

RESEARCHING THE 'FRIENDS' IN YOUR FAMILY



By Annette Burke Lytle

As many as half of today's Americans whose ancestors lived in or migrated through the mid-Atlantic region of North America in colonial times have at least one ancestor who was a member of the Society of Friends, or Quakers.¹

Founding & Beliefs

George Fox (1624–1691), an Englishman, is credited with founding the Society of Friends during a time of great religious upheaval in England. Many dissenting religions were established in the seventeenth century by people who opposed what they saw as the corruption of the established church. But Fox failed to find a religious message that spoke to him, even among the radical preachers of the time.

By 1647, when he was 23, he had “forsaken all the priests [and] the separate preachers also” and

despaired of finding anyone who could speak to his spiritual needs. But “when all my hopes. . . were gone. . . then, oh then, I heard a voice which said, ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,’ and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.”²

Fox believed that God had spoken to him directly, and this experience became central to Quaker theology. An authentic inward relationship with the Creator was available to anyone, and early Quakers interpreted this as the second coming of Christ, so priests and sacraments and all the traditional customs of Christianity were no longer necessary. Beyond that, they felt their relationship with God separated them from other humans, a stance that caused non-Quakers to view them as arrogant. That perception won them no friends, but their worst offense was refusal to pay the

1. Ancestry, “Research Guide to Finding Your Quaker Ancestors” (<http://ancestrycdn.com/support/us/2016/11/findquakerancestors.pdf>).

2. Pink Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

required tithes to the established church. This led to widespread persecution of Friends in England.

Quaker worship involves a liturgy of silence, allowing direct experience of God, alternating with individuals sharing messages from God they have received. Women and men were equal participants in worship, as well as in the government of the community and missionary work.

Emigration to North America

Two women Friends, Mary Fisher and Ann Austin, were the first to come to North America, arriving in Boston in 1657. New England Puritans were not hospitable to Quakers, torturing many and going so far as to hang four of them for their beliefs. Spreading the faith was a core tenet of Quaker theology, and their persistent missionary activity was offensive to the Puritans of New England.³

Rhode Island was tolerant of religious dissenters, but New Jersey and Pennsylvania were the first real havens for Quakers. The western half of New Jersey was purchased in 1674 by Quaker proprietors, and William Penn brought the first Quaker settlers to Pennsylvania in 1682.⁴

Migration Within America

Quakers' migration patterns from the late 1600s to the mid-1800s were a little different from those of other groups. They began moving south, first by water and then by the Great Wagon Road to Virginia. Their welcome there was not as frosty as in New England, but it was not warm, so many moved on to North Carolina, which was more tolerant. Those who came early by water settled in the Albermarle region. Those who came later by land settled in the Piedmont region.⁵

As Quakers came to believe that owning slaves was incompatible with their religious beliefs,

they began to experience hostility from their slaveholding neighbors. In the first 50 years of the nineteenth century, Quakers migrated in large numbers out of North Carolina to western Pennsylvania and to Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan.⁶

While other Quakers moved west through New York or north into Canada, it's important to understand the north to south and then south to northwest pattern followed by many Quakers in order to follow the records.

Organization of Meetings

Quaker meetings are organized in a hierarchy. Though there are some minor variations, the following is the basic structure:

- Preparative meetings were where the local community gathered to prepare business that would be sent to the monthly meetings. This business could include complaints brought against members, intentions to marry, recommendations for accepting new members, and similar actions.
- The business of a number of preparative meetings would be dealt with at a monthly meeting. These meetings produced minutes and registers that are of significant genealogical value.
- Quarterly meetings were made up of representatives from the various monthly meetings under their purview. These meetings dealt with matters that were too "weighty" to be handled at the local level. Quarterly meetings established and dis-established monthly meetings.
- Yearly meetings were attended by representatives from the quarterly meetings

3. Rufus Matthew Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (London: Macmillan, 1911).

4. Ibid.

5. L. Maren Wood, "Quakers," *Anchor: A North Carolina History Online Resource* (<http://ncpedia.org/anchor/quakers>).

6. Elbert Russell, *The History of Quakerism* (New York: Macmillan, 1942).

subordinate to them, though any Quaker in good standing could attend. Minutes were taken, but these meetings generally dealt with larger policy issues and not individual Friends.⁷

