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Settling and Laying Down: A Cultural History of Quakers in Savannah and Statesboro, Georgia

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SETTLING AND LAYING DOWN: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF QUAKERS IN
SAVANNAH AND STATESBORO, GEORGIA

by

JONATHAN H. HARWELL

(Under the Direction of Robert Shanafelt)

ABSTRACT

This descriptive cultural history follows a hybrid methodology often applied to ethnohistories. This approach combines archival research, oral history, and ethnography, with reflexive aspects. I explore some similarities and differences between two Quaker meetings in Southeast Georgia, the small but growing urban meeting in Savannah and a discontinued rural one in the small college town of Statesboro (that sometimes met in the village of Guyton). These case studies of local and personal histories, combined with my observations as a participant in the life of the community, are designed to illuminate fine details of Quaker culture in the recent Deep South.

INDEX WORDS: Quakers, Religious society of friends, Savannah, Statesboro,
Guyton, Georgia, Cultural history, Ethnography, Oral history, Anthropology,
Southern states, Religion, Pacifism, Peace churches, Universalism

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SAVANNAH AND STATESBORO, GEORGIA

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

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2012

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Electronic Version Approved:
May 2012

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my wife of thirteen years, Julie C. Harwell. She has shown unending support of my research, including spending a sunny Florida weekend rummaging through a large, unsorted pile of archival boxes with me.

I also dedicate the effort to Tom Baugh, my first Quaker friend. Tom's personality and friendship sparked my interest in Quaker culture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Robert Shanafelt, Dr. Barbara Hendry, and Dr. William L. Smith have provided me with the intellectual tools to analyze the culture and history of the Friends, grounded in the anthropology and sociology of religion and in the methods of ethnography and oral history. I have learned a great deal about Quaker culture from Friends Tom Baugh, Nancy Whitt, Connie LaMonte, Liz Perch, Joe Guy, and Steve Angell, and from the writings of Friends Ben Pink Dandelion and Chuck Fager. Without the gracious participation of Savannah and Ogeechee Friends, and support from the interlibrary loan staff of Georgia Southern University's Zach S. Henderson Library, the staff of the Georgia Historical Society Library and Archives, and Flo Turcotte of the University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries, this project would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“A lot of people...think that the Quakers are a branch of the Amish or something.” --Earl Parks (pseudonym)

The Religious Society of Friends

Throughout history, people have tended to congregate with others who share their beliefs and values. Diverse religions have been organized out of shared traditions. At times, adherents of some faiths have used violent means to assert their superiority, while some other faiths, known as “peace churches,” hold nonviolence as a core value.

The term “peace church” is often applied to several different traditions, including the Amish, Mennonites, Hutterites, Moravians, Shakers, and Quakers. The Religious Society of Friends, commonly known to the public as Quakers and but simply as Friends among themselves, began as a movement in England in 1652 inspired by the leadership of George Fox. This was soon after the end of the Third English Civil War.

As William Penn, one of the earliest and best-known Quakers, explains, “The goal and purpose of their ministry was conversion to God — to regeneration and holiness, not to doctrinal systems, the wording of creeds, or

new ways of worship" (Penn 2003:376). Quakers live by a few core "Testimonies," those of equality, honesty, peace, and simplicity; the Testimonies are sometimes explained with the SPICE acronym (simplicity, peace, integrity, community, and equality). These principles have led their stands against war and slavery, including their work in the "Underground Railroad" (Barbour & Frost 1994:4, 8-9).

Historians refer to the Great Migration of the 20th century, when millions of African Americans moved from southern to northern states. A northwesterly "great migration" of southern Quakers was much earlier. Between 1799 and 1809, almost all Quakers in South Carolina and Georgia left to settle the slave-free territories in Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Kansas (Hamm 2003:38-39). They maintained some meetings in the South, including in Greensboro, North Carolina. However, in the Deep South, Friends would not reappear in significant concentrations until the 20th century.¹

Only in the late 20th century did Friends regain visibility in the Deep South. Quaker meetings in this area primarily represent the unprogrammed Liberal Quaker tradition, which tends to be practiced in small meetings in college towns or large cities (Hamm 1988:172-3). A few Deep South meetings have written histories, but many stories remain only in the memories and/or the

written minutes of Friends. Savannah Friends have a limited knowledge of the local area's Quaker history, and are eager to know why there hasn't been a longer line of Quaker activity in Georgia's oldest city.

Method and Approach

This descriptive cultural history follows a hybrid methodology often applied to studies of ethnic groups ("ethnohistories"). This approach combines archival research, oral history, and ethnography. I also emphasize my own interactions with the group from a perspective anthropologists call "a reflexive approach" (Nazaruk 2011). I will explore some similarities and differences between two Quaker meetings in Southeast Georgia, the small but growing urban meeting in Savannah and a discontinued rural one in the small college town of Statesboro (that sometimes met in the village of Guyton). These case studies of local and personal histories, combined with my carefully documented and indexed observations as a participant in the life of the community, are designed to illuminate fine details of Quaker culture in the recent Deep South. This sort of information has not been widely published, and the research is valuable for understanding a little-known Southern religious subculture. The thesis will conclude with some possible implications, in the form of a set of

questions that Savannah Friends, and possibly those in other Southern communities, might find useful in examining their own meetings.²

As Carlson, Lutz, and Schaepe note: “Ethnohistory, simply put, is the combination of the oral history, cultural focus, and field work of the ethnographer with the archival research and temporal context of the historian. Put another way, ethnohistory seeks to meld the temporal sensitivities of the historian with the cultural sensitivities of the anthropologist” (2009:1). While the present work is a study of religious communities rather than ethnic groups, I have used a similar approach.

I came to this project as a “friend of the Friends,” with an affinity for the movement gained by my previous visits, studies, and projects with Quakers. I’m not quite an insider, but I’m too familiar with the tradition to be considered a true outsider. It was easy to establish rapport, with my calm manner, my knowledge of the tradition, and my respectful attitude as a researcher. Quakers and ethnographers tend to share certain attitudes and skills, including reflexivity, listening, and openness, according to ethnographer Eleanor Nesbitt (1999).

One aim of my thesis is to think reflexively about the research, by examining my own religious background and how it shapes my viewpoint as a

researcher. I come from a family of Baptist ministers and journalists on my father's side, and on my mother's side, Baptist laypersons (and some members of an Assembly of God that I often visited, a denomination that has Quaker and pacifist roots, according to Alexander (2005-2006)). My father, Frank H. Harwell, has had a long dual career as a community newspaper editor and as a Southern Baptist minister of music. My brothers and I grew up doing homework at church while he led choir practice. My grandfather, Hoyt Horace Harwell, was a well-educated Southern Baptist pastor who ministered in Georgia and Alabama. Those who knew him are fond of quoting his saying that, "Whenever a Baptist tells another what he or she must believe, that person ceases to be a Baptist." His legacy of a historically Baptist anti-creedalism is reflected in his children, such as my uncle Jack U. Harwell, who was dismissed as the editor of the Georgia Baptist newspaper *The Christian Index* because it was felt that his moderate sentiments were too controversial in a time of what advocates call a "conservative resurgence" and critics a "fundamentalist takeover" within the Southern Baptist Convention. Following this, Uncle Jack became the editor of *Baptists Today*, a moderate newspaper. My aunt Eleanor Anne Harwell was also an involved moderate Baptist. For example, she worked with Baptist Women in Ministry, and served as a minister of music for 45 years. This is controversial in

the eyes of “the new SBC,” as the SBC now discourages women from taking church leadership roles. So as you can see, I have been steeped in Baptist culture, with a healthy helping of “renegades” in the family.

As for myself, in college, I became involved with Campus Crusade for Christ. This group provided me with plenty of socialization and mission trips, but over time I became disillusioned as I and some friends found it took increasing control over our lives. Eventually, some of us left the group, and a few of us began attending a more moderate Baptist church.

After a month-long study abroad in Mexico to complete my bachelor’s degree (my first significant international experience), I enjoyed two years (1994-96) as a teacher and missionary in Lezha, Albania, serving with the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. As a teacher of “missionary kids” in an American family, I was also involved with a Lezha mission church led by Brazilian ministers, where I delivered sermons on occasion. We also had American Mennonite friends in our town, who had their own worship services. These Mennonites, representing one of the “peace churches,” were the first pacifists I had ever known (I had never heard of Mennonites before), and I enjoyed visiting with them and learning about their tradition.

Living as a temporary migrant worker among the Albanians, I learned the feeling of being an outsider. "Minority" is probably the wrong term, as we Americans knew a higher economic status than most Albanians. But I did learn what it's like to live under constant observation, and I had my first major experience of what anthropologists are talking about when they refer to reflexivity. Living within the Albanian culture of honor, freedom, and their sacred principle of hospitality, I was able to reflect deeply on my own cultural identity.

Around the year 2000, when I was a librarian at Berry College in Rome, Georgia, a man came to the desk, introduced himself as an independent researcher who was new to the area, and asked about getting library privileges. He also mentioned he was a Quaker, and my colleagues and I were intrigued. I was particularly fascinated, both by his kind, peaceable personality and by his involvement with a tradition that, based on my general history classes, I associated with religious liberalism. (By this time I was involved with a more liberal church, a church affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists; this group, along with Liberal Quakers, has influenced me greatly in my spiritual outlook.)

For the next few years, while we both still lived in the area, Tom and I often went out to lunch, chatted in my office, and discussed the various cultural

threads of the Quaker tradition.³ I began reading up on Quaker culture, particularly of the Liberal Quakers. Tom, who might characterize himself as a theological conservative and a social liberal, represented a different thread of Quakers, and he was amused that I was reading a book by a person he liked to jokingly call “the pope of Liberal Quakers.” Friend Tom must take the credit (or blame) for stoking my interest in the Quaker tradition.

After I moved to Alabama, I began taking courses in religious and American studies, including one on “Quaker Life” from Earlham School of Religion, a Quaker graduate school in Indiana that offers online courses. My final project for that class involved writing a brief history of the Birmingham Friends Meeting, where I did participant observations, semistructured interviews, and archival research (Harwell 2004). The Birmingham Friends, like the Ogeechee and Savannah Friends, represent what is called the unprogrammed Liberal Quaker tradition.⁴ So, when I began my thesis, I was already familiar enough with the tradition that I didn’t come in as a complete outsider.

I have enjoyed getting to know the local Friends, and while my visits to the Savannah Meeting are infrequent due to full-time work obligations and part-time studies, I have been trying to keep up with some of the individuals via Facebook. (Savannah Friends Meeting established their own Facebook page in

February 2011, and 18 people “like” the page as of January 21, 2012.) I feel completely at home and relaxed with the group, and I enjoy the meetings for worship and the discussions over lunch. I can certainly envision myself becoming a Quaker (or at least a regular attender of a Friends meeting) at some point in the future, as my personality and attitudes toward belief, peace, politics, and social action fit well with theirs.

I trust that my presence and my research have not affected the meeting negatively, and I have discussed the project with them several times to help ensure that I represent them appropriately. Hopefully my use of confidentiality for three individuals will not cause anyone embarrassment in discussions about disagreements, and Friends’ participation in my research will be rewarded with a wealth of information that they can draw from in years to come. Just as Birmingham Friends appreciate having a background history collected, Savannah Friends have also expressed a desire to know more about the early and more recent history of Quakers in their area. As one member says, they’d like to look at what’s happened with other meetings that have not lasted, so that they’ll “know what mistakes not to make.” If this study assists them in these ways, then I will have succeeded in repaying their generous participation in the research.

To collect oral history, I met with and audio-recorded three former members of the Ogeechee Friends Meeting in Statesboro. I refer to two of these individuals with the pseudonyms Sheila and Earl Parks, to protect their confidentiality. Our conversations were based on semistructured interviews (See Appendix A). Bernard (2002:205) recommends the semistructured interview for one-shot meetings, or for balancing the excesses of too much time or too much interviewer control. I first met with George Cox in his office on Thursday, September 25, 2008, for a 35-minute interview. This was followed by a one hour and 19 minute meeting with Sheila and Earl Parks on Friday, October 3, 2008, held at the temporary Headquarters of the Bulloch County Democratic Party, at 10 East Olliff Street near downtown Statesboro [Figure 1]. (While this setting was not conducive to an uninterrupted conversation, with visitors stopping in to buy Obama campaign merchandise, this was the earliest and most mutually convenient opportunity to meet, since Sheila had volunteered to staff the headquarters during that time.)



Figure 1. Interior, Bulloch County Democratic Party Headquarters (table and chairs on the right were used for the Parks interview). Friends in Statesboro and Savannah tend to be active in their local Democratic Parties.

I was able to identify these former members of Ogeechee Friends, as well as other prospective narrators, through word of mouth. My wife, a former officer of the Bulloch County Democratic Party, knows the Parks couple from party meetings and events, and happened to hear Sheila mention that they came from a long line of Quakers. And a professor of mine had visited the local Quaker meeting in the past and remembered that George Cox (a member of the

political science faculty at Georgia Southern University, retired since the interview) had been involved.

I had expected only Sheila to be present at the interview, as I had received the word secondhand that she would talk with me while staffing the Bulloch County Democratic Party Headquarters. However, Earl was also on his way when I arrived. Interviewing a couple together, in a setting conducive to interruptions, is not considered a best practice on either point (Yow 1994:56-58), partly because one individual tends to dominate the conversation (this was the case here). They also led each other into tangential discussions. Those trains of thought made the semistructured interview format more difficult to keep on track. However, I felt I should take advantage of the opportunity while they were physically and mentally able to take part.

