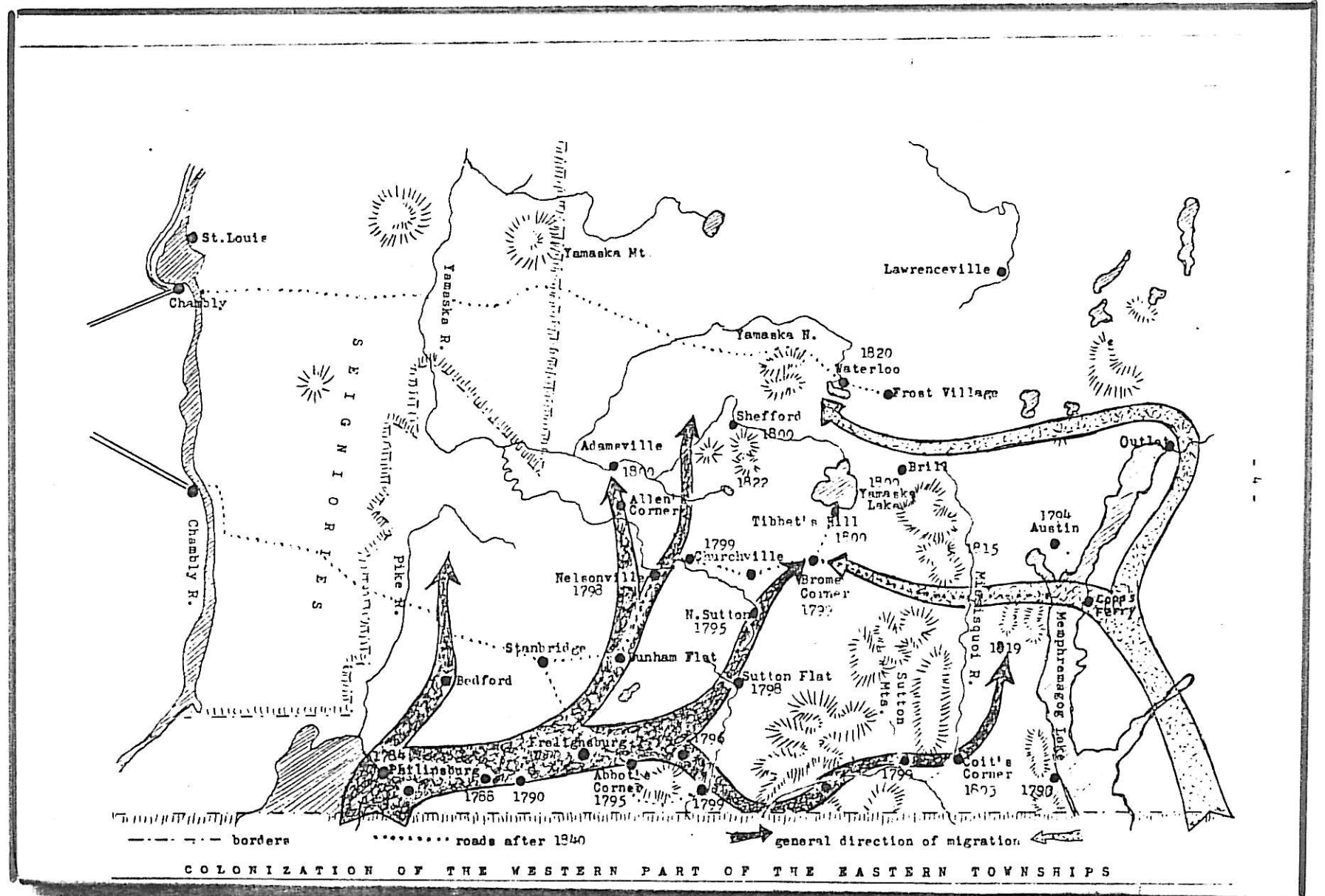
A QUAKER MEETING  
IN  
ALLEN'S CORNER

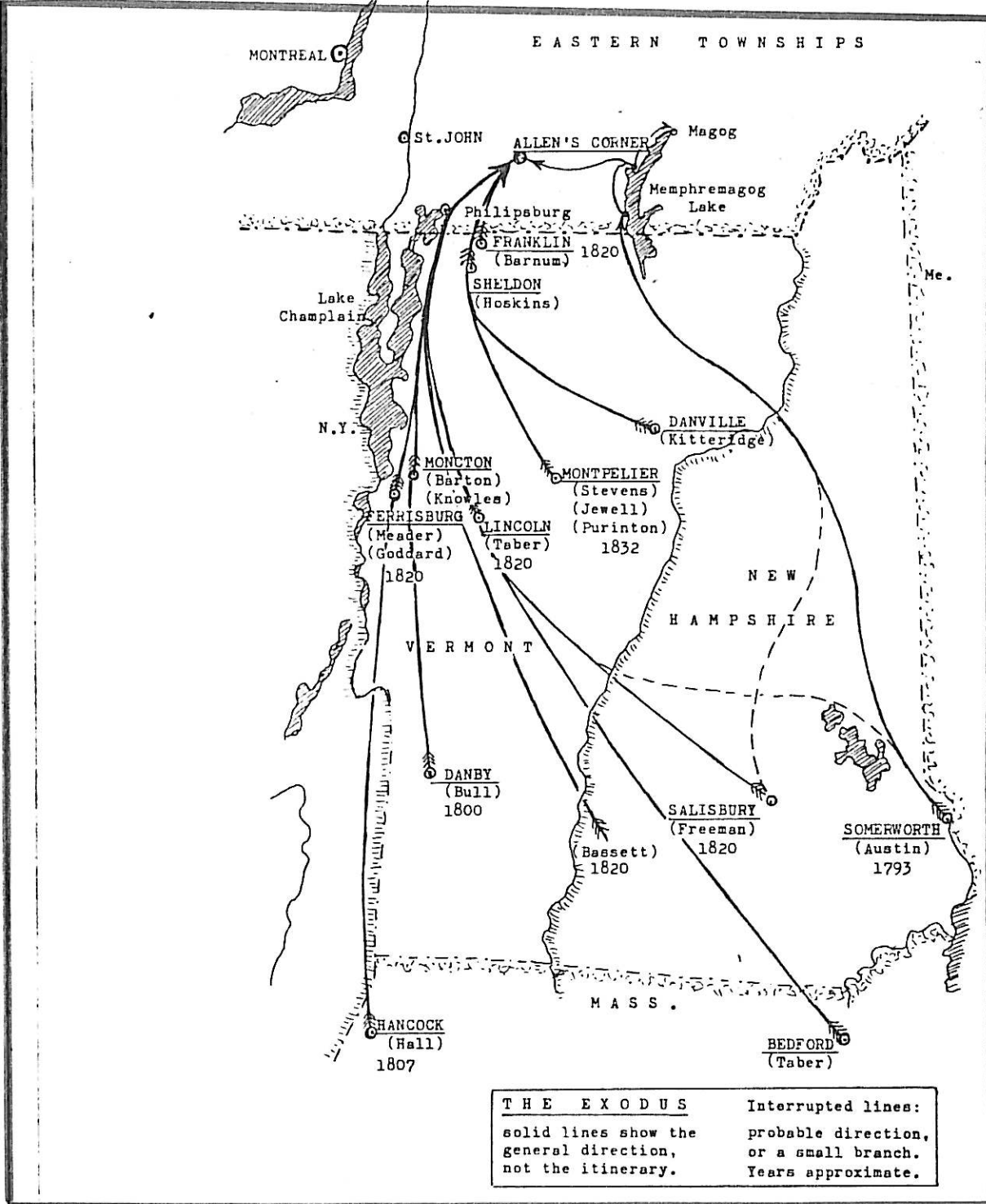
EAST FARNHAM TOWNSHIP  
BROME COUNTY  
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC  
CANADA