The Quaker Dating System

Quakers rejected the common names of days and months because those names were derived from the names of pagan gods. They substituted numbers, which sounds easy to understand, but the change from the Julian to Gregorian calendar by England and North America in 1752 throws a wrench into the works. The first day of the year moved from March 25 in the Julian calendar to January 1 in the Gregorian calendar in 1752.⁸ Table 1 shows the Quaker months before and after the change:

The date 27 4mo 1731 would be June 27, 1731. However, June 27, 1761, after the calendar switch, will be written 27 6mo 1761. The days of the week

are easier: Sunday is the first day and the days go on in order through Saturday, the seventh day.

Quaker Schisms

In the nineteenth century, Quakers began to split over which aspects of the faith should be emphasized. Hicksite Quakers emphasized the Inner Light as their guide, while Orthodox Quakers emphasized the role of Scripture. Orthodox Quakers further split into Gurneyite, Wilburite, Conservative, or Primitive groups. Some Hicksites broke off into Congregational or Progressive groups.⁹ In looking at the records of Quaker meetings, it is important to know these groups exist.

Information Found in Quaker Records

Monthly meeting minutes contain marriage records—the process of marriage for Quakers involved declaring intention to marry, an examination of whether the parties were free to

Table 1. Quaker Months

Month	Called Before 1752	Called During and After 1752
January	Eleventh	First
February	Twelfth	Second
March	First	Third
April	Second	Fourth
May	Third	Fifth
June	Fourth	Sixth
July	Fifth	Seventh
August	Sixth	Eighth
September	Seventh	Ninth
October	Eighth	Tenth
November	Ninth	Eleventh
December	Tenth	Twelfth

7. Ellen Thomas Berry and David Allen Berry, *Our Quaker Ancestors: Finding Them in Quaker Records* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1987).

8. "The 1752 Calendar Change," *CT State Library* (<http://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/hg/colonialresearch/calendar>).

9. "A Brief History of the Branches of Friends," *Quaker Information Center: A Gateway to Quakerism, Earlham School of Religion* (<http://quakerinfo.org/quakerism/branches/history>).

marry, and parental consent if the parents were living. Disciplinary actions were recorded in the minutes. If a complaint was registered against a member of the community, a committee was appointed to visit the member and urge that person to acknowledge fault. If the member refused, he or she would be disowned until acknowledgement of the fault was made. Certificates of removal were issued when a person or family moved to the jurisdiction of another monthly meeting. The certificates indicated that the individual or family was in good standing with the meeting they were leaving.

Monthly meeting registers usually contain birth and death records, but they may also contain marriage records, registration of certificates of removal, records of slave manumissions, and whatever else a meeting decided to keep track of.

Ancestry has the largest collection of digitized Quaker records, but there are issues with the way some of these records have been classified. In order to get the most out of *Ancestry's* collection, Peggy Baldwin's 2017 article in *NGS Magazine* is a recommended read.¹⁰

Finding Records Through QuakerMeetings.com

In order to find the records of a Quaker ancestor, it is necessary to know that person's monthly meeting. A search by geographical area for monthly meetings can be done at *QuakerMeetings.com*.¹¹ Choose the MEETING SEARCH tab. The search form permits a search by county or state/province if the meeting name is not known.

A search for Lenawee County, Michigan, shows seven monthly meetings in that county, both active and no longer active. Selecting the Raisin Valley meeting as an example, its page indicates that it is

an active meeting that was formed October 6, 1830. Originally, it was called Adrian. The meeting's website and physical location are given.

The important information for genealogists comes further down the page in a section called WHERE RECORDS ARE KEPT. Malone College, now Malone University, in Canton, Ohio, has minutes and registers of this meeting, mostly from the nineteenth century, though a note says the earliest records of the meeting have been lost. Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania has a collection called "Farmington Friends Settled in Michigan, 1816–1831," from before this meeting was established. The Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan has some minutes that are missing from the Malone University collection. The other resource listed is "mf LDS 17271, 1533220–21." These are Family History Library microfilm numbers. The first film, 17271, has been digitized but is viewable only in a Family History Center. The other two films, 1533220 and 1533221, are digitized and viewable without restrictions.