I had established contact with all three narrators via e-mail, explaining my project and inviting their involvement. I have also been in touch with some acquaintances in Statesboro who have Quaker backgrounds, but who have not been involved with local Friends since moving to Statesboro. They have agreed to be interviewed in the future for related research on “isolated Friends” in the area and the worship choices of individuals in the absence of a meeting.

A Facebook connection assisted me in establishing contact with Savannah Friends. I had identified Liz Perch of the Savannah Friends Meeting, via a Facebook search for Quakers in the area. I made contact with her then, for the purpose of asking her advice in planning a possible peace studies symposium at Georgia Southern. (I had Googled her name and found that she was already organizing a similar conference on behalf of Philadelphia Friends.)

I have met occasionally as a participant observer with the Savannah Friends Worship Group, at their weekly meeting time of 11:00 a.m., in Room 315 of the Trinity United Methodist Church in Savannah. I have also joined them for lunch afterward on most occasions, making a minimum of jottings in their presence and full descriptive and analytical notes afterward. I have reminded them on each occasion about my ongoing research on their group. Throughout the participant observations, I have treated each conversation as an informal interview.

My first visit was in September 2008, and since then I've made multiple commuting visits to the weekly meeting for worship, and also participated in the post-meeting informal lunch outing. On other Sundays I stayed for the meeting for worship with attention to business, following the regular worship hour. I also continued to seek ethnographic interviews and to do archival historical

research. I have written descriptive and analytical field notes from nearly all of my visits, and coded (or tagged) them according to ethnographic methodology.

On my first visit, September 14, 2008, I explained that I had lived in Statesboro for a year, that I was a graduate student in anthropology, and that I was thinking of doing my master's thesis on a cultural history of Quakers in Savannah and Statesboro. They gave approving comments, and followed up with questions about my background with Quakers. I explained that I had worked with Birmingham Friends on an oral history project about their meeting. We discussed the new project on that day and the following Sunday (or "First Day" in Quaker terms), September 21.

On September 21, I provided an information sheet (Appendix B), and the group approved of my proposal. The only criticism was from Liz Perch, who suggested that I change one line in the information sheet, about the Quaker faith being a minority religious tradition in the American South. Pointing out the strength and size of the meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina, she said that "the American Deep South" would be more accurate.

Follow-up questions were asked about the use of names. Frank asked whether individuals could still opt to keep their identities confidential, even if the group and other individuals allowed the use of their names. I said,

“Absolutely,” and offered to rewrite the consent form to clarify this if they preferred. After a few further clarifications, including that I had individual consent forms for anyone who might choose to be interviewed, Liz asked whether anyone present would prefer to be confidential. No one requested confidentiality, and a couple of them (Sandy Branam and Joe Guy) specifically stated that it would be fine to use their names. However, for reasons to be explained later, I have used few actual names.

There appeared to be a consensus, as is the traditional Quaker way of making decisions as a group. (Some Friends would reject this idea, saying that instead of coming to a consensus, the group is merely recognizing the same truth.) Liz said that the person who would need to sign as a representative of the group was the clerk of SEYM (Southeastern Yearly Meeting), Susan Taylor, so she would mail her both copies of the form that I had already signed. (However, since the Savannah Friends Meeting became official soon afterward, Liz, as their first official clerk, signed the form herself instead of Susan.) Meanwhile Friends have welcomed me and included me in their meetings from the beginning, and on subsequent visits, I have made an effort to inform other attenders about the project.

My third participant observation with Savannah Friends was on November 23, 2008. Following my first visit, I have been included on their e-mail distribution list. Thus I knew that on this First Day, the regular “meeting for worship” would be followed by an important “meeting for worship with attention to business” (the common Quaker term for a business meeting). This would include a discussion in preparation for an upcoming visit by four or five SEYM representatives in the form of a “Visiting Committee of Care,” that appears to be a type of “clearness committee.”

“Clearness” is understood by Friends as “clearness of conscience, or clarity of mind about what course of action to take” (Booy 2004:xv). As George Cox said in an interview, “all clearness committees are designed to slow down the process.”

The process in this case involved Savannah Friends (at that point an informal “Worship Group”) becoming recognized as a “Monthly Meeting.” This would allow the attenders to have official status as members of the Religious Society of Friends. (Some already held memberships in other Monthly Meetings.) “Monthly Meetings” usually meet weekly, but are so called because they conduct business once a month. Quarterly and Yearly Meetings encompass

larger geographical areas, and hold quarterly or yearly meetings for worship with attention to business (Barbour & Frost 1994:77).

I had a smooth transition into the community, both in Savannah and Statesboro. Having lived in Statesboro for a while before I began the research, I had already met the couple I interviewed through our involvement in the 2008 political campaigns. As I've mentioned, the site of our interview was a campaign headquarters where they were volunteering. My wife and I had helped to prepare the building for the headquarters, and had hosted out-of-town campaign volunteers in our home for months.

My political affiliation also helped me fit in with the Savannah Friends, as the 2008 election was the main topic of discussion at lunch in those days, and some of them had also been active with the same party's campaigns.

The key narrators are those with the longest times of involvement with either meeting. These have included some of the earliest known surviving attenders and the first official clerk of each meeting. The analytical insights that some have shared are crucial to understanding their views of the history and future of each group. There have been a few mentions of a person in Savannah who no longer attends due to personal privacy concerns. I suggested that if anyone wished to speak with that person about being interviewed, then their

identity would be confidential, but there have been no further discussions about it. I also invited an occasional attender in Savannah to participate in an interview, but I understand from others that personal obligations are taking this person's time these days.

I considered the idea of listing the participants as co-authors of the thesis, with pseudonyms for three people. This approach was attractive to me, because I would not have been able to do this research without their generosity of time and insight, about their own personal histories and those of the meetings. However, at the advice of the thesis committee, I have instead noted their participation within the acknowledgements section.

On one occasion I spoke with a group of seven Savannah Friends who had gathered over the customary potluck lunch that follows the first hour of worship each month in order to discuss meeting business. This is the only occasion when I have done an interview with more than two people at once. At this time, I explained my research project and asked the group what they thought would be worthwhile to learn. This was my effort to make sure the research was fully participatory, and to see whether my assumptions in planning my research had been on target; and I was prepared to shift my focus if appropriate. However, I

was pleased to hear that they were interested in the same questions that I had in mind from the beginning.

As the meeting began, the clerk said the agenda was brief and “lame.” The treasurer said he would give his “lame treasury report.” The clerk asked whether I would like to discuss my research at the end of the regular agenda, and I said I’d love to. When the time came, I said to the group that I wasn’t sure how much everyone knew about my research project, although I had mentioned it several times and had interviewed a couple of people. I explained that as a graduate student at Georgia Southern University, I was working on a master’s thesis on a cultural history of Quakers in Savannah and Statesboro. “I’ve had my own ideas about what you might want to learn from my research,” I said, “but I’d love to hear from you. What are the Savannah Friends, either as a group or as individuals, interested in finding out from my historical research, interviews, and cultural observations?”

There was a brief pause before one member said he was wondering about “what happened with the Ogeechee Monthly Meeting in Statesboro.” Another added that “we need to know what mistakes not to make. Augusta Meeting was laid down 3-4 years ago. The meeting house was in disrepair, and I think it was even condemned, and the remaining people moved to Aiken.”

He continued, "As I mentioned to you last week, I'd like to know more about why there is no early history of Friends in Savannah." The clerk then added a related question, "How did Penn Center and the Reconstruction-era work contribute or not contribute to Savannah?"

I replied that I had already done a bit of background historical research and found links with the Wrightsborough Friends (1767-1807) and the colonial government in Savannah, particularly Governor Wright who was very favorable to the Friends. Apart from a few visiting Friends who came through, however, there does not appear to have been any ongoing Quaker work in Savannah in early times.

After another pause, I explained that my assumption was that they would also be interested in knowing what might cause a Friends meeting to survive in the Deep South over the long term. They agreed that this would be helpful. One noted, "There are no kids here." Another said, "A school would help. Westfield, where I came from, had one. I was raised Presbyterian, and that's why I ended up going to meeting." The clerk agreed, and another briefly mentioned another person's idea of opening a school in Savannah. At this point it was time to leave. I thanked the group and told them the discussion had been most helpful.

In November 2008, during a meeting for worship with attention to business, the clerk of the Savannah Friends Meeting addressed my project as being different from some historical notes already being gathered by another attender. Mine, she said twice, will be a “dry academic” history. The second time she said this, I spoke up (smiling broadly) and said, “I’m not sure why we assume that my writing is so dry. I’ll be happy to send you a copy of the Birmingham paper.” This prompted a round of laughter around the table, and she said she would love to read it. She came to me after the meeting and apologized for joking about this, and said again that she would love to read my other paper. I also spoke with the other attender after the meeting, reaffirming to each other that we were eager to collaborate. We have since been sharing notes occasionally. I have not forgotten this challenge, however, and I have tried to make the thesis readable and not too dry.

Ethics

The Savannah Friends Meeting has welcomed my occasional visits to worship, business meetings, and lunch gatherings. From my first visit, I have been accepted as an attender. I have also discussed the project with representatives of SEYM (Southeastern Yearly Meeting), the wider organization for the region, and they have been as supportive as the local Friends. As

discussed above, the Savannah Friends' interest in this research fits my beginning assumptions. The findings will provide them with a greater awareness of their community's local history, and possibly with a sense of certain elements that might help to ensure the meeting's long-term survival.

My responsibility to publish the research will be upheld. Georgia Southern University hosts an institutional repository called EagleScholar. EagleScholar is built on open-source software (DSpace), in collaboration with other Georgia institutions as part of the GALILEO Knowledge Repository (GKR). This open-access electronic archive is designed to provide perpetual, free access to institutional output, such as e- journals, student projects, theses, dissertations, pre- and post-print articles, presentations, instructional resources, and archival materials. New theses and dissertations are being published and preserved in EagleScholar, and are accessible via Google. As the Coordinator of Content Management at the Zach S. Henderson Library, I have been responsible for developing the content of EagleScholar along with the library's other information content.

As mentioned earlier, when I began visiting the Savannah Friends Meeting, I obtained the informed consent of the individuals gathered there. The clerk of the meeting also approved my research on behalf of the organization. I

shared an information handout (Appendix B) with the group, explained that privacy and confidentiality were optional for individuals and for the group, answered basic questions about the project, and asked the clerk to sign a consent form (Appendix C). I also promised that anyone who chose to be interviewed for the project would also sign an individual consent form (Appendix D) and could choose confidentiality at any time during the research. When I interviewed former members of the Ogeechee Friends Meeting in Statesboro, they also signed consent forms that explained the project. Each consent form had two copies, for my files and for their own. These consent forms had already been approved by Georgia Southern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Only two narrators from the Ogeechee Friends Meeting opted for confidentiality. This couple was interviewed together, and their identities are confidential primarily due to concerns about privacy from the government due to their political views. This presents a challenge, because their oral history includes critical comments about another narrator (the clerk of the now-dissolved meeting) who did not request confidentiality. Since I cannot share their identities with the clerk, and he does not mention the couple in his interview, there is an issue of balanced fairness. The clerk thus carried more risk of embarrassment, so at the advisement of a thesis committee member, I have

used a pseudonym for the clerk as well. I recognize that there are still individuals who recall him as the only clerk of the meeting, so there is still some risk involved. Meanwhile, in order to maintain the option of confidentiality for all involved throughout the research process, no names have been shared in the research presentations, and photographs have not included people. In addition, my descriptions of Friends in Savannah avoid names, with the exceptions of meeting officers and those who have been publicly identified by others.

I have presented my ongoing research at scholarly conferences, representing three relevant disciplines. I shared it with the Southern Anthropological Society at the annual meeting in Savannah in February 2010; at the biennial conference of the Southern American Studies Association, in Atlanta in February 2011; and at the annual meeting of SECSOR, the Southeastern Commission for the Study of Religion, in Louisville, Kentucky, in March 2011. Feedback from these conferences has been constructive and positive.

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Statesboro, who in the past collaborated with the Ogeechee Friends in children's education, also invited me to share my research at their regular weekly worship in May 2011. I invited the Friends I know in Statesboro, as well as those on the e-mail list of the Savannah Friends Meeting. Sheila Parks, Frank Perch, two other attenders of the Savannah

Friends Meeting, and a couple of isolated Friends in Statesboro came to the service.

I had collaborated with the minister and the choir director in creating a service centered on Quaker themes, including a brief time of silent worship, a hymn written by George Fox, and a children's story about Stephen Grellet, a French Quaker. I spoke from within the worship circle (in a typical Quaker-style "facing benches" arrangement), sharing about Quaker culture and the early history of Friends in the area as well as the more recent history, including the experimental joint First Day School with UUFS. We held a "second hour" of discussion. A second-hour discussion is traditional for both UU's and Quakers. The Savannah Friends stayed and answered several friendly questions from the congregation about their beliefs and practice.

During the course of my research, I have connected with various Friends via Facebook. While I have gleaned a rich ethnographic understanding of individual Savannah Friends this way, my approved research proposal and informed consent forms did not address social software. In order to protect these persons' privacy, I have deliberately not included this information in my research. Instead, it simply helps me to maintain a rapport between visits, while also helping me to further understand their personalities, thoughts, and

behaviors. This has helped me to avoid misunderstandings and misrepresentations in my analysis.

Similar and related ethical considerations are outlined in the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Code of Ethics, updated in 2009. The AAA also highlights the need to “protect the safety, dignity or privacy of participants.” I am confident that my project provides the proper protections, as I have worked out a fair treatment of the confidentiality issue discussed above.