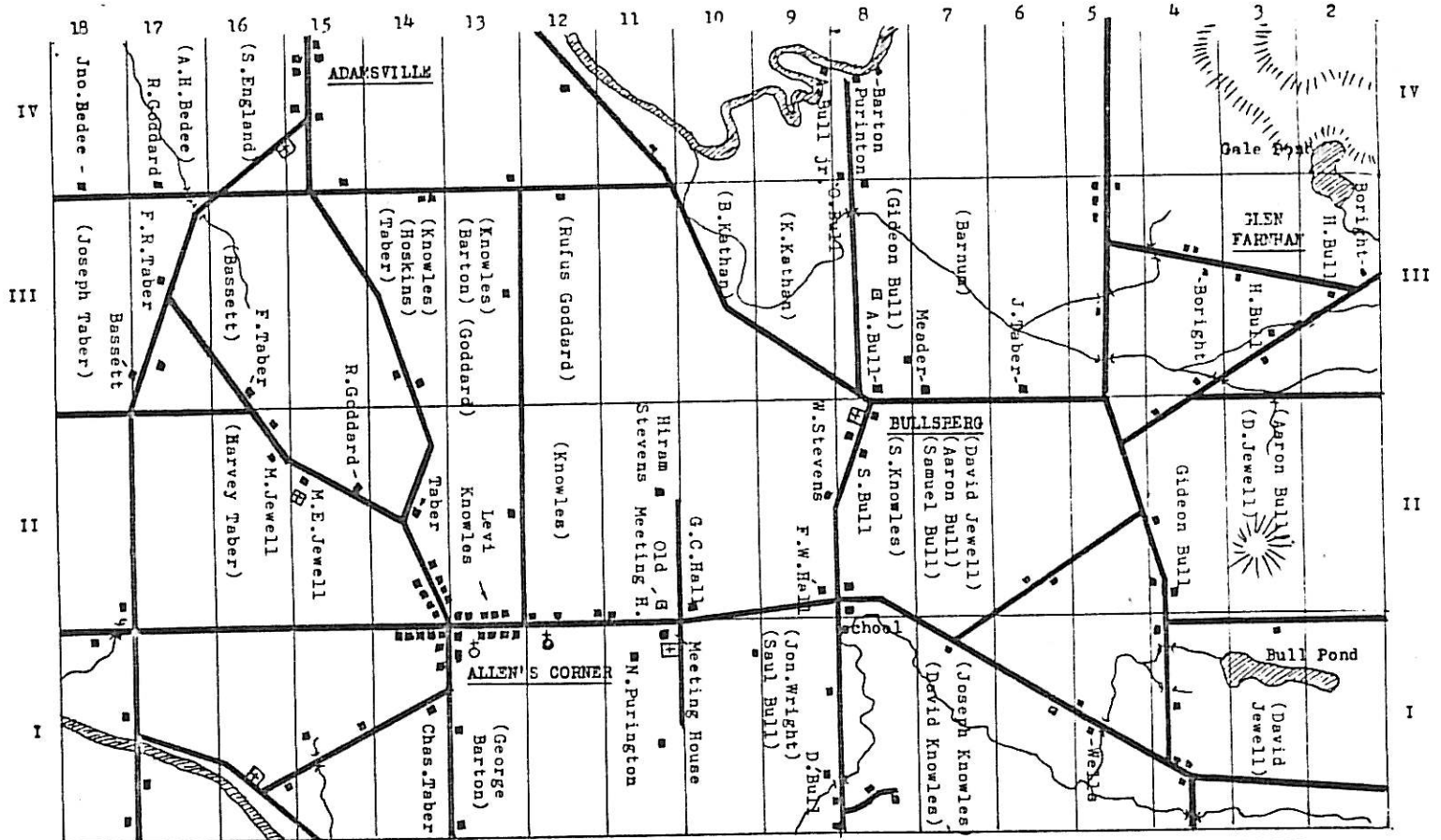
1820 · 1902

By  
S. A. ZIELINSKI  
FULFORD · P. Q.

1961







TOPOGRAPHICAL SKETCH & CADASTRAL PLAN of ALLEN'S CORNER & VICINITY.

1 : 35,000



## THE MEETING

### The Genealogy of the Farnham Meeting.

- 1671 - Flushing Monthly Meeting (Long Island).
- 1725 - Purchase Monthly Meeting.
- 1744 - Oblong Monthly Meeting.
- 1769 - Nine Partners Monthly Meeting.
- 1778 - Easton Monthly Meeting.
- 1795 - Danby Monthly Meeting.
- 1801 - Ferrisburg Monthly Meeting.
- 1842 - Farnham Monthly Meeting.

### The Chronology of the Farnham Meeting.

- 1814-1819 - Meetings for worship.
- 1820 - Request for meetings for worship on the 1-st & 5-th day.
- 1821 - Request granted by Ferrisburg Monthly Meeting.
- 1822 - Indulged Meeting.
- 1823 - First Meeting House.
- 1826 - Preparative Meeting.
- 1828 - Meeting laid down.
- 1828 - Meeting re-opened as Orthodox.
- 1831 - First Meeting House destroyed by fire.
- 1834 - Second Meeting House.
- 1840 - Monthly Meeting on Probation.
- 1842 - Monthly Meeting.
- 1853 - Meeting divided. Wilburites hold separate meetings.
- 1871 - Third Meeting House.
- 1902 - Meeting laid down.
- 1907 - Meeting House sold and pulled down.
- 1917 - Friends Cemetery Co. in Cowansville incorporated.
- 1950 - Occasional Meetings for Worship resumed by Montreal Monthly Meeting.