The entry also lists a book of abstracts, *Michigan Quakers, Abstracts of Fifteen Meetings of the Society of Friends 1831–1960*, by Ann and Conrad Burton. It also states that information about this meeting is in Hinshaw's *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy*, volume 4, pages 1347–1386.

Hinshaw's Encyclopedia & Index

Two resources cover most, though not all, of *Ancestry's* online Quaker records. One is the six volumes of William Wade Hinshaw's *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy*.¹² The other is "U.S., Hinshaw Index to Selected Quaker Records, 1680–1940."¹³ Both collections can be accessed through *Ancestry's* the card catalog by entering the keyword

10. Peggy Baldwin, "Navigating Ancestry's Quaker Records: A Four-Part Strategy," *NGS Magazine* 43 (January–March 2017): 27–33.

11. "Monthly Meetings in North America: A Quaker Index," *QuakerMeetings.com* (<http://quakermeetings.com>).

12. "U.S., Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy, Vol I–VI, 1607–1943," *Ancestry* (<http://ancestry.com/search/collections/encycloquakergen>).

13. "U.S., Hinshaw Index to Selected Quaker Records, 1680–1940," *Ancestry* (<http://ancestry.com/search/collections/quakerindex>).

Quaker. That catalog search also provides access to Ancestry's collection of Quaker meeting records, "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935."¹⁴

Hinshaw's encyclopedia contains these volumes:

- Volume 1: North Carolina meetings
- Volume 2: New Jersey and Pennsylvania meetings
- Volume 3: New York meetings
- Volume 4: Ohio meetings, part one
- Volume 5: Ohio meetings, part two
- Volume 6: Virginia meetings

Hinshaw's index covers the following:¹⁵

- Indiana: 86 meetings
- Iowa: 84 meetings
- Kansas: 49 meetings
- Pennsylvania: 13 meetings
- New Jersey: 4 meetings
- Some meetings from these states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin

Finding Records Using Hinshaw

Selecting volume 2 of the encyclopedia brings up the index to the oldest meetings that belonged to the Philadelphia yearly meeting. These include Salem and Burlington monthly meetings in New Jersey, and Philadelphia and Falls monthly meetings in Pennsylvania. All date from the period 1676 to 1683. The first few pages of each volume of the encyclopedia provide useful background and history of Quakers for understanding the records.

A very important page in each volume is the page of abbreviations. In volume 2 it is image 13. Even experienced Quaker researchers keep a copy of the abbreviations handy as they use the encyclopedia.

The encyclopedia entries are alphabetical by surname. Under each surname are dates in a year, month, day format, then a first name, and an abbreviated note about the nature of the event (see figure 1). For example:

HUNT

1708, 4, 15. Robert, Burl. Co., m Elizabeth Paine, Burl. Co., at Burl. Mtg

This means that on June 15, 1708, Robert Hunt of Burlington County married Elizabeth Paine of Burlington County at the Burlington Meeting. (This is before 1752, so the fourth month is June.)