I will proceed by explaining some background about the early history of Friends in the area, and by telling the story of how there came to be an official but short-lived meeting in Statesboro, and a newly official one in Savannah. I will include some cultural observations from my visits with local Friends, and then share the personal histories of two Savannah Friends, in their own words.

¹ Quakers from Ohio founded a meeting in coastal Fairhope, Alabama in 1915. About half of the Fairhope Friends migrated much farther southward in 1950, establishing the community of Monteverde in army-free Costa Rica.

² “Queries,” as Quakers call certain provocative questions, are often used as starting points for reflection and/or discussion.

³ Dandelion provides a helpful explanation of the three main threads of the Quaker tradition (Evangelical, Conservative, and Liberal), including a chart

of differences (2008:106-118). Among these three broader threads, there are particular threads associated with individual surnames, including Hicksite, Beanite, and Gurneyite Friends. Fager's history of Liberal Quakerism (1996) explains these distinctions and the stories behind them. As noted, the Ogeechee and Savannah Friends both represent the Liberal, unprogrammed tradition. These tend to be Universalist-leaning groups led by rotating clerks, and they do not generally use songs or sermons in meeting for worship. In contrast, Evangelical, pastoral meetings have a common identity as Christians and are led in worship by pastors, using sermons, songs, and brief times of silence.

⁴ Unprogrammed meetings, without songs or sermons, are what outsiders might call "silent worship." Quakers prefer the term "unprogrammed," because when someone is led to speak, they shouldn't feel constrained by the silence.

CHAPTER 2

EARLY HISTORY: PASSING THROUGH

One of the major questions in the story of the Savannah Friends is why they have found no early, ongoing Quaker history in Georgia's oldest city. I have done an extensive search of historical sources in order to try to answer this question. As we will see, there have been individual Quakers, former Quakers, future Quakers, and workers sponsored by Quakers, all connected with Savannah's history, but until the late 20th century, never an ongoing Quaker meeting.¹

In 1755, Samuel Fothergill arrived in Georgia by way of Charleston. He is the first Quaker minister known to have visited the state (Weeks 1968:117). While the area of Georgia he visited is unknown, he reported that "there were not any there who bore our name."

In an analysis of statistics of Christian congregations in the South as of 1776, historian Heyrman (1998:261) found that 10% of them were Quaker meetings (111 of 1118). Marsh (2007:164-167) examined more specific details of Quaker life in the South by examining the marriage customs, as revealed by meeting minutes at the colonial Quaker settlement (1767-1807) of Wrightsborough, Georgia. Wrightsborough, near Augusta, was the

southernmost Quaker meeting at the time. Over 70 families had migrated there from the vicinity of Orange County, North Carolina, to settle on land provided to them by the colonial government (Davis 2003).

One unique feature of the region was that marriages were being planned at the discretion of the couples rather than always in the meetinghouse after at least eight weeks of engagement, as was the norm among Friends elsewhere in those days. Marsh also found that marriages to non-Quakers were more common than not, with 26 members marrying outsiders and 20 marriages within the group. Most of the 26 were “read out of” (had their membership revoked from) the meeting (79% of those read out were women, although equal numbers of men and women had married outsiders). As the membership shrank, however, marriage confined to partners within the meeting would mean fewer marriage possibilities outside of the family.

Georgia’s population tripled between 1760 and 1773, including immigrants from various countries (Bailyn 1987:19, 558-572). Historian Bailyn gives a detailed account of the founding of Friendsborough, Georgia, during the first year of the American revolution by ship captain William Manson as a Quaker enterprise. This was a short-lived settlement near Wrightsborough.

Cox states that William Manson was the only Friend upon whom the Americans sought revenge after the war. This was likely due to the fact that Manson publicly refused allegiance to the new country, and they expelled him from Georgia in 1780 (Fleming 2009:137). He was also the only Georgia Quaker to seek compensation for lost property from the Loyalist Commission in London; his land in Savannah and Wrightsborough had been confiscated following his arrest in Augusta.

Mekeel (1979) quotes an epistle written by Joseph Williams, Joseph Maddox, and others to the London Meeting for Sufferings on Jan. 2, 1782, noting that the British had been in control of the city since early 1779. Around the time of this letter, American revolutionaries “descended on the suspected Quakers and ‘took what they pleased, some plundering openly, some stealing privately, being encouraged therein by the colonels.’” Five Friends were sent to South Carolina and imprisoned for five months. Some Friends in northern Georgia were imprisoned for several days before being released on court order. Details of the situation are important and worth detailed consideration. I therefore include the following extensive quotation from Mekeel:

It was at this time [early in 1779] that test affirmations of allegiance were administered to many Friends in the American-controlled areas of

Georgia. Several Quaker families were banished to British-held Savannah on refusing to take the affirmation. Other Friends, subjected to plundering by the Americans, fled to Savannah for refuge. Naturally the Quakers were looked upon with favor by the British since they were not participating in the war. Those who took refuge in Savannah were granted allowances of beef and rice by the royal authorities. In the spring of 1781 the loyalist assembly passed an "Act for the Relief of the People Called Quakers," granting them the right to sit in the Commons House of Assembly and to serve on juries in civil cases by taking an affirmation instead of an oath.

One cannot deny that there would be some justification for considering the Georgia Friends as loyalist sympathizers because of their relations with the British installed government during the period 1779-1781.

However when the British eventually withdrew from the south and evacuated Savannah only two Friends went with them, Joseph Maddox and Jonathan Sell. It is notable, moreover, that there was no confiscation of Quaker property on grounds of loyalism following the war, a fact which would indicate that their community accepted the pacifist stance of the Friends. (274-276)

The Wrightsborough Friends had roots in Pennsylvania, by way of North Carolina. Along with Wrightsborough and Friendsborough, there was another nearby settlement called Quaker Springs (1751-1754), nine miles west of Augusta. Georgia's royal Governor James Wright was the namesake of the main Georgia Quaker settlement. He gained their loyalty by providing them with the land grant and troop protection, establishing a peace treaty with the Creeks in 1774, and financing a fort and a meetinghouse. He also funded a wagon road from Wrightsborough to Augusta that was completed in 1769. This was known as Quaker Road and eventually was extended to Savannah (Cox 1988-90; Franklin 1984).²

Political scientist Franklin says that "Quakers had come and gone from Georgia in a mere thirty-five years, and they would not return until a Friends' group began meeting in Atlanta in 1943." She relates the stories of the two westward migrations of Friends from Wrightsborough. The first wave consisted of 40 families led by Henry Jones to Ohio in 1785, following the deaths of 50 Friends from a Creek raid. During 1800-1803 there was another, more gradual movement to Ohio. This was encouraged in part by visiting Friend Zachariah Dicks' prophecies of a slave revolution. As I shall explain, however, the demise

of the Wrightsborough Friends did not mean that Friends were completely absent from Georgia from then until 1943.

Aside from the reported ostracism, the Creek raid, and the prophecy about an impending slave revolution, Franklin believes that the Friends' migration to Ohio was essentially a self-determined decision based upon several factors: "the loss of control within the group; competition from incoming settlers (not a form of ostracism); loss of political control of the township when the state put the commission in charge, and Quakers found that they could not be elected popularly to the board; and the general yearning for new lands which was common in the period" (92).

Wrightsborough had its share of scandal. This was an additional challenge to the life of the community. Joseph Maddock, who had friends in high places, was the scandalous figure. Maddock, clerk of the Wrightsborough Friends (1773-75), was an open supporter of England who found himself in debt following business deals with James Habersham. Habersham was a prominent merchant in Savannah who served as secretary of the colony and was even acting governor at one point. Davis (1976) relates an account from the journal of Lutheran Rev. Henry M. Muhlenberg on a visit to Savannah. Muhlenberg's story illustrates the relationship between Joseph Maddock and Royal Governor James

Wright in 1775. Wright, who often entertained visitors to Savannah and had also “sometimes stayed” with Maddock as well, hosted Maddock and Muhlenberg over a meal one day. Maddock took the opportunity to complain about Indian attacks upon the Wrightsborough settlement, where Wright had already provided a fort at Maddock’s insistence to protect the Quakers from raids by native tribes and white bandits. Rev. Muhlenberg listened as Maddock continued with compliments to the already aggravated governor, “I love to be with you. I enjoy being with you. In fact, I could spend five more hours in your company today.” Wright replied that he regretted not having such time to spare, due to “some absolutely necessary business to attend to today.”

The Whigs arrested Maddock in 1779 for his recruitment of loyalist fighters near Augusta, and temporarily imprisoned him in Charleston. Disgraced among the pacifist Quakers, he left Wrightsborough in 1781 and moved to Savannah, where he supported the loyalists as a cattle buyer for their militia. In 1782-83, Maddock obtained relief funds from London Friends who were unaware of his scandalous reputation among the local Quakers; this gave him added infamy as a war profiteer and a mishandler of funds.

Although there was no established Quaker presence in Savannah until the late 20th century, there are some more historical connections. In July 1773, Friend

Nathanael Greene was read out of the Coventry, Rhode Island, Friends Meeting, where his family were members. One view is that this was for visiting a pub (Golway 2006:39), although popular history attributes it to his attending a military parade. Regardless, he might have left voluntarily before long, due to having military ambitions. During the war for independence, ex-Quaker Greene became a famous general known as “the Fighting Quaker.” For his service, Golway notes that Georgia and South Carolina both presented General Greene with gifts of property-- 2000 acres in the former and 25,000 in the latter. He chose the smaller plot near Savannah as his postwar home, Mulberry Grove, and borrowed money to buy slaves for both plantations. In its heyday, Mulberry Grove, a rice plantation, included a two-story Georgian home with a library and a large kitchen, a coach house, stables, and a poultry house. Greene brought his family there from Rhode Island in November 1784. He died of a sunstroke in June 1786 at the age of 44, after touring a Savannah plantation; and was honored with a state funeral and burial in Savannah.

In May 1791, the widow Caty Greene hosted President George Washington at Mulberry Grove (Golway 2006:149-150). The following year, Eli Whitney came there for a teaching position that never came to fruition, but Caty invited him to stay. Two years later, he invented the cotton gin there. Historians

say that this invention prolonged the slave system by making cotton plantations more profitable again. In 1800, in the face of mounting debt and a widespread depression, Caty and her family moved to Cumberland Island, where Nathanael had bought land just before the war ended; and the plantation was sold for \$15,000.

Illustrating General Greene's (2005, vol. 13) tenuous relationship with Quakers even in his later years, he had moved his headquarters to the Providence, Pennsylvania, Friends Meeting House on Feb. 15, 1778. Writing to Col. Clement Biddle, who had been foraging for wagons and other supplies in Springfield (and who had in 1775 formed a volunteer regiment from among the Philadelphia Friends, known as "the Quaker Blues"), he closed his Feb. 19 letter with, "The Quakers are very angry, youl [sic] certainly be read out of Meeting, and called an Apostate. Yours, N Greene." Biddle had in fact already been read out in 1775 for his military involvement, and in 1781 would help to found the "Free Quaker" movement that was not as firm on the issue of pacifism (714-6).

Greene showed favor to Quakers in the South. On June 7, 1781, he wrote a complimentary letter to give traveling Friends, Abel Thomas and Thomas Winston, the right to pass through the army by the Savannah River in order to

visit Friends in Georgia. The general noted that he had been “bred and educated among” Quakers (Thomas 1824:41-2).

In those days, Baptist and Quaker meetings were the only significant presence of organized religion in Georgia. Most ministers had left the area, and churches lay in ruins after the war (Strickland 1967:160).

At 5:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 29, 1791 (probably soon after President Washington’s visit), the earliest known Quaker meeting in Savannah was led by a traveling preacher. William Savery, after attending Friends meetings at Mendenhall (now Raytown, 12 miles west of Wrightsborough), Wrightsborough, and Augusta, had arrived in Savannah the day before. “The parson came and offered his meeting-house for a meeting...which was large; several of the clergy, and many people of note attended; they appeared to be total strangers to us, and were at first light and airy, but became more serious, and were mostly very attentive. The Lord was near, and I trust was mouth and wisdom. I left them easy and comforted in mind, being glad I gave up to go there, though in the cross” (Savery 1844:10). From there he departed to South Carolina.

Another Quaker visited Savannah on occasion, in relation to his business network; but I have found no evidence that he met for worship with anyone in the area. Isaac Hicks was a dry-goods merchant in New York, and also a

member of the Savannah Cotton Exchange. He was a cousin of notable Quakers, Elias Hicks (the leader of the Hicksite/Liberal Quaker movement) and Edward Hicks (the artist known for The Peaceable Kingdom). Isaac traveled in ministry with Elias, and helped Edward in times of financial difficulty.

Isaac Hicks traded extensively with Robert and John Bolton, wealthy Savannah merchants. They had already been friends before they did business together, and they sometimes visited each other. Hicks visited Savannah in 1792, and Bolton relatives would stay with Hicks in New York as if he were a member of the family. Recognizing that Hicks had taken a business risk in admonishing his Savannah friends against slavery, Robert Bolton contributed \$100 toward Hicks' fundraising effort for New York's African Free School in 1797 (Davison 1964:138,158).

Robert Bolton shared some ideals with the Friends, such as the egalitarian approach of not using titles of address. In fact, Bolton chided Hicks on this point in a note in 1801, "I observed that you *Esquired* me by your last letter. I don't know whether this is considered an indictable offense against the rules of the Friends Society, neither can I suppose so, when deviated from by a man of your gravity, but conclude there will be no necessity of preferring a bill against you

for it, as it is to be supposed the like will never happen again" (Davison 1964:101-6).

Joseph John Gurney, the leader of the Gurneyite/Evangelical Quaker movement, came to Savannah in 1840. Writing in his journal on April 9, he tells the story of his visit. The combination of Gurney's importance in Quaker history, along with the contrast to Savery's visit, compels me to quote at length.