Meetings for worship were taking place even before 1818. It is more than likely that they started as soon as Aaron Bull and Knowleses came from Vermont, which must have been around 1814. By 1820 three families: Knowleses, Bulls, and Meaders decided that they will have a regular meeting, and sent a request to Ferrisburg to held a meeting for worship on the 1-st day.

This request was signed by 14 applicants: 7 Knowleses, 5 Bulls, and 2 Meaders. Its delivery took 23 days. It was sent on Sept., 4th, and received in Ferrisburg on the 27th.

The 14 founders of the Meeting were: David Knowles (David E.); Anne Knowles (probably Anna Fish, wife of David jr.); David Knowles jr.; Asa Knowles; Jemima Knowles ("aunt" of Hannah); John Knowles (brother of David E.); Hannah Knowles (later wife of George C. Hall); Aaron Bull; Phila (Knowles) Bull; Abijah Bull (wife of Gideon); Nicesa Bull (later wife of James Meader); Margaret Bull (sister of Aaron); James Meader, Ribuer Meader.

On January, 3, 1821 the request was granted for one year. One Meeting for Worship on Sunday, and one on Thursday. They were to take place in the house of David E. Knowles, about a mile north from Allen's Corner on the east side of the road to Adamsville.

In Ferrisburg a committee was selected to visit the new meeting. Its members were: Ann N. Hoag, Thos. Robinson, Chileca Wood, Nathan Austin, Moses H. Bedee, Valentin Meader, S. Gregory, and Larez Otis.

On April 18, 1822 the meeting was allowed as Indulged Meeting. A year later the first Meeting House was built on lot II/11 across the road from the present monument.

In 1826 the meeting became a Preparative Meeting. By this time it developed normally and had plenty of committees: for the care of schools, for the Indian affairs, for the care of the meeting house, "and make fire therein", for the poor, to investigate the morals of Henry Knowles, to establish the quota paid to Ferrisburg, and so on. There were also Friends appointed to take part in each Monthly Meeting in Ferrisburg.

The first burying ground of the meeting was located on the lot II/15, which later on became Jewells' property, and therefore it is known as "Jewells' Burying Ground". It was used since 1826 and probably much earlier. Here are the graves of Charles Tater and of both his wives, of Joseph Taber, of John (Pere) Hoskins, of David Knowles, and of many others.

It comes as a shock when we read that in 1823 the Farnham Meeting was "laid down" (closed). No explanations are offered in the records. What actually happened was that among the elders of the Ferrisburg Meeting there was a majority of Hicksites, and they were running the meeting for a while. Since Farnham Preparative was orthodox, it was laid down. It was a very irregular procedure: to close a meeting without even consulting the members. Then shortly after the Ferrisburg Meeting became orthodox too, and Farnham was reinstated.

A year later there was a sort of a census among the members. Its purpose was to make the members share the financial responsibilities of the meeting proportionally to their earthly possessions. The first draft of these possessions was made in 1829. It was not accepted, and a second one was made in 1830. According to the first draft the wealthiest member of the meeting was David Knowles: his farm was evaluated at \$ 399.00, when the poorest was Benjamin Taber (\$ 21.00). The reason why this first was rejected was that several members were entirely omitted in the first version although they were rather in the upper bracket: Aaron Bull - in the second draft \$ 400.00; Nicholas Austin \$ 350.00; Reuben Goddard - \$ 200. Benjamin Taber dropped from \$ 21.00 to \$ 15.00.

What this evaluation meant is hard to say. It could not be the actual value of any farm however poor. The prices then were not as low, as we may think now. A pound of butter was 15¢, and a dozen eggs 10¢. Thus the poorest Friend's property would not be worth more than \$ 70.00 in our currency, which obviously is impossible. On the other hand it was not the actual yearly contribution to the meeting, because it would be much too high.

The library of the meeting was started in 1830. The first purchase was of a blank book, and of a book case (\$ 2.50). The first entries were 54 copies of the London Meeting Epistle, extracts of the Yearly Meeting in New York, and some back copies of the same, "which were all read to our edification". The library finally had 130 books, not counting "epistles", and periodicals. It is now in Brome County Historical Museum in Knowlton, Que.