BURLINGTON MONTHLY MEETING	
<p>HUDSON, continued</p> <p>West N. J., at house of Thomas Stokes</p> <p>1710, 6, 17. Mary Hudson, Burl. Co., m John Eves, Burl. Co., at Northampton Mtg</p> <p>HUGH</p> <p>1780, 2, 4. Priscilla [Hug] gc</p> <p>1788, 2, 21. Mary, dt John, Gloster Co., m Emmon Williams, s Emmon, Talbot Co., Md., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>1780, 3, 4. Elizabeth roof Phila. MM</p> <p>1780, 3, 21. Elizabeth, dt Elias, Phila., m Emmon Williams, Bucks Co., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>1780, 10, 2. John, Gloster Co., West N. J., m Mercy Middleton, wd, Burl. Co., at Mtg, Northampton Twp., Burl. Co.</p> <p>1780, 18, 1. Mary, w John, got Haddonfield MM</p> <p>1788, 2, 18. Mary, Burl. Co., m Thomas Lippincott, Burl. Co., at Mtg, Northampton Twp., Burl. Co.</p> <p>1740, 9, 10. Hope rpd mod</p> <p>1741, 3, 20. Sarah, dt John, Gloster Co., West N. J., m Benjamin Hancock, s Joseph, Burl. Co., at Mt. Holly Mtg, N. J.</p> <p>1788, 18, 6. Hannah con mod (m brother-in-law)</p> <p>HUGHES</p> <p>1746, 10, 1. Rebecca [Hugh] con mod</p> <p>1766, 9, 1. Elizabeth, dt Elias & Rebecca, got Buckingham MM</p> <p>1769, 5, 1. Aaron rmt Jane West</p> <p>1769, 6, 5. Jane [Hews], w Aaron, got Haddonfield MM</p> <p>HULME</p> <p>1777, 7, 7. George dis mou</p> <p>1789, 1, 5. John roof Falls MM</p> <p>1791, 11, 7. John [Hulmes], Jr., got Phila. MM</p> <p>1805, 2, 4. Martha (form Craft) dis mod</p> <p>HUMPHRIES</p> <p>1711, 4, 21. Joshua [Humphrie], Burl. Co., m Rachel Horner, Burl. Co., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>1718, 11, 1. Joshua ltm Elizabeth Wills</p> <p>1784, 2, 9. Jonathan rmt Sarah Dougherty</p> <p>1784, 18, 1. Sarah [Humphries] got Marion MM, Pa.</p> <p>1789, 11, 22. Elizabeth, wd, Burl. Co., m Joseph Penimore, Burl. Co., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>1787, 9, 24. Joshua [Humphreys], s Joshua, Burl. Co., m Increase Lippincott, dt James, [Co. Burl. Co., at Mtg, Northampton Twp., Burl. Co.]</p> <p>1788, 4, 8. Increase [Humphreys] got Haddonfield MM</p> <p>1749, 4, 5. Joshua [Humphries] & w, Increase, roof Haddonfield MM, dtd 1749, 3, 8</p> <p>1769, 5, 7. Joshua [Humphries] & w, Increase, & ch, Joshua, Anna & Isaac, got Haddonfield MM</p> <p>HUNT</p> <p>1697, 4, 6. William ltm Margaret Person</p> <p>1708, 4, 16. Robert, Burl. Co., m Elizabeth Paine, Burl. Co., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>1712, 8, 5. Mary ltm Caleb Shreve, Jr.</p>	<p>1718, 9, 2. Elizabeth ltm John Harvey</p> <p>1718, 2, 6. Sarah ltm John Gibson</p> <p>1780, 2, 14. William, Bucks Co., m Mary Woolman, dt John, Burl. Co., at Mtg, Springfield Twp., Burl. Co.</p> <p>1780, 6, 1. Mary got Falls MM</p> <p>1780, 8, 3. Hannah ltm Jonathan Shreve</p> <p>1788, 2, 18. Elizabeth, dt Robert, Burl. Co., m Thomas Ellis, s Francis, Burl. Co., at Mtg, Hancockfield Twp., Burl. Co.</p> <p>1783, 4, 4. Robert got Haddonfield MM</p> <p>1789, 7, 13. Samuel, Burl. Co., m Mary Gardener, dt Matthew, Burl. Co., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>1748, 9, 7. Samuel dis dismity</p> <p>1808, 10, 17. John, Jr., s John & Esther, Burl. Co., m Ann Brown, dt Joseph & Susanna, Burl. Co., at Mtg, Mansfield Neck, N. J.</p> <p>1805, 11, 4. Ann got Fresham MM</p> <p>1826, 11, 6. Clayton, minor, roof Fresham MM, dtd 1826, 10, 6</p> <p>HUSTON</p> <p>1813, 6, 7. Margaret [Hewston] roof Chester MM, dtd 1813, 5, 6</p> <p>1816, 3, 4. Margaret got ND MM</p> <p>HUTCHIN</p> <p>1780, 1, 5. Sarah con mod</p> <p>1784, 7, 2. John reeq</p> <p>1777, 7, 7. Elizabeth dis mou</p> <p>1784, 5, 2. Isaac got ND MM</p> <p>1791, 18, 5. Charles [Hutchins] got Phila. MM</p> <p>1818, 6, 1. William, minor, roof Upper Springfield MM, dtd 1818, 5, 8</p> <p>1884, 5, 2. William got Chesterfield MM</p> <p>HUTCHINSON</p> <p>1687, 4, 6. George gc</p> <p>1789, 7, 11. Isaac [Hutchinson], s John, Burl. Co., m Mary Allison, dt Richard, Burl. Co., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>1789, 1, 2. Mary got Falls MM</p> <p>1788, 11, 1. Hannah roof Falls MM</p> <p>1783, 10, 2. Hannah got Falls MM</p> <p>1825, 4, 10. John, Jr., s John & Margaret, Phila., m Sarah W. Peirce, dt Joseph & Mary, Burl., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>1828, 6, 2. Sarah W., w John, Jr., got Phila. MM</p> <p>1825, 18, 1. Joseph B., s John & Elizabeth, Bucks Co., m Abigail Pittman, dt Abel & Catherine, Burl. Co., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>1886, 2, 6. Abigail B., w Joseph, got Middleton MM</p> <p>HYERSON</p> <p>1711, 10, 20. Elizabeth, dt Obediah, Burl. Co., m Robert Wright, Burl., at Burl. Mtg</p> <p>IBLE</p> <p>1684, 3, 5. Nathaniel got Phila. MM, to m Eliza Annas</p>