We were detained a whole week at Savannah before the steamboat was ready to convey us to Charleston; and certainly it was a week of no small interest to ourselves. In the course of a few days, we formed an acquaintance with several of the gentry of the place, who treated us with great civility; and some of the evenings which we spent in their houses, were I trust, occupied in a manner calculated to leave a profitable impression. We received some very kind attentions from a gentleman of the name of Schmitz, a timber merchant, whom I had formerly met in Virginia. He is in possession of a collection of costly books and valuable manuscripts, such as would do credit to the Dibdins and Hebers of our own country. It is one of the few good private libraries that I saw in America.

Savannah contains upwards of 7500 inhabitants, of whom more than one half are slaves. We had made our arrangements for a public meeting, to be held at eight o'clock one evening, and were about to insert our notice in the newspaper; but our purpose was, at that time, frustrated by the sudden diffusion of a report, that I had come thither from the West Indies, as an "anti-slavery spy." It produced no small excitement; and we were assured, that the meeting could not be held without endangering the peace of the town, and probably our own lives. We had been previously warned by a missionary from Jamaica, who came from these parts, that we could not visit Savannah with any degree of safety, a warning which seemed now likely to be verified. But all turned out well at last. The nature of our gospel mission was explained, the report gradually subsided, and two large public meetings were held in succession-- the latter on the first day of the week, with nearly 2000 people. It was a satisfactory occasion; and the next morning we left the place, under feelings of sincere regard and affection towards many of its inhabitants. Certainly we are bound to acknowledge that they treated us with great civility and kindness. (Gurney 1857:220-1)

Rufus P. King, before becoming a Quaker, was captured by Union troops in Gettysburg; nursed Southern prisoners in Point Lookout, Maryland, for over a year; and in 1864 was “taken with a shipload of exchanged prisoners to Savannah, Georgia, from which place he soon found his way home [near Chapel Hill, North Carolina]...” Shortly thereafter, while heading west looking for work, “he first became acquainted with the people called Quakers, and at Mill Creek, Ind., for the first time in his life he attended a Friends’ meeting...He applied for membership with the Friends, and was received by Mill Creek meeting in 1856” (Cartland 1895:296-298). He later became a recorded minister, traveling the world to preach as a Quaker.

Along with stories about famous ex-Quakers and future Quakers in Savannah, there have also been workers sponsored by Quakers. Former slave Harriet Jacobs worked with Friend Amy Post, a highly influential abolitionist and women’s rights organizer, in Rochester, New York, in the Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society. The New York Quakers were longtime sponsors of Jacobs’ work in establishing freedmen’s schools, asylums, and other institutions. Arriving with her daughter Louisa in Savannah in November 1865, they worked there (Louisa establishing the Lincoln School) until nearly a year later. They left after a colleague, Samuel Whitfield, was shot dead in the street by a white city cart

driver who had just shot a black cart driver and severely beaten another (Yellin 2004:200-201).

Louisa Jacobs (1866) tells of the plight of African Americans in Savannah, and a newspaper ("Report," 1866) describes how she and her mother were ejected from a boat departing Savannah for New York, noting that they had purchased first-class tickets before it became known that "there was colored blood in her veins" (also noting that they are "almost white"). Jacobs, says the article, "was sent by the Society of Friends to establish schools and asylums for the colored people."

While the Liberal Quaker movement did not reach Georgia until the mid-20th century, this thread of the tradition (which was led by Elias Hicks and influenced by Unitarianism and Universalism) became common in the East after 1907 and "spread throughout the United States in small, unprogrammed meetings found largely in college and university towns or in major urban centers..., combining traditional patterns of worship with modernist theology and an often radical social activism" (Hamm 1988:172-173).

Bertsche (1986) provides an insider's history of the Augusta Friends Meeting, including the founding of an interracial kindergarten in 1964. She notes in 1976 that "a group of people from Savannah, Georgia journey to Augusta to

meet with Friends; Macon and Athens have individuals who are interested in learning more about Quakers; and throughout the state there is a faint quickening of the spirit which is reaching out to all" (33-34). In the 1986 update, she mourns the death of Donald Olewine of Statesboro, who was among the first Statesboro Friends, according to my interviews.

The early history shows how the Wrightsborough colony near Augusta, while favored by the colonial governor, faced opposition by Creeks and by American revolutionaries, and eventually migrated to the Midwest. Individual Friends and others with Quaker connections visited Savannah over the years, and there were at least a couple of meetings for worship. However, some faced suspicion from the locals, and the climate was particularly hostile during the 19th century, in the years preceding and following the Civil War. It wasn't until the late 20th century that an ongoing Quaker meeting arose in the Savannah area.

¹ A Quaker sculptor, Sylvia Shaw Judson of Illinois, created the Bird Girl statue in 1936. The statue became a Savannah icon when it was featured on the cover of John Berendt's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. It has been on display at the Telfair Museum of Art (next door to Trinity United Methodist Church, where Savannah Friends meet), after being removed from a Savannah cemetery for fear of vandalism.

² I have cited a series of historical publications about Wrightsborough by George Cox, the same person who served as the clerk of the Ogeechee Friends Meeting.

CHAPTER 3

RECENT HISTORY: SETTLING AND LAYING DOWN

As we have seen, the early history of Quakers in the Savannah area is sketchy. Although Savannah was founded in 1733, there is no continuous thread of Quaker tradition in the area until the late twentieth century. This more recent history begins around 1970, when Sheila and Earl Parks recall that they began meeting in their own home in Statesboro, as well as two other homes in Statesboro and Guyton. Earl, a former chemistry teacher, and Sheila, a former legal secretary, recall that a few families and a single male college student would meet “on Sundays, more or less, and have a potluck dinner afterwards.” Once a month, they would visit the Augusta meeting.

One of the first conveners, Donald Olewine, was a biology professor in Statesboro. Eventually, around the time of Olewine’s death¹, Earl says that at one point, “the meeting was over and...sort of disappearing...we still went over to Guyton.”

Memories of meeting for worship in Savannah begin with an interesting local figure who was among the first modern-day Savannah Friends. Major Beatrice Stroup (1908-2006) was a career soldier in the Women’s Army Corps. She worked mainly in intelligence, serving in Japan and other countries. She is

widely quoted in her explanation of her enlistment. "It isn't just my brother's country, or my husband's country, it's my country as well. And so the war wasn't just their war, it was my war, and I needed to serve in it" (Carroll 2005:230). She should not be understood as pro-war, however. As she told an interviewer, she "had met Hitler before the War and was not inspired by him. She thinks that all wars, even World War II, could have been avoided by more diplomacy. 'I am absolutely against war!'" (El-Khalidi 2005)

She also told the story of her "most memorable experience," in Berlin at the close of World War II, when she helped a woman whose husband was in hiding and starving. She collected extra rations and walked for hours to deliver them. Afterward she learned that they were both "famous artists" (no names provided), and they insisted on painting three portraits of her. She donated two of them to the Telfair Museum of Art in Savannah. During her retirement years, Beatrice Stroup was known as a restorer of historic homes, a collector of fine antiques, and the proprietor of Laura's House.²

A Philadelphia native, Stroup had retired to Savannah following the death of her husband Donald (a Navy retiree). Living in a historic mansion at 19 East Gordon Street on Monterrey Square, she had restored and finely decorated her home, including an antique writing desk used by Quaker poet John Greenleaf

Whittier. In May 1976, around the time Savannah Friends began meeting, their meetings for worship and potlucks were held in that home, according to SEYM records. Joe Guy, one of the longest attending members of the Savannah Friends Meeting, remembers meeting for worship in her home. Her “carriage house behind the Mercer House,” as Joe has mentioned more than once, was filled with valuable antiques that the children were always warned by their parents not to touch. As one local Friend reflects, “Old Philadelphia Quakers, for all their talk of simplicity, tend to like to surround themselves with valuable antiques!” Joe recalls that Beatrice Stroup “was rather modest and didn't talk much about herself, but I was always hearing amazing things about her from other people. I do seem to remember her talking about John Greenleaf Whittier once...”

An examination of Beatrice Stroup’s papers, archived by the Georgia Historical Society, reveals no further clues about her involvement with Quakers in Savannah. Joe Guy suspects that she was the first convener of the modern-day Quakers in Savannah. However, a booklet published by the Southeastern Yearly Meeting in 1981 states that in the spring of 1976, “Jean Milmine [Director of the Savannah Science Museum] and Sim Graves were the initiators; subsequent leadership has included Beatrice Stroup, Jack and Eileen Pray, Paul and Bernice

Courteol" (Jacob & Greenleaf, 1981). Joe does not recall anyone by the names of Milmine or Graves, as he only met the group around 1996.

As of May 1976, according to SEYM records, the Savannah Worship Group was meeting each Sunday at 9:00 a.m., at Sheftall House (the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 321 East York Street). Jean Milmine was the Correspondent (main contact). Other names on the roster include Deacon Milmine, Glenda and Sim Graves, Jack and Eileen Pray, and Beatrice Stroup. Brenda Burns is listed as the Babysitter. The location of the meeting might explain why Earl Parks, formerly of Ogeechee Friends, characterizes the Savannah group in the 1970s as "half Unitarian and half Quaker, or something...I do remember some of them were very much Unitarian-- had a Unitarian outlook on things."

In the following year, the Savannah Worship Group reported to SEYM in April 1977 that after their "first full year of worshiping together," with 6-10 attendees gathering "for planned discussion and silent meeting each Sunday," they had also "recently hosted the first North Quarterly Meeting of SEYM." They had also "recently changed our place and time for Meeting to 10:00 a.m. at the YWCA at 105 W. Oglethorpe Avenue." In April 1979, Savannah Friends "report a more satisfactory meeting place in a centrally located restored home."

In April 1980, the Savannah Worship Group reports a weekly gathering of three to nine, with usually five or six in attendance. (There were also only five others on my first visit in September 2008. Although the group has steadily grown since those days, Frank Perch had observed then that “we still never break the double digits.”) “Recently we have been having a study/discussion period following meeting for worship. This has been an enriching experience which has lead [sic] to our asking Augusta Meeting to meet with us to explore the subject of our becoming a Preparative Meeting.”³

On October 28, 1980, Savannah Friends officially requested Monthly Meeting status in affiliation with Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM). J. William Greenleaf, Clerk of SEYM, replied on November 11 that “it is good to know that Savannah Friends wish to meld their feelings and beliefs into an organic part of the Religious Society of Friends...I will appoint a Committee of Oversight to help implement your request for Monthly Meeting status. They will meet with you, either individually or as a committee over the next few months and report to the Representative Board of SEYM when they have had an opportunity to formulate pertinent observations. Since this takes time, I would hope that you proceed with your request to Augusta Monthly Meeting for Preparative Meeting status under their guidance.”

On October 28, 1980, Bernice Courteol (1910-2007) wrote to Sue Greeleaf [sic] that Friends in Savannah had two days earlier “decided to ask Augusta Meeting for Preparative Meeting status. We also want to ask SEYM to start the process giving us Monthly Meeting status.” However, I have found no record of Monthly Meeting status being granted to Savannah Friends at that time. Their disappointment might help to explain the decline of the group.

In April 1981, Correspondent Marmon Thompson’s report to SEYM states, “The sum of the Savannah Worship Group’s annual report is that we still exist-- we are still meeting. There are five regular attenders with periodic visitors. At least three still plan to request membership in the Augusta Meeting as part of our plan to become a Preparative Meeting. Our energy is down now, but I believe our intent is still strong.”

By March 3, 1982, the group in Savannah was dissolving, or being “laid down.” As explained in a letter on that date to Beatrice Stroup, two local couples, the Secretary of SEYM, and the Clerk of Augusta Monthly Meeting, Bernice Courteol explained, “Events of the past several weeks make it clear that the Savannah Friends Worship Group no longer exists in fact...We hope a group with new strength emerges in the not too distant future and we wish it success.

We love you and want the best for each of you. Peace, Bernice Courteol,
Correspondent.”

In May 1983, a meeting took place in Guyton, and Bernice Courteol wrote to SEYM about this new development. As reported in a new Ogeechee Friends Newsletter on July 1, 1983, her letter “drew a positive response...[replying] with greetings and news of Friends to our south...[along with] a list of meetings in the general area and several newsletters that are now being circulated among Ogeechee Friends.” George Cox, serving as the “summer contact person in Bernice’s absence,” also reported that meetings for worship were being planned for the fall, and that they had been welcomed by St. Matthews Catholic Church in Statesboro as “an every-other Firstday worship place...We officially declined the offer of rented space from Trinity Episcopal Church (in a friendly way).” In the SEYM minutes from October 1983, it was reported that “a new worship group, the Ogeechee Friends is meeting and has asked for a visit from an advancement committee. The group is composed of people from Savannah, Statesboro and Guyton, Georgia.”⁴

Historical records in the SEYM Archives show other links among Friends in various locations in Southeast Georgia. The Ogeechee and Savannah groups, in particular, appear to have some common history and, at times, a common

identity. An undated roster of the Savannah Friends Worship Group in the SEYM Archives lists five households, alongside two of the original families in Statesboro listed as "Statesboro Friends." Another undated roster of "Ogeechee Friends and Attenders" lists three Savannah households, seven in Statesboro, and two in Guyton. Published obituaries indicate that Bernice and Paul Courteol, both Quakers, moved from Guyton to the Sacramento, California area in 1985, where they remained the rest of their lives.