In 1831 the first meeting house burned down. There was a committee to work out plans for building a new house, but after a year of deliberations it resigned. In all it took three years to build the second meeting house (1834). This time it was situated on the lot I/11 which belonged to Nathan Purinton. It was closer to the road than the existing foundations of the third house. It was facing south, and the driveway ran around it.

The house had two doors: on the left for men, and on the right for women, Facing the entrance there was the usual gallery for ministers and elders. In the centre of the gallery sat the "acknowledged" ministers then the elders, and then other ministers.

Probably a unique feature of this meeting house were two rocking chairs in front of the gallery: one occupied by Stephen Basset because of his infirmity, and the other by Frederick England for no reason.

The meetings for worship were held together by men and women, but the meetings for business were separate. A partition was erected for the latter so that they could take place simultaneously.

At the beginning of the meeting for worship everybody kept his headgear on, until somebody spoke, then the hats were removed. The meetings on the first day lasted up to three hours. They started with silence which would not be interrupted for an hour or so, but then one of the ministers would preach for another hour. It seems that short, really inspired testimonies were rare, although Abner Bedee encouraged younger members to speak in the meeting.

On the 22nd of June, 1840 the meeting was allowed as a Monthly Meeting on Probation, and finally two years later (May, 23, 1842) as a Monthly Meeting. It took nearly 22 years since the original petition.

Each month two delegates of the Farnham Meeting were supposed to attend the Monthly Meeting in Ferrisburg. This must have been quite a hardship particularly in winter. The delegates presented the minutes of their meeting, and brought back instructions, solutions of minor problems, and various requests, often for money. There were subscriptions to help the poor, the Indians, the Irish, the "people of colour in North Carolina, the school at "Ninepardners" and so on. How successful were such appeals? One of the subscriptions for the Indians raised \$ 1.56.

Friends were acting in the traditional leisurely way. When Henry Knowles was accused of immoral conduct it took nearly two years before the meeting found out that "the complaint is not supported".

After Papineau Rebellion an oath of allegiance was required from the new settlers. The Quakers from the district sent a letter in 1838 to Lord Durham assuring him of their loyalty and abhorrence of any sort of bloodshed and violence, but asking to be released from the oath. It is very characteristic of the relations which existed between the Friends, and what we call now "the larger community", that this letter was signed by practically everybody living in or around Allen's Corner, except the Bucks of course.

Starting with 1850 the Quarterly Meeting was held once a year in East Farnham. This took place in October. Many Friends from Vermont and visiting ministers attended. Obviously Friends even then did not think much about political frontiers, and did not worry that a Quarterly Meeting which belonged to New York was held in a foreign country.

The Wilbur-Gurney controversy reached East Farnham early in the fifties. In 1853 the meeting is already divided, although the Wilburite minority was very small. It consisted mostly of a few Knowleses, who held a separate meeting.

Nevertheless there were quite a few Friends disgusted by the hostility between the two factions, because in the following years many were disowned and many left the meeting of their own will. Then the division was followed by a revival, parallel to the great revival in United States. More than a dozen new members joined the meeting, and a new (third) meeting house was built, although it was not necessary at all. The old (second) house was pulled down in 1870, and the new erected in 1871. It was facing north and was built above the old driveway. Now it had only one door. The gallery was as usual at the back, and above it there was a large clock which ticked very loudly. At least this is what the last survivors of the meeting remember from their childhood.

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#### THE MEETING AND THE HOAG FAMILY

There is one aspect of the history of the Farnham Meeting which is extremely difficult to reconstruct, and this is the line of the spiritual development of the meeting. We learn for instance that in 1828 the meeting became suddenly "orthodox", apparently without any dissenters. Then again in early fifties, although this time with plenty of opposition the meeting followed Gurney. Finally in the seventies it joined in the "revival" and probably became still more evangelical.

But who decided what direction the Meeting was going to follow in each case? The Elders, the majority, the Quarterly Meeting? Unfortunately the records of the meeting do not help. They contain facts but no explanations.

The Meeting was technically isolated, yet exposed to many influences. There were books, pamphlets, and periodicals supplied by Ferrisburg, New York, and London. There were visitors, and there were travelling members of the meeting.