Figure 1. Sample page from Hinshaw's encyclopedia

The next step is to find the original record by going to Ancestry's collection, "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935." On the right side of the search box is the browse box that allows

14. "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935," Ancestry (<http://ancestry.com/search/collections/quakermeetmins>).

15. "U.S., Hinshaw Index to Selected Quaker Records, 1680–1940," Ancestry (<http://ancestry.com/search/collections/quakerindex>), see "About" section.

ancestry Home Trees Search DNA Health Help Extras Hire an Expert 99+

Search > Birth, Marriage & Death

U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681-1935

Search ☒ Match all terms exactly

First & Middle Name(s) **Last Name**

Day **Month** **Year** **Location**

Lived In City, County, State, Count

Any Event City, County, State, Count

Add family member: Father Mother Spouse

First & Middle Name(s) **Last Name**

Father

Mother

Spouse

Keyword

e.g. pilot or "Flying Tigers" ▾

Browse this collection

To browse this image set, select from the options below.

Meeting State

New Jersey ▾

County

Burlington ▾

Monthly Meeting

Burlington Monthly Meeting ▾

Title

Membership, 1828-1935

Minutes of Women Friends

Minutes, 1677-1777

Minutes, 1678-1737

Minutes, 1678-1737 (Film)

Minutes, 1737-1756

Minutes, 1737-1756 (Film)

Minutes, 1748-1807

Figure 2. "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935" search screen on Ancestry

selection of the state, county, and meeting (see figure 2). Browsing the collection of Burlington Monthly Meeting "Minutes, 1678–1737" reveals that Robert and Elizabeth first declared their intention of marrying at the monthly meeting on May 3, 1708,¹⁶ and they made their second declaration on June 7, at which time they were given permission to marry (see figure 3, next page).¹⁷ A copy of their marriage certificate is found in the "Marriages, Births and Deaths, 1677–1765," records of the Burlington Monthly Meeting collection.¹⁸

Certificates of Removal

Certificates of removal are valuable for following Quaker ancestors as they migrate. When members

of the Society of Friends wished to "remove" to the jurisdiction of another meeting, a committee was formed to look into their standing, both in terms of religious faith and of secular considerations, such as being free from debt. On January 3, 1791, Cadwalader Foulke, his wife Phoebe, and his daughter Sarah were granted a certificate to move from the Burlington Monthly Meeting to the Falls Monthly Meeting in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.¹⁹ These certificates almost always name all family members.

Disciplinary Actions

Disciplinary matters often provide the most interesting details about ancestors' lives in the

16. "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935," Ancestry > New Jersey > Burlington > Burlington Monthly Meeting > Minutes, 1678–1737 > image 306, marriage intention, Hunt-Paine, 3 May 1708.