SEYM Minutes from October 1985 state that an Oversight Committee "recommends approval of the intentions" of Ogeechee Worship Group to become a Monthly Meeting. "Ogeechee Monthly Meeting will consist of about 10 Friend families and attenders who meet once/month at Guyton, Georgia on the Ogeechee River which connects Statesboro, Georgia to Savannah, Georgia. Meeting for worship is held on other Firstdays in both Statesboro and Savannah." At the same SEYM meeting, George Cox was nominated and approved as Clerk of the Projects and Resources Committee.

In April 1986, Ogeechee Friends were "heartily approved" as a Monthly Meeting in affiliation with SEYM. In an annual "State of the Meeting" report to SEYM in April 1987, George Cox states that Ogeechee Friends are "a regional association with Meetings for Worship held in Statesboro, Savannah, and St.

Simons, Georgia. A single Meeting for Business serves all southeastern Georgia Friends, and this meeting rotates its meeting location, often sitting at Guyton, Georgia.”

In an interview, George Cox recalls that:

At its largest, there were about a dozen adults and eight to ten children [in Ogeechee Friends Meeting]. So it was a very small meeting. And not all of the dozen adults were members of the Society of Friends. There were only, I think, four of us who were. The others were what Friends call “regular attenders.” There was a Jewish couple, a Unitarian woman and her children, and so forth. During the life of the meeting, I’m only aware of one person who became a member of the denomination, and she lives in Savannah now. Or she may have stopped just short...As you know, there’s a process in Quakerism called “clearness committees,” and all clearness committees are designed to slow down the process. And at one point in this process with her, she felt like her support of capital punishment was a barrier, and she couldn’t put it aside, and she couldn’t get around it. There was no pressure by us. So she may have stopped just short of membership. Her clearness committee lasted about a year, which is a bit unusual. But like I said, it was very small; eventually it was just

too hard to sustain that small a group. I was clerk in perpetuity, and that isn't as it should be, and so we set the meeting down in the very early 90's, and notified Florida that we were setting the meeting down, and sent them our records. But at that time, there was a small meeting in Augusta, and there had been several attempts at establishing a worship group in Savannah, none of which had been successful...There's a very large meeting in Atlanta. That's where I came from. And I suppose in the late 80's, early 90's, then there was Augusta, Ogeechee, and Atlanta, and that was it...There may have been a worship group in Athens...But there was a meeting in Charleston, and we would see them occasionally; there was a meeting in Columbia, South Carolina, and we would see them occasionally. But they were part of a different yearly meeting; they were part of Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting, so they were headquartered up in Tennessee, not in Florida, so we didn't see too much of them. We would occasionally go down to Tampa, St. Pete. There was a good meeting in St. Petersburg. But one of the things about the Society of Friends is that there really is no Quaker practice without a meeting. For example, I don't have a meeting now, and so I attend a Disciples of Christ church. And the Disciples of Christ are very similar on social issues--

women in ministry, and those kinds of things. But there really isn't a Quaker practice without a meeting, because it's a communal enterprise.

George Cox reports as Clerk of Ogeechee Friends in the SEYM Newsletter in February 1988 that "Quakers in Statesboro, Savannah, and St. Simons Island continue to prosper. We have recently enjoyed larger gatherings, one for business at St. Simons and one for music at Statesboro. Our major focus continues to be our many young children. A dozen youngsters is not unusual on Firstdays in Statesboro."

As George reflects in the interview:

One of the things I've learned, in sort of being involved with a number of small churches of different stripes, is that you really have to have about 50 adults to make it. And you know, that sounds real crass and secular, but there are duties that have to be done, and there are resources that have to be assembled and managed, and if you fall much below 50 adults that are regular, have regular involvement, you're gonna have a hard time. You're gonna burn out the few adults you have. Also, it takes about 50 adults to generate enough children that you have a children's program. Without a children's program, you're not going to attract couples, young couples. And they're often people with the most energy. So it's tough in this

climate. There are megachurches with television ministries, and very polished performance, music and so forth, and [for] Disciples and Quakers and Mennonites and Brethren and all...the small traditional denominations, it's tough.

The Ogeechee Monthly Meeting roster in April 1990 actually lists 50 people including children, representing 22 households. Seven households have addresses outside of Georgia, in Greenwood, MS; Medford, NJ; Misenheimer, NC; Kalamazoo, MI; New London, CT; and Costa Mesa, CA. Seven others are in Statesboro, one in Guyton, two on St. Simons, one in Savannah, and two on Sea Island. The geographical distribution might be explained by a March 1988 report to SEYM from the St. Simons Friends Worship Group. "Typical of other Meetings and Worship Groups in the Southeast, each winter we are stimulated by the return of our Friends from the north who stay in the area for several months. We also enjoy having Friends and attenders who are visiting for short periods. The past year has been important for our Worship Group in that several of us who had been long-time absent members of northern meetings transferred our membership to Ogeechee Meeting. We are now considered an associate of that Meeting, and while we each continue to act independently, in many ways

we find that we each have something to contribute to the other group.” One-third of those Ogeechee households appear to have been snowbirds.

The Spring 1991 SEYM Newsletter contains a report from George Cox on behalf of Ogeechee Friends. His report concludes with a note on peace and militarism. “Recently, we have had tendering discussions concerning Friends’ peace testimony. We all felt challenged by the spirit of ‘patriotism’ which is being voiced around us. Georgia is home to many large military bases and is very pro-military (not that Friends are anti-anyone). In any event, it is sometimes hard for us to know how to testify to the Light Within and the removal of the cause for all wars without polarizing and wounding the feelings of others who have loved ones in the military. These are trying times in Georgia for those who love peace.” The same newsletter contains a report from St. Simons Worship Group, calling itself “a satellite of Ogeechee Meeting.”⁵

The 1992 State of the Meeting from Ogeechee notes that:

[D]uring the first four years of the meeting’s existence, we lightheartedly characterized ourselves as a Monthly Meeting attached to a First Day School. That was because we had as many young children as we had adults in those years, roughly a dozen of each. Our primary focus was the creation of a curriculum for the children which would prepare them for

living in the Bible Belt. This was no small task for our adults; we came from many different backgrounds and had varying interpretations of Friends' message to children.

There has always been turnover in our Meeting, due largely to the fact that we are located in a university community and draw many of our members and attenders from Georgia Southern University. It is also the case that the Statesboro community has many churches, and some families stay with Friends for a while and then resume their religious seeking elsewhere. One dimension of this seeking was an experiment with a joint Quaker-Unitarian Firstday School from Sixth Month 1988 until Tenth Month 1990. In any case, we found ourselves with ten adults but only one child in the fall of 1991.

We refocused our Meeting's energy toward more adult concerns at that time. We are concerned for the hungry and homeless in our area, and we are currently active supporters of the Statesboro Food Bank. Several of our members and attenders are active in feminist issues, and they have organized a Feminist Reading Group in the community. Our region wrestles with racism in many contexts including the public schools...

We are a close and unified religious community. Our weekly Meetings for Worship are held at the Statesboro Senior Citizens' Center. We are able to extend some hospitality to isolated Friends in Savannah and in coastal South Carolina...We undoubtedly suffer from being so small and so isolated geographically. But we abide in a generally peaceable condition with our neighbors.

In 1993, the Ogeechee "Worship Group" roster lists 18 people in 10 households. Although it was still designated as a Monthly Meeting, this heading signifies its decline. In 1994, a Tybee Island Worship Group (just outside of Savannah) is listed as an unaffiliated group of Friends in the SEYM Directory, with Gene and Sarah Powers as contacts. The following announcement appeared in the calendar section of the Savannah Morning News from February 20, 1993, until May 7, 1994: "The Tybee Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) meets at [sic] for worship at 11 a.m. Sunday at Tybee Island Community Center, at the end of Campbell Street. To reach the center, from Savannah turn left at the first flashing [sic] onto Campbell Street. For more information, call Robert Dinnebeil at 786-7566, or Sarah or Gene Powers at 925-1298." Robert Dinnebeil's name appears nowhere else in the archival records; the Powers' are the only Savannah names listed on the 1993 roster of the "Ogeechee Worship Group."

In 1994 and 1995, only five names appear on the roster of the Ogeechee Meeting, representing three households in Statesboro. A SEYM minute in 1995 states that “the membership of Ogeechee Monthly Meeting, which is being laid down, will be transferred to Jacksonville Monthly Meeting.”

According to Branam (2009), “In 1943 Friends started a meeting in Atlanta, acquired a meetinghouse in 1959, and subsequently became a center for civil rights and antiwar efforts...A worship group has also met on St. Simon’s Island. In recent decades Friends, mostly transplants from the North, especially the Philadelphia area, have met as a worship group at various locations in and around Savannah: in homes on Tybee Island, at the Jewish Educational Alliance, and now at Trinity United Methodist Church...By the way, our Savannah group was officially accepted as a monthly meeting by SEYM at the Easter gathering.”

SEYM, as Joe Guy explains, meets in a more informal, less business-oriented gathering than Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. He refers to it as “my annual Quaker vacation.” Along with conducting business, the Savannah newsletter notes that SEYM gatherings have included fun activities such as “worship shearing (haircuts to raise money for ProNica, which aids poor Nicaraguans),” and music from the Faith and No Practice Band (a play on “Faith and Practice,” a term I will explain shortly).

When Savannah Friends discussed SEYM affiliation in February 2009, the minutes record that “Friends expressed that affiliation and Monthly Meeting status would help bring about greater stability, permanence and cohesion. Some Friends recalled that other Quaker groups in Savannah and elsewhere in Georgia have come and gone.”

The official minute, # 09YBM06 from Southeastern Yearly Meeting in April 2009, states, “Southeastern Yearly Meeting gladly welcomes Savannah Friends Meeting as one of its constituent monthly meetings. We look forward to many years of loving association and growth in the Spirit.” Thus the Quakers’ history in Savannah had *officially* begun at long last.

Savannah Friends Meeting’s 2009 State of the Meeting report (their first official report as a monthly meeting), for the April 2010 SEYM annual meeting, reads as follows:

Savannah Friends Meeting has existed as a group of Quakers and others worshiping together for more than 30 years. In 2008, a core group took the step to request recognition from Southeastern Yearly Meeting. On April 12, 2009, that request was approved.

So this year has been one of excitement, celebration, and growth. Our meetings for worship have deepened as we find new Spirit in

community. Vocal ministry is only occasional, but grounded. We average 12-15 at worship, with out of town visitors, SCAD students, and seekers adding to our group.

Five Friends have transferred their membership from other meetings, and a clearness process was held for Joe Guy, finding him a devoted Friend. He was accepted into membership on November 15, 2009, as part of our meeting establishment celebration. We also have one sojourning member. We accept attenders as fully as members in our worship and business.

Our meetings for business are grounded in the Spirit. The meeting functions as a committee of the whole for the present, although we use small ad hoc committees of 2 or 3 to accomplish some tasks.

The meeting enjoys social opportunities both on First Days and at other times. Most Sundays most of us enjoy lunch together at local eateries, as diverse as a French bistro, an Irish pub, and a sports bar. We have a fledging religious education program once a month and are seeking connections outside of social times in areas of social concern.

We have had the opportunity to relate to wider Quaker bodies. In addition to having the SEYM visiting committee, we hosted the FGC Committee for Ministry on Racism in February, made housing available for several Friends coming to the FGC Weaving Sacred Wholeness conference, and were able to provide emergency out of town hospitality for a Pittsburgh Friend when her friend was being treated in Savannah. Harold Branam has served on the SEYM Faith and Practice Revision Committee this year. Liz and Frank Perch serve on FGC's Central Committee. Three Savannah Friends attended FGC Gathering in Blacksburg, VA.

Our relationship with Trinity United Methodist Church continues to be delightful. The church, and particularly its pastor, Enoch Hendry, are welcoming and accommodating, expressing great joy in our use of their building. We feel we are more than just tenants.

As of July 18, 2010 (the date of Liz Perch's interview), there were six official members of the Savannah Monthly Meeting. This included all regular attenders who were permanent residents of Savannah. Of the six, Joe Guy was the only member who had a "clearness" process. This refers to a "clearness committee" from the local meeting, whose responsibility it is to determine

whether he should be considered a member, and thus a Quaker. The other five had held memberships in other meetings. This means they had already been Quakers, that is, official members of the Religious Society of Friends.

Cultural Observations

Savannah Friends, whether intentionally or not, sometimes tend to cluster themselves by gender-- in meeting, on the street, and while dining. This occurred more frequently in my earlier visits, but as the average attendance has grown, I have noticed it less. Joe Guy recalls attending small Quaker groups in other places where he was the only man. However, in earlier days in Savannah, he recalls that "very often" there was only one woman present. Since Liz has been attending, she says, "There tend to be more women than men [not always the case, as I have observed]. I think that's true throughout, certainly my experience in meetings. And more women in leadership roles than men, until you get way up, and then more men than women; although more balance than other religions. Like most FGC meetings, we're very white, and our core is probably aging faster than the general population."

All Friends in Savannah and Statesboro, as far as I'm aware, have been Euro Americans. I have observed positive references to Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Barack Obama. Liz Perch in Savannah shares some

anecdotes about how she values cultural diversity, even beyond the Quaker meeting. She says that one woman in her needlework group was reluctant to come to her home for a potluck, because it was in the same neighborhood where the woman's housekeeper lives (a modest older neighborhood near Oatland Island). "You know this is a mixed neighborhood?" she asked. Liz responded, "Yeah, yeah, that's why I picked it."

Liz continues, explaining another way she brings diversity to the needlework group. "...Usually they have a prayer at the beginning of their potlucks, and I decided that I wasn't real comfortable with that kind of prayer, so I just got up and said, 'I'm a Quaker, and this is what we do.' And then I read a part of [Palestinian Quaker] Jean Zaru's Christmas message from Ramallah, on the West Bank, in Palestine...Then I had everybody pray quietly for about 15 seconds [laughing]. I was circulating among my guests, and one said, 'So where's Palestine exactly?'