The first division was hardly felt in East Farnham. Yet the Ferrisburg Meeting was so strongly divided that, as we have already seen, the Hicksites won at first, and the orthodox Friends later on. And out of some nine Preparative Meetings which then belonged to Ferrisburg only two were not divided, Farnham being one of them.

What helped the meeting in 1828 was probably their close relations with Joseph Hoag. Knowleses, then very influential in the meeting, and three other families were related to Hoags by marriage, and Joseph was strongly anti-hicksite. He was also an outstanding personality, extremely sincere and outspoken. What is more he was "psychic" and often spoke in meetings about the most intimate problems of the congregation, although he could not be aware of them in any ordinary way.

But Joseph Hoag was not only an anti-hicksite, but also a Wilburite, although this second controversy only just started when he was dying. He put both Hicks and Gurney in the same category of deviators.

In the meantime the Meeting had a visit from J.J.Gurney in 1838, and the visit although a very short one, left a very deep impression. Gurney came to Allen's Corner on the 10th of October, and was greeted not only as a famous Quaker, but also as a friend of the Governor, Earl of Durham. He advised the Meeting what to do in connection with the recent Papineau rebellion; he practically dictated the letter to Durham, and a delegation left immediately for Quebec.

In 1843 the meeting had a visit of Lindley Murray Hoag, son of Joseph. Lindley unlike Joseph was an evangelist, and he came to East Farnham several times.

Thus when the second division started the Meeting was torn in two opposite directions: one represented by Joseph Hoag, the other by J.J.Gurney, and Lindley Hoag. The short visit of Gurney could be forgotten but Lindley Hoag was as strong a personality as his father, and he was also "psychic". He travelled not only in America, but in British Isles, and Scandinavia where he performed a sort of a minor miracle by discovering a small community in the mountains, so isolated and remote, that even the local highlanders never heard about it.

Apparently the Gurneite faction won, but at a very heavy cost of disownments, resignations, and of general dissatisfaction.

Lindley Hoag's influence was felt again when many new members joined the meeting during the evangelical revival, when the third meeting house was built.

Thus the fate of the Farnham Meeting was closely associated with the history of the Hoag family for half a century or more.

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## THE DECLINE

There are several theories which try to explain the decline of the Farnham Meeting. They offer many reasons: the division of the forties, the isolation, the strict attitude of the elders toward the young members marrying outside of the Society, the simplicity of the meeting for worship as compared with the glamorous services of other denominations. They are all valid, but they do not include all factors.

They do not explain for instance why small meetings established by the early settlers at a distance from larger centers had a definite span of life. Thus the earlier meetings died early, and the latest survived several decades longer. The only explanation is that the "civilisation" of cheap technology, higher wages, looser social life, and of other temptations was always catching up with the settlements after two or three generations, i.e. when the settlements became prosperous enough to make this intrusion profitable. The early community of a cooperative type would become a competitive one, where spiritual goals were soon abandoned. The uncompromizing attitude of Quakerism was here at a disadvantage compared with the opportunism of other religious denominations.

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After the short revival in the seventies the number of members started to decline rapidly. In the nineties there were about a dozen attending the meeting for worship. In 1900 "only a handful of Friends remained", and the Meeting was laid down in 1902. The meeting house was for sale but somehow nobody bought it. There was an "Episcopal Guild" who tried to buy it for a parish hall, but the transaction did not take place. Finally it was sold for lumber to a contractor Guy Morey, who pulled it down and took away. He is said to have used the lumber for construction of houses in Lachine, but this does not make much sense, as the transportation would cost more than the material.

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Just a year before the last meetings for worship took place, a committee was formed to take care of the original burying ground, called "Jewell cemetery". Keziah Jewell made a gift of land on which the burying ground was situated "in consideration that the said Plot of ground shall remain forever as such burying ground sacred to the memory of those whose mortal remains are and were buried there...". Six Tabers, two Bulls, and ten other names appear on the subscription list: "for the purpose of cleaning up the ground and further beautifying and fencing the Jewell Burying Ground". This cemetery is in a remarkably good shape today.

In January 1917 "The Friends Cemetery Company" was incorporated in Cowansville. This company still exists and takes care of the Meeting House burying ground.

The Bullsberg burying ground was incorporated in the Anglican cemetery. The old graves are in very good preservation.