17. "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935," Ancestry > New Jersey > Burlington > Burlington Monthly Meeting > Minutes, 1678–1737 > image 307, marriage intention, Hunt-Paine, 7 June 1708.

18. "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935," Ancestry > New Jersey > Burlington > Burlington Monthly Meeting > Marriages, Births and Deaths, 1677–1765 > image 60, marriage, Hunt-Paine, 1708 [4th month?].

19. "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935," Ancestry > New Jersey > Burlington > Burlington Monthly Meeting > Certificates of Removal, 1787–1879 > image 25, Cadwalader Foulke, 3 January 1791.

Additional Resources

In addition to the resources mentioned in the footnotes, here are additional resources to help with Quaker research.

Benny, Sally. "Quaker Genealogy." *American Ancestors*. <http://americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/read/quaker-guide>.

"Digital Quaker Collection." *Earlham School of Religion*. <http://esr.earlham.edu/dqc>.

The Religious Society of Friends. <http://quaker.org>.

Jones, Rufus M., Isaac Sharpless, and Amelia M. Gummere. *Quakers in the American Colonies*. London: Macmillan, 1911. Digital version available at *Internet Archive* (<http://archive.org/details/quakersinamerica00joneuoft>).

Thomas, Allen C., and Richard H. Thomas. *A History of the Society of Friends in America*. Philadelphia, John C. Winston & Co., 1895. Digital version available at *Internet Archive* (<http://archive.org/details/historyofsociety01thom>).

"U.S. Quaker Research (Society of Friends)." *FamilySearch Wiki*. [http://familysearch.org/wiki/en/U.S._Quaker_Research_\(Society_of_Friends\)](http://familysearch.org/wiki/en/U.S._Quaker_Research_(Society_of_Friends)).

committee was appointed to try to persuade these men of the error of their ways.

Final Thoughts

These are just some examples of the rich detail that can be found in Quaker records. Using the resources and records discussed above, set forth and search for those "Friends" in your family.

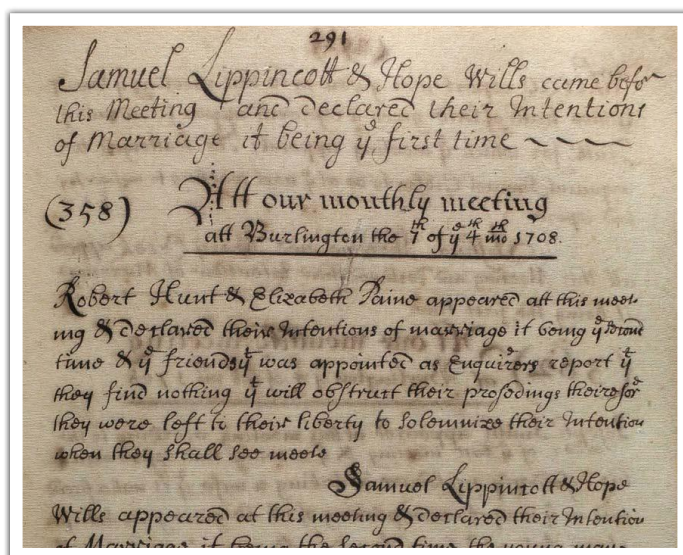


Figure 3. Record of second marriage declaration for Robert Hunt and Elizabeth Paine



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Society of Friends. At the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting on January 26, 1776, Samuel Moon, who had married and then removed to Bucks County, "attended with a paper condemning his unchaste conduct before marriage," and asking forgiveness for his "sinful conduct."²⁰

At the same meeting, Thomas Dorsey, a grocer, and seven other men were condemned for "assum[ing] a warlike appearance" and accepting a military commission "which subjects him to act in the warlike measures now carrying on."²¹ A

20. "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935," *Ancestry* > Pennsylvania > Philadelphia > Philadelphia Monthly Meeting > Minutes, 1771–1777 > image 587, Samuel Moon, 26 January 1776.

21. "U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681–1935," *Ancestry* > Pennsylvania > Philadelphia > Philadelphia Monthly Meeting > Minutes, 1771–1777 > image 589, Thomas Dorsey, 26 January 1776.