"...That was a very interesting conversation. 'Ah, you mean Israel.' Okay, I'm not gonna get political here. Not since she asked me if I was saved, and I said, 'From what?' So anyway, they're all praying for me...I stay in trouble with that group, because I got to give the invocation at the national convention [of the Smocking Arts Guild of America] two years ago, because I was the most

religious person on the board, because I actually go to church every Sunday. Well, I don't, I go to meeting every Sunday, but we'll let that go. So I gave this very non-denominational-- like I didn't say 'prayer' [laughing]. We got three comments on the evaluation. 'It was nice and all that, but it wasn't very Christian.'...And I thought, 'But there were several people who came up to me and said it was really nice that we didn't pray in Christ's name because they weren't Christians.'...But the next year they thought they'd get a Christian to do it."

Earl Parks in Statesboro also expressed some sentiments in favor of Palestinians. "I mean, we've got the Star of David people, which I don't agree with...The reason I don't goes back to a person we met when we were in Miami Meeting...For several years, she was in Ramallah. You've heard of Ramallah, right? She taught school there. She didn't have too much love for Star of David people, because of the way they treated the Palestinians. And so that warped my view. And we've got this humongous bunch of Star of David people in the Congress; they're on the TV all the time. If they aren't Star of David, they're Catholic..."

He also speaks of some of the meeting's visitors in somewhat negative terms. "The Vietnam War brought in a bunch of hippies," an influence he's "not

over fond of.” George Cox notes that during his involvement, “the people who were coming were coming for the meditation, and there’s nothing wrong with that, but meditation and the Society of Friends are not the same thing. And it didn’t grow enough, and there wasn’t enough interest in the customs, the traditions of the Friends, for it to ever really-- Even those twelve didn’t become members, so after a time, I just, you know, said, ‘We’re done.’”

It should be noted that in George Cox’s statement above, the pronoun “I” suggests that he alone made the decision to lay down the Ogeechee Monthly Meeting. This is uncharacteristic of Quaker decision-making. As we have said, Friends traditionally value a sort of consensus, or everyone arriving at the same truth. At another point in the interview, it appears that the decision was made by the group. He notes that the group was “very small; eventually it was just too hard to sustain that small a group. I was clerk in perpetuity, and that isn’t as it should be, and so we set the meeting down in the very early 90’s, and notified Florida that we were setting the meeting down, and sent them our records.”

Both meetings have been “unprogrammed,” described as “silence interrupted on occasion by a member moved by the Spirit” (Yount 2007:146). In the context of two of the several threads of the Quaker tradition, Liberal Quakers tend to have unprogrammed meetings, as opposed to the programmed/ pastoral

meetings common among Evangelical Friends; and their political leanings tend to be liberal or conservative, respectively (Dandelion 2008:111).

In Savannah, the Friends socialize when they arrive, and after it seems that everyone is there, the socializing sometimes turns to prayer requests (or requests to “hold [someone] in the Light”). The title of this thesis refers to a sort of “call to worship” observed once in the Savannah Friends Meeting. A softly spoken command, “Let’s settle,” brought the room out of conversation into immediate silent meditation. On the following First Day, following a brief conversation, someone said, “Is it time? Joe’s not here yet.” Liz answered quietly, “Joe knows how to join us.” Immediately the settling began.

Friends fall silent, generally close their eyes, center their thoughts, and meditate, listening to the Light, or “that of God” within each soul. They might or might not bow their heads. They breathe deeply and evenly, the silence only broken by coughs, growling stomachs on occasion, sighing, yawning, or even snoring at times, or other slight sounds. If they feel led to speak, they do so. However, I have only witnessed this at some of the meetings I’ve attended. Sometimes, as at the first two Savannah meetings I attended, the entire hour is silent. At other times, one or more Friends will softly and (usually) briefly speak to a topic of concern, such as peace or an inspiring quotation.

As Joe Guy reflects, "We've had people who broke into song sometimes out of the silence, which is always an incredible thing when that happens. Doesn't happen very often, but it does sometimes happen. I'm always very thankful when it does happen. We don't have very musically inclined people here...[laughing]. There was one musically inclined person who I'm thinking of, who would occasionally break into song...We have lots of artists, but not the vocal kind."

Both meetings have always been unprogrammed, according to all evidence. Both groups have used the "Faith and Practice," a Quaker "book of discipline" that each regional yearly meeting uses for guidance in practices and procedures, "advices," and "queries." Advices and queries generally are collections of brief paragraphs, "containing thoughtful advice and some distinctly awkward questions" (Durham 2010:41-9).

George Cox explains that the Ogeechee Meeting "used the Faith and Practice of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting as our reference, for our queries and things like that. There was no music at all. But the kinds of things that people would bring in to read varied. I guess it would be like what you might call spiritual, spiritualistic things, that would sometimes get brought in that people would want to share. But no, there was no, not much doctrine going on. There

isn't much doctrine there. But what there was, wasn't going on. Sometimes people would have a question about, you know, going for jury duty, 'Am I allowed to swear an oath?' I'd say, 'Well, you're not a member of the Society of Friends, so it's really just a question of your own conscience.' So a lot of those doctrinal questions never would come to a head. But people seemed to take the queries quite seriously. *The Journal of John Woolman* was a popular thing; it was always out on loan. People liked reading John Woolman. A lot of us do. It's really good. And of course it's very old [laughing]."

Other books and pamphlets referred to by local Friends, mainly in Savannah Friends newsletters, include Howard Brinton's *Friends for 300 Years* ("our Quaker Bible," says Earl Parks in Statesboro); Marcelle Marin's *Holding One Another in the Light* (a pamphlet published by Pendle Hill); Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee's *Alchemy of Light and Spiritual Power: How It Works*; Barbara Bradley Haggerty's *Fingerprints of God*; Parker Palmer's *Hidden Wholeness*; Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*; Philip Gulley and James Mulholland's *If God Is Love: Rediscovering Grace in an Ungracious World* ; William and Frances Taber's *Building the Life of the Meeting and Four Doors to Worship; The Spirituality of Restlessness* (a pamphlet from the Wider Quaker Fellowship); David Mitchell's *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*; Voltaire's *Candide*; James Allen's *As a Man*

Thinketh; Salman Rushdie's *Shame*; Wendell Berry's *Leavings: Poems*; Dave Eggers' *Zeitoun*; Kevin Roose's *Unlikely Disciple: A Sinner's Semester at America's Holiest University*; and Bede Griffiths' *Return to the Center*.

Speaking in Meeting

"...Some people refer to it like a séance meeting without the Ouija board...To break the silence, you have to be moved." --Earl Parks

As George Cox recalls worship in the Ogeechee Meeting, "I would say that most of the speaking in meeting was experiential...I would say the practice would be familiar to people who come from silent meetings, but the messages were so experiential that I would say they were probably Quaker, old-time Quaker experiences. People would find meaning in what might otherwise be mundane things and say that. That's pretty mainstream."

One individual in Savannah, as Liz recalls, "made the observation that when we started...doing the work towards meeting with the Clearness Committee from Southeastern Yearly Meeting, we had some meetings prior to that, specifically to discuss...some queries..., so that we could have them together when the Clearness, or the Visiting Committee..., came. And so we would put out some questions before meeting for worship, and so after meeting we were gonna talk about a specific topic, and how as a meeting we would

answer this question if Southeastern put it to us. And he observed after one meeting for worship that [it] was really, and even if nothing was said..., was bringing a cohesiveness. And I think that's really true. The idea that we had a single focus. And there was not necessarily any spoken ministry.

“But almost everybody, if not everybody in the room, was preparing to have a really serious discussion on whatever our topic was gonna be for that day. And it would change the character. And then we would come, and it was good. I was glad that no one was debating the query in meeting for worship before business meeting [laughing]...which has been known to happen in other meetings I've been in...”

It was on my second visit, in September 2008, that Liz presented the group with the favorable response from SEYM regarding the possibility of becoming a monthly meeting. As she explained to the group, Friends would need to study the SEYM Faith & Practice document and be prepared to respond to queries, including the “spiritual condition” of the group, “divine guidance” (prompting a comment from one man that these are complex theological issues), the “vitality of the meeting for worship,” “evidence of good order” (drawing laughter around the room), and committees, including a nominating committee (more laughter, due to the small size of the group).

One attender asked how we should address the visitors, and Liz said that we would address them as “Friend Susan,” etc. Even the Queen of England, said Liz, is not addressed as such by English Friends; they refer to her as Betty Windsor.

On my third visit with Savannah Friends, in November 2008, there were four “spoken ministries,” or Friends speaking during worship. This was the first time I had witnessed this in Savannah, and I was struck by a common thread of hope and change. This was the day of the monthly meeting for worship with attention to business, the first one following President Obama’s election that the group had been so excited about during the campaign season. That day’s meeting for worship with attention to business would be the appointed time to examine and discuss the queries from SEYM. They were to respond to those queries in order to be considered for monthly meeting status. So it was a day of hope and change in both respects.

The first to speak was a woman. She paraphrased a parable from the Gospel of Matthew, about a man who hired some people to work for him and ended up paying the same sum to those who worked all day as to those who only worked in the afternoon. The first group was upset, she said, because they thought they deserved more for their work. However, she pointed out, there are

two important elements that are not addressed in the story. First, it was not clear about what sort of pay the man had promised to the afternoon workers. Also, it was not mentioned how the afternoon workers felt when they were paid the same as the full-day workers. Presumably, she said, they would have felt guilty. She then related this story to the idea that there are some people in our society who do not have the same opportunities and rewards that others have. She referred to Dr. King, who had preached about going to the mountaintop and seeing the promised land. The promised land is not just for the more privileged, she said; and she has felt guilty for having more privileges, but she needs to learn to not feel guilty, and to rejoice.

The second to speak was a man who spoke for a few minutes about the dawning of a “new day” in a “different world” where war is “clearly” not working and where peace will thrive.

Third was a woman who shared a story about what had happened at her home that morning. A crow had landed on the railing of the condo balcony, and stayed there when they went out to see it. They were asking questions of it (no clue what kind of questions!), and it would caw in response. Then it leaned over and touched its head to the railing, “as if it were making a grand bow.”

Afterward they looked up “crow” in their book of Native American symbolism, and saw that it was a sign of “great change.”

Finally, Joe Guy spoke, asking everyone to hold another attender (not present) in the Light, as she had been dealing with many bumps in the road of life lately, and had called him that morning, upset that she couldn’t make it to the meeting, although she really needed it.

At a later meeting in July 2010, Joe delivered a long spoken ministry about attending the funeral of a male friend that week at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. He had felt the presence of the Spirit of God during that service, and was reminded that we are all a part of the universal catholic church. A woman also spoke about a pregnant friend who had been blessed with hummingbirds nesting and feeding their young outside her window. In our brief informal chat after worship, several people shared hummingbird stories, including a woman who humorously illustrated her optimistic nature, by telling how she once mistook a flying cockroach for a hummingbird.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

As a case study for the way Friends conduct business, let’s consider the November 23, 2008 meeting. This was the hour that followed the hope-filled meeting for worship just described. It was both a formative meeting for the

emerging official structure of the group, as well as a time to discuss and prepare for queries from the upcoming visit from SEYM, so that they could try to be recognized as an official monthly meeting.

Following a brief “worship and welcome” (these meetings usually open and close with brief times of silent worship), Liz Perch briefly explained the traditional “practice and procedures” for Quaker business, including the idea that “consensus is not always unanimous.” This means that those who disagree with the group’s decision can “stand aside” for the record, she said. Some meetings allow one person’s disagreement to halt the process, said Liz, remarking that this is not a good way to get things done and often is an issue of ego.

The third item on the agenda was “discernment of needs and gifts—many hands make light work.” This alluded to the need for nomination of officers, in order to further the process of becoming an official meeting. Liz explained that another person had been made clerk without a “process” before, and no longer wanted to be clerk. A few persons suggested that Liz should be the clerk, because she knows more about Quaker traditions and beliefs and is well organized. Liz warned the group that she would have a busy schedule for the next three months, but if they would be willing to work around that, then she

would be willing to clerk for a two-year term and not renew after that. She then asked another man to temporarily clerk the meeting, because she does not believe in choosing a clerk who is clerking the meeting at the time. After some discussion and further affirmations, the group spoke the word “approved” and made Liz the clerk.

Sandy Branam nominated herself as assistant clerk, saying that although she knows little about Quaker tradition, she’s eager to learn from Liz. The group approved her in this position.

Liz then asked for nominations for a recording clerk. Frank had been doing this for the time being; but Liz suggested that the ideal is for the clerk and recording clerk to not be out of town at the same time, implying that we might want to have someone different since they’re married. She also said that she feels strongly that a recording clerk should be someone who will get the meetings done and distributed promptly. Harold Branam had volunteered his own name, but then retracted it after the statement about prompt distribution (although Sandy said she wouldn’t let him forget). The group approved Frank as the recording clerk.

Joe “hesitantly volunteered” (his words) as the treasurer, since he had been acting as such for a few years already. He also explained that he was

“probably the worst choice for a treasurer,” because he’s not trained in accounting or bookkeeping and rarely has a chance to get to the bank during business hours. He referred to his large binder, saying that the group had begun meeting in this place in May 2000. Joe is the only one left from that group. James Mitchell [a pseudonym], the “previous convener” (and now deceased, as was mentioned later), had made Joe the treasurer around the same time that he made another person the clerk.