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There is no moral to this story but there is a sequence. Three decades passed when no regular meetings for worship took place either in Vermont or in the Province of Quebec. Then a new Meeting was opened in Montreal, and new Meetings in Vermont soon followed. There is now a Quarterly Meeting in the same area where the old Ferrisburg Meeting was so active a century ago. Meetings for worship take place in the Eastern Townships.



RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) in Canada :

East Farnham Monthly Meeting, Quebec

MG 17, G 3

<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Microfiche No.</u>
<u>MONTHLY MEETING</u>		
Men's Minutes 1	23 May 1842 - 23 Oct. 1844	1
" " 2	18 Nov. 1844 - 19 June 1848	2
" " 3	19 June 1848 - 23 June 1851	3
" " 4	23 June 1851 - 15 Sept. 1854	4
" " 5	15 Sept. 1854 - 19 July 1858	5
" " 6	19 July 1858 - 22 Dec. 1862	6
" " 7	22 Dec. 1862 - 20 Aug. 1866	7
" " 8	20 Aug. 1866 - 26 Aug. 1869	8
" " 9	26 Aug. 1869 - 24 April 1873	9
" " 10	24 April 1873 - 24 Jan. 1878	10
" " 11	24 Jan. 1878 - 25 July 1878	11
Women's Minutes 1	23 May 1842 - 25 Oct. 1847	12
" " 2	25 Oct. 1847 - 19 July 1852	13
" " 3	23 Aug. 1852 - 25 July 1859	14
" " 4	25 July 1859 - 21 Oct. 1867	15

<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Microfiche No.</u>
<u>MONTHLY MEETING</u> (cont.)		
Women's Minutes 5	21 Oct. 1867 - 23 Sept. 1875	16
" " 6	23 Sept. 1875 - 23 May 1878	17
Joint Men's and Women's Minutes 6 (cont.)	24 Feb. 1878 - 28 July 1881	"
" " " " " 7	25 Aug. 1881 - 24 Feb. 1887	18
" " " " " 8	24 March 1887 - 26 Jan. 1893	19
" " " " " 9	23 Feb. 1893 - 5 Feb. 1902	20
" " " " " 10	5 Feb. 1902 - 10 Oct. 1902	21
Register of Births, Marriages, Burials, Removals, and Members	1839 - 1885	22
Register of Members	1885 - 1911	23
Register of Births, Marriages, Burials 1	1861 - 1881	24
" " " " " 2	1882 - 1911	25
Treasurer's Book 1	1853 - 1889	26
" " 2	1890 - 1903, 1857	27
Ministers and Elders Preparative (Select) Minutes 1	20 April 1845, - 22 April 1855	28
" " " " " " 2	[22 July] 1855 - 19 July 1857	29

<u>Description</u>		<u>Dates</u>	<u>Microfiche No.</u>
<u>MONTHLY MEETING (cont.)</u>			
Ministers and Elders Preparative (Select) Minutes	1	18 Oct. 1857 - 26 April 1871	30
" " " " " "	2	26 April 1871 - 23 Sept. 1880	31
" " " " " "	1	26 Jan. 1881 - 26 April 1894	32
" " " " " "	2	26 April 1894 - 10 Oct. 1902	33
<u>PREPARATIVE MEETING</u>			
Men's Minutes	1	15 June 1826 - 19 April 1832	34
" " "	2	19 April 1832 - 19 Oct. 1837	35
" " "	3	19 Oct. 1837 - 18 Sept. 1841	36
" " "	1	21 Oct. 1841 - 15 June 1848	37
" " "	2	15 June 1848 - 18 May 1854	38
" " "	3	18 May 1854 - 15 Dec. 1859	39
" " "	4	19 Jan. 1860 - 18 Oct. 1866	40
" " "	5	15 Nov. 1866 - 15 June 1871	41
" " "		15 June 1871 - 21 March 1878	42
Women's Minutes		18 April 1822 - 14 Sept. 1826	43
" " "	1	15 June 1826 - 19 June 1834	44

<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Microfiche No.</u>
<u>PREPARATIVE MEETING</u> (cont.)		
Women's Minutes 2	17 July 1834 - 14 April 1842	45
" " 3	14 April 1842 - 18 Jan. 1849	46
" " 4	18 Jan. 1849 - 15 Nov. 1849 and	
Monthly Meeting Minutes	17 Dec. 1864	47
" " 1	20 Dec. 1849 - 21 Oct. 1858	48
" " 2	21 Oct. 1858 - 20 March 1873	49
" " 3	17 April 1873 - 21 March 1878	50