The group’s regular expenses consisted of paying rent to the church for the meeting room (\$15/week; they were “far behind” in these payments); and an ad for the meeting listing in *Friends Journal* (\$60/year)⁶. Joe explained in detail, with some discussion, about the rental agreement. The former pastor of the church had made this arrangement, and the current pastor (Enoch Hendry) likely was not aware of the details, and had recently mentioned to Joe that the Friends had been “very generous,” although they were in fact long behind in payments. Joe proposed to the group that we meet with Enoch and offer \$75/month from here on. That would make up for the missed payments over time. He said that at this point, when Friends are forming an official meeting, people should be more generous with their giving (not emphasized in the past, due to the informal nature of the gathering). In the past year, \$655 had been collected in donations.

After more discussion and approval of his proposal, the group approved Joe as the treasurer. All officers agreed to serve two-year terms.

Liz explained that the only formal relation the group had at that point was with SEYM (several people from Savannah attend the yearly SEYM gathering). This was part of the reason for “jumping a step” (i.e., skipping the “preparatory meeting” status). The group discussed how most meetings form near another one, and each new one is considered a preparatory meeting “under the care of” an established monthly meeting. Joe said that in the past, he has visited the Golden Isles Friends Worship Group in Brunswick. An hour’s drive is not a good way to prepare for meeting, he said. (And I would agree!)

We examined the list of queries sent by SEYM to be discussed in preparation for their upcoming visit. This was listed on the agenda as “Worship Sharing on queries from Southeastern Yearly Meeting, in preparation for clearness.” The document we examined was entitled “Establishing New Friends Meetings, Approved 4/15/06.” We were given only pages 4-6 of the 9-page document, the section entitled “Establishing Friends Monthly Meetings.”⁷ The section begins with this statement: “A Monthly Meeting is usually established upon the initiative of a Preparative Meeting, and the process follows similar paths whether it is under the care of a Monthly Meeting or SEYM.” No mention

is made of a meeting skipping the step of being a preparative meeting under the care of another.

The guidelines state that “The Yearly Meeting Clerk will then appoint a Visiting Committee of Care of four or five Friends to discern with the Preparative Meeting their readiness.” This refers to the visitors coming to Savannah soon (although as mentioned before, the Savannah group did not have Preparative Meeting status). A numbered list of “guidelines and queries” are presented as follows:

1. **Recording.** The Preparative Meeting compiles a complete list of names and addresses of its regular attenders, noting those who are members of the Religious Society of Friends and indicating in which Monthly Meeting and Yearly Meeting, if other than SEYM, their memberships are held.
2. **Spiritual Condition.** Does the Preparative Meeting function under divine guidance? Is the Meeting for Worship the center of life of the Preparative Meeting? What is the vitality of the Meetings for Worship? Are they held in the spirit of expectant waiting and communion with God?
3. **History and Experience.** How long has the Preparative Meeting been meeting? What relations does it have with other Meetings? What

geographical area does it serve? Where and when is its Meeting for Worship? What is the usual attendance? How many Friends, regular attenders and children are there in the Meeting? Of the individuals and families taking responsibility for the Meeting, how many appear well settled in the area? How do the lives of the people in this meeting speak to the outside world? Are responsibilities for the meeting's business and activities shared fairly by all? The responses to these and similar questions need to be recorded and saved to begin the history of the new monthly meeting.

4. Evidence of Good Order. Has the Preparative Meeting studied the Faith and Practice of SEYM? Does it hold a monthly Meeting for Business in the manner of Friends? How are the minutes taken and approved? Are the functions of Clerk and other officers understood? What Committees does the Meeting have? Are the functions of the Committee(s) on Ministry and Counsel understood and carried out? Are financial matters being handled in a competent manner according to Friends' principles? How are the Meeting's officers and committees and Nominating Committee selected? How are children included in the life of the Meeting? Are there religious education programs for children and adults?

Liz read each set of queries aloud to the group, not waiting for an answer to each question as they were read the first time. Regarding the final statement under #3, someone noted that we needed to record the responses to the “History and Experience” queries. Harold volunteered to begin a history of the meeting, and Liz pointed out that my own research would also be helpful. I said that I would be happy to collaborate with Harold and help in any way I can, and that we could share information with each other as we go. I gave him my business card. I mentioned briefly that I had written the first history of the Birmingham Friends Meeting in collaboration with them, and that they were glad to have it documented. (This was when Liz, as I explained earlier, challenged me not to write a “dry academic” history.) Joe again mentioned that he’s the only one left from the original group, but that there was another person who no longer attends, who might be willing to talk with someone about the history.

Joe mentioned that in the past, the group met for a time in the carriage house behind the Mercer House, and that the carriage house was full of antiques (as explained previously in the story of Beatrice Stroup).

Friends responded to each query one by one, after they were all read together, as recorded in the minutes:

1. “Recording. Friends observed that a good and complete list of Meeting attenders is being maintained currently by Frank Perch. To be fully in keeping with the guidelines suggested by SEYM, the list should also include notation of those Friends that are currently members of another Meeting.
2. Spiritual Condition of the Meeting. Some Friends observed that many of our Meetings for Worship are completely silent. Other Friends noted an increasing depth of worship that seems to be associated with the process of devoting greater attention to our status as a Monthly Meeting. Friends noted an improvement in the practice of allowing space between messages. Friends expressed the belief that further discussion about our process of worship and approaching worship more intentionally will deepen it. Friends expressed thankfulness and appreciation for the Meeting and found it spiritually enriching even when one comes without being ‘prepared.’
3. History and Experience of the Meeting. Some Friends noted that the Meeting actually has a long history but that many of those who were involved with its earlier days have passed away or otherwise

moved on. However, many Friends have significant experience with Quakerism from other Meetings. Friends noted that there have been ties in the past especially to Charleston and Jacksonville Meetings and the Golden Isles worship group. Harold Branam offered to work on a history of the Meeting and Jonathan Harwell offered assistance.

4. Evidence of Good Order. Friends suggested ways of increasing the Meeting's knowledge and familiarity with Faith and Practice, such as reinstating the practice at certain times of reading an excerpt at the commencement of worship, and being sure that all Friends have a copy and also know where it can be accessed on the SEYM website. Friends observed that the Meeting was also making progress in becoming more comfortable with the process of Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business and in defining responsibilities of members and attenders for the care of the Meeting. The question of providing for children in the life of the Meeting was discussed. It was noted that at present only one family with children attends the Meeting and that they attend infrequently due to being a significant distance away. Thus it is

difficult to have programs for children planned. Friends expressed that this question could be revisited in connection with future outreach work.”

Politics

Although, according to George Cox’s recollection, the Ogeechee attenders never got involved with any community projects as a group, Friends in both cities exhibit a strong and active affiliation with the Democratic Party, as mentioned earlier. The 2008 election was the main topic of discussion over lunch with Savannah Friends at the meetings I attended during that campaign season; and the Democratic headquarters was a natural and convenient place for me to meet with the Parks couple, due to our involvement with the local party.

Liz Perch recalls that when she began attending worship in Savannah, Joe Guy and another attender had “made a real effort to get me aside to make sure I knew that James Mitchell was a Republican [laughing]...they wanted me to know that they already knew that and it shouldn’t put me off [laughing] that there was a Republican Quaker...I’m not sure if they just wanted to make sure that I knew it, or if they wanted me to know he was the odd one out [laughing], and I hadn’t latched onto some kind of Republican meeting.”

At lunch on my second visit in September 2008, the presidential election was the main topic of discussion (as it was every time I visited during that election season). One woman shared a story about being invited to a pre-election house party recently, and assumed it was a Democratic event but was surprised to find Republicans hosting. She wore her Obama button, prompting incredulous questions like, "You're voting for Obama? Don't you know he's a Muslim?" She responded, saying, "Actually, he's not a Muslim, he's a Christian." They continued with, "You mean you believe that? Well, don't you know he's going to raise taxes on everybody?" Sandy asked them where they were getting their news. At this point, several people around the lunch table said, "Fox News."

In February 2010, Savannah Friends wrote a letter to the Friends Committee on National Legislation (in response to a request from FCNL to monthly meetings for input regarding the issues that FCNL should prioritize in its lobbying work with the 112th Congress that would take office after the 2010 elections), as follows:

"Dear FCNL Policy Committee,

At its Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business on February 20, 2010, Savannah Friends Meeting considered the question of FCNL's

legislative priorities for the 112th Congress. With so many pressing issues, selecting a short list of priorities was not an easy process.

Nevertheless, out of our worship-sharing and discussion, several themes emerged:

“We feel that the climate of gridlock and partisanship in Congress is contrary to our testimonies of integrity, respect and seeing that of God in each person. We urge FCNL to work with Congress to find points of unity rather than points of contention, and to focus on what we can do rather than what we cannot.

“Peace remains our most important priority. Congress should work on implementing the President's goal of complete nuclear disarmament. As we rebuild our economy we should look for ways to transform our war industries into peace industries that will improve the lives of people and strengthen our economy at home. We should encourage non-military forms of service.

“Our economic stimulus and job-creation efforts should be seen as opportunities to focus resources on rebuilding our country's infrastructure and developing alternative energy resources.

“Congress should be encouraged to seek a legislative solution to the disturbing Supreme Court decision which will greatly increase the power of big money corporate interests in our national elections.

“Looking at the priorities for the 111th Congress, we see much unfinished business, particularly in the areas of immigration reform and human rights. These issues should not be forgotten.

“We commend these concerns to you and we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as you plan your priorities for the 112th Congress. We pray that the Spirit will continue to guide you as you work with our legislators.”

Friends in Community

“There really isn’t a Quaker practice without a meeting, because it’s a communal enterprise,” says George Cox. When Friends find themselves living in an area without a meeting, it appears that they either locate other Friends and form a worship group, choose another worship tradition, or choose not to be involved in communal worship. The first option worked for several years in Statesboro and has finally resulted in official recognition in Savannah; and the other two choices have been evident among former Friends in Statesboro. There is also the option of affiliating with the Wider Quaker Fellowship, a program that

provides a sense of community among Quaker groups and individual “isolated Friends” worldwide.

Savannah Friends traditionally go out for lunch together following the weekly meeting for worship, and in the case of the monthly meeting for worship with attention to business, some bring food to share. They also have an annual Christmas potluck meal. Ogeechee Friends also had potluck meals, following the First Day weekly meeting in the early years. Later their meals were only combined with monthly meetings. The infrequency of their meals together in the later years could signify the meeting’s decline, or at least a sign of communal ties being loosened.

Memories of the basic facts of the meeting differ among former members of Ogeechee Friends. George Cox remembers the meeting beginning in the mid-to-late 1980’s, while the Parks couple tells of a (more or less) continuous local meeting, beginning around 1970 and including Cox in the later years. However, there are allusions to the former group dissolving somewhat, and meeting irregularly outside of Statesboro, before Cox arrived. Earl speaks of when “after the meeting was over and...sort of disappearing, Cox came; we still went over to Guyton, and I don’t remember if Cox ever went to Guyton or not.”

George Cox recalls, "Well, the [excavation] work at Wrightsborough received some...publicity; and people who were curious about or had heard about Quakers and so forth came around and said..., 'Would we want to have a meeting here?' I said, 'Sure.' Just kind of started, and once we had that group of about ten to twelve-- I don't think it was ever more than twelve adults-- we just knew the process, and so we began to have monthly meeting, record minutes, and we did that for a while, and then we made Southeastern Yearly Meeting aware that we were doing that. Then of course we had some correspondence with them, we went down for some visitation. I think one time they had a visitor come up here..." George remembers the group being in existence for about four or five years, and being an official monthly meeting for two years. As we see from other evidence, the local history is longer than this.

George doesn't identify a particular turning point in the history of the Ogeechee Meeting. "Probably the lack of turning points as much as anything. It just always drifted, and [to] people who just kind of drop by in Quaker meetings, they always look like it's just drifting. But it usually isn't; it usually has some direction and maybe goals; it certainly has certain testimonies that it's trying to live, I guess you could call them projects. No, none of that was going on, and there was a concern about the education of these eight to ten little children. And

that was a big motivation for the parents of those children, because they wanted their children to have some religious education, but they didn't approve of what was being done in the churches here. And I'm sure each family had a different complaint. I don't even remember what they were. I just remembered that I always had to do Easter, because no one else wanted to do crucifixion. 'Oh, please, you're the real Quaker. Will you do Easter again?' 'Okay, okay, okay.'

Friends historically have viewed every day as holy as the next; hence the terminology of "First Day," etc. It is no longer uncommon for them to celebrate some holidays, however. As George Cox, explains, "...The Society of Friends takes note of the Christian calendar. Not Lent, you know, Maundy Thursday and all those things, not all that, but Christmas and Easter...That was pretty much it." Earl Parks recalls that in early days in Statesboro, "We may have sang a few Christmas carols. We had some Friends' Christmas carol books."

Liz Perch in Savannah has explained more than once during meetings for business that some meetings argue endlessly about what to call holiday gatherings (Christmas, seasonal, holiday, 12th Month, etc.), but she refers to such debates as "stupid" and prefers to use terms such as "Christmas lunch." The group has voiced neither objection nor agreement, in my observation. It is apparent from my observations that some of the attenders are not as familiar

with the Quaker tradition as Liz is, since she has been immersed in Quaker organizational activities for many years. She is often on the road with Quaker committee work and other commitments.

“I’m not sure [the Ogeechee Meeting] would’ve gone that long,” George reflects, “had it not been for the kind of academic curiosity...John Humma always had one of those talks with...his comparative religion class, and anytime there was some kind of issue going on about race or crime or women’s concerns or whatever, they would always want to have a [presentation]-- I’m not sure there were any Unitarians here then. But anyway, there wasn’t much on the left. And one of the things that is hard to appreciate, but newspaper people know it and academics know it, is that there’s just as big a religious left as there is a religious right. (laughs) And Quakers are clearly identified with the religious left.”

Some Quaker groups tend to attract academics. George confirms that this was the case at Ogeechee, with “academics, university staff, and [K-12] teachers. It’s interesting, the occupations of Quakers in different times. Of course, at the time of Wrightsborough, it was agriculture and agriculture-related things like milling and storekeeping. And then it was botany for a long time. The Bartrams were doing their studies in the South, and in fact the Quakers encouraged

education, and their children were literate, more literate, and there was a readership for things about botany. And then business in the early 1900's. It changes over time. There aren't many pockets of liberality in the South." The attraction of academics (a transient demographic) to the group also seems to have contributed to its decline at Ogeechee. George says, "Well, academia has so much turnover, that that was another thing that kept happening, is that people would become pretty knowledgeable, and they would go off somewhere else."

He recalls a couple of different meeting places. "We met at the Methodist Student Center for a while. And then they had a change of staff and didn't want to offer us hospitality anymore. They wanted Methodists. And then we met at what was then a senior citizen center out on Northside. It's that little tiny white building, and we'd just meet back there on Sunday mornings. There's now this fancy senior citizen center; I don't know what that little building is used for anymore. Those were our two meeting places...We were never a home-based meeting. We did have potlucks and things in homes. But we never wanted to be a home-based meeting. Some do, some don't."

This memory is in contrast to the story we hear from others. As discussed earlier, the earlier history in Statesboro and Guyton was as a home-based group. Earl Parks recalls not attending many of the local meetings after George Cox

came. Major disagreements among the Ogeechee Friends, according to Earl, were whether to have a meetinghouse, and whether to engage in proselytizing (not a traditional Quaker activity). These disagreements led to Earl's leaving the meeting. (Sheila was living in Florida at the time, caring for her parents.) At least one person favored a meetinghouse (specifically the "little white church" at Northside Drive and Lee Street, now the home of the Church at Lower Mill Creek), according to Earl. "But four or five people...upkeep of the meeting? No [laughs]," Earl recalls. "You know, there's this thing of Friends, unanimity. And the way unanimity works usually is one of the adversaries don't participate. That's the way you can get unanimity. I had been clerk of some of the meetings, and the clerk's job is to find unity. If you don't find unity, we wait till next month." (For comparison, see Liz Perch's explanation of consensus, as discussed previously.)

Aside from the proselytizing idea, there are additional findings regarding local Friends' views of other faiths. For example, Savannah Friends are hosted by a Methodist church, and both Quaker meetings appear to be at different points within the spectrum between Universalist and Christocentric traditions. As noted previously, the Liberal Quaker tradition has been influenced by Unitarianism and Universalism, and it is common to have a mix of Christian and

non-Christian attenders. In contrast, Evangelical Friends meetings share an outlook that some scholars call Christocentric; that is, the attenders identify themselves as Christians. Ogeechee Friends had attenders from the Jewish and Unitarian Universalist traditions during the later years (according to George Cox), while Earl Parks' memories of occasional visits with the Savannah worship group are of people with "a Unitarian outlook...Christians ...[who]...just don't believe in literal scriptures." As George Cox recalls Ogeechee, "...I wouldn't say it was Universalist, although I think the level of tolerance was. Nor would I say it was really Christocentric."

Liz Perch, the first clerk of the Savannah Friends Meeting, says of their group, "I would characterize it as more Universalist, but then I am one. You might try asking that question of a Christian and see [laughing]...I've often been surprised in meetings to hear either a Christocentric or Christian person talk about how Universalist the meeting is, and how this is somehow oppressive to them, or a Universalist talk about how Christian a meeting is and how oppressive this is to them, and they're maybe talking about the same meeting. But instead of having the view that everyone is different from me, I'm oppressed, I have more a view that most people are the same as me. Which I know is not true, because I'm married to a Christian [laughing]...Certainly we don't have a

lot of people using very Christ-centered language, which is not universally true, even in FGC⁸ meetings; and certainly not universally true with Quakers, and somewhat uncommon in Savannah. I have several people around Savannah praying for me, because I explained that I wasn't a Christian, and I really scared a couple of them, actually. And partly because I'm not a Christian, but I'm also not a Muslim or a Jew or a non-believer, which are the only kinds of non-Christians they know...They can't categorize me. They prefer 'Universalist' or 'Monotheist,' and [laughing] so they can't put me easily in somewhere."

Joe agrees that Savannah Friends Meeting is "definitely Universalist." His own immediate family were church-going Universalists who "didn't talk about Jesus a whole lot [laughing]. But I did go to church; I did attend Sunday school, where we did talk about Jesus, and one of my uncles was a Presbyterian minister, and my greater family, my extended family, did talk about Jesus, did a lot of praying and that kind of stuff, and I was familiar with it. But I've always considered myself a Christian, and when I came to Friends, I felt much more comfortable with Friends, but I also had a certain feeling of estrangement from them, and that was one of the things that I really like about going to Southeastern Yearly Meeting." SEYM, at the time Joe began attending, was affiliated with both Friends General Conference (FGC) and Friends United Meeting (FUM). The

latter “was what I would characterize as more Christocentric.” SEYM suspended its affiliation with FUM in 2007.

As explained in the May-June 2010 *Savannah Meeting Newsletter* [bold text as published]:

Citing “our core belief of that of God in every person,” SEYM disaffiliated from FUM because of “the FUM personnel policy with its discrimination against our gay and lesbian Friends.”

Here is the minute approved by SEYM:

As an affirmation of who we are, the Marriage and Commitment Section of our *Faith and Practice* defines marriage as a union between a couple before God, and deliberately does not define what constitutes a couple in terms of gender. Our experience in SEYM has been that spiritual gifts are distributed by how Friends are called and their faithfulness to that call, not by marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. SEYM affirms its continuing support for our gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer Friends.

It is our deep desire to remain in a loving relationship with FUM, supporting and sharing in their efforts to carry on God’s work in the world.

SEYM formally lays down its membership in FUM. We look forward to continuing Spirit-led, loving interaction with FUM and are mindful that continuing revelation may enable us to find more common ground in the future through the power of God in work we do together.

The explanation accompanying the minute also noted that ‘many SEYM Friends have difficulty with the theology implicit in the FUM purpose statement,’ which tends to be exclusively Christ-centered.

Joe Guy values the historical connection of Quakers with Christianity.

“...One of the defining documents of Quakerism is George Fox’s Letter to the Governor of Barbados, and if you read that, there’d be no doubt the early Friends were Christians...I understand...why Friends have tended to move away from that, but I think it’s a shame. I think it’s a loss. I think people need to, rather than discounting Christianity and turning away from it, I think people just need to find a new way...

“If you really talk to people who don’t consider themselves Friends, and you say, ‘Well, this is what makes...,’ you know, a lot of times they’ll say, ‘I can, you know, I’m cool with that,’ but...[if] you start saying Jesus or Christ or whatever, then...people get nervous because of all the baggage that comes along, so I don’t know, I think a lot of conventional Christians look at me and say, ‘He’s

not really a Christian, you know.’ Well, I’ve had people tell me that. ‘It’s not like you’re really a Christian,’ or something like that. And I’m like, that’s something for me to say, and for the Greater Being to say [laughing]. It’s not really for another human to say. But I’m probably not, you know, not by any means a conventional Christian, but I still consider myself a Christian.”

George Cox explains that he grew up as a Southern Baptist, became an anticleric, then a Quaker, and is now a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Sheila Parks was raised as a Seventh-Day Adventist, and Earl as a Methodist. They joined the Friends after they were married. Earl now considers himself an agnostic; Sheila did not mention her current faith identification.

In Savannah, Joe Guy, now 46, says that “the first Friends meeting I ever attended was part of my Presbyterian confirmation class” in Hockessin, Delaware. Liz Perch shares that she also grew up Presbyterian, in Little Rock, Arkansas, and her husband Frank was in the United Church of Christ. They met at a church affiliated with both denominations.

Dressing Down

Historically, Quakers have valued a simple lifestyle, including in their manners of dress. This has varied from traditional gray clothing known as

“plain dress” to casual dress, both in worship and in daily life (Cope-Robinson 1995:190). In the case of the Savannah Friends, their dress is in contrast with the more formal custom observed at the Trinity United Methodist Church.⁹

The Savannah group tends toward the casual, or even the “ultra-casual,” as Joe says. He often wears shorts and a T-shirt, and jeans and sandals are common. Bright colors such as red or purple are also common, especially among women, although the men often dress in more traditional, subdued tones.

One day after worship, Liz Perch mentioned that a lady on the plane the day before had asked how she could be a Quaker and wear red sandals. This prompted another woman at the meeting (also wearing red sandals) to respond, “Well, what does that have to do with anything?” Interestingly, every red piece of clothing in the room that day was nearly the same shade of coral red. After sharing the “red sandals” story, Liz told the group about an elderly Quaker man she once knew who always talked about early Friends as if he had known them personally. Once he had told Liz that she reminded him of Elizabeth Fry, an early Quaker; because Elizabeth Fry “always added a touch of color to her Quaker gray.” Liz explained to the group that traditionally, Friends would dress in gray or plain colors. This seemed to be news to some attenders. I also noticed on another occasion, in November 2010, that one man wore a light blue t-shirt

featuring Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert's "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear," held two weeks prior in Washington, DC.

In her interview, Liz recalls that "Wilmington Monthly Meeting definitely had a core group of people who were always...[in] a tie or in black or whatever, very often in a suit or something. But the general trend among Quakers has been towards sloppiness, sometimes to the point of absurdity [laughing]." She adds, "I'm not sure Joe owns anything but cutoffs and a T-shirt [laughing], and it has to get darn cold before he's not wearing shorts."

Liz says that the dress code is not unusual. "I would say it's very similar to other meetings I've experienced all over the US. I was giving a prepared message at Olympia Meeting, which is semi-programmed, two Sundays a month. And I had on a black wool tailored skirt, and a slate-gray silk sweater and cardigan, and black shoes, and I came downstairs at my host's house, and she goes, 'Oh my God, that's exactly the way Quakers in Washington think Quakers in Philadelphia dress.' [laughing] And I said, 'And this is exactly what I would never wear to my meeting. But I'm representing an organization, and being in front of people, I'd better—' She goes, 'No, really, it's fine, it's just exactly what they expect.' [laughing]"

Joe does recall that “James Mitchell [in his 70’s at the time] was a pretty conservative dresser and dressed up a little bit for meeting.” Liz says that “I think if you showed up in a tie at our meeting, you’d be a little uncomfortable.” However, she hadn’t even noticed that a week prior to this interview in July 2010, I had seen a visitor dressed formally, with a bright green bowtie.

George Cox says that at Ogeechee Meeting, people dressed comfortably, wearing “whatever we wanted. We’d have some people who wanted to be on the floor, and some people wanted to be in chairs...” I have not observed anyone sitting on the floor at Savannah Meeting.

Savannah Friends sometimes have a “second hour” of discussion about books, Quaker history, etc. More often this is an informal, social discussion over lunch following worship. There were never any “second hours” at Ogeechee, according to George Cox’s recollection. “...We would have monthly meeting at a time other than First Day. And a potluck with it, that was it.” The potlucks were usually in homes. “When we were over there at the senior citizen center, they gave us permission to have them there in the room there, as long as we cleaned it up, you know, left everything tidy. That was better, really, that way...Families with small children weren’t totally disrupted for the day. And that was pretty much it.”

Regarding the first hour, it is important to understand the way that Friends worship and how they communicate during the meeting. Joe explains: "...One time somebody had a message in meeting that kind of provoked more of a conversation and worship sharing, rather than worship, which...for a non-Friend you know what I mean by that. Among Friends it's something that's customary if you speak out of the silence, that [another might] respond, but...it's not something to start a conversation...If you do want to respond, you usually allow some silent time between, before you respond, and of couple times that didn't happen, and people weren't really sure why things fell apart in worship, which-- [laughing] was kind of an awkward situation...So there was a core group of people who had knowledge of Quaker procedure...but...we were the minority..."

"One of the things that struck me when I first started attending Savannah Meeting," Liz recalls, "was that people were really good at sitting quietly, and that I could identify a distinct difference between sitting quietly and having meeting for worship. And I couldn't tell you what it was or how to change it, but I could identify a difference. And it was heavily brought home to me when I attended meeting in Bismarck, North Dakota, which is, in size and structure and history, fairly similar to Savannah. It's somewhat distant from most of the parts

of Northern Yearly Meeting and pretty much everything else. It's tiny. They may have as many as 12 to 15, but in the summertime, they have 6 or 8. They had been meeting very informally for quite a few years...Their history is older than ours...They had meeting for worship. There were 7 people in the room, and it was just a very clear difference to me."

Liz also recalls that when she first began attending worship in Savannah, she asked them about making their presence known with a paid advertisement in *Friends Journal* and/or a free listing in QuakerFinder (an online directory of Friends meetings in the US and Canada). With an average of four or five people gathering weekly at that point, in the same room they still use at Trinity, James Mitchell had responded, "I'm afraid we'll outgrow our space."

Liz also recalls that before the meeting grew, new visitors might have been overwhelmed at times by their welcoming group. "I am afraid that occasionally we scare newcomers with our enthusiasm, and we've gotten a little better about that now that there are more of us. When there were only five or six, first of all, it was really, really obvious you were the newcomer. And you couldn't accuse us of being standoffish [laughing]. We got very excited when new people came. We wanted to welcome them. And I think there may be a few people we scared off [laughing]. We might've seemed desperate or something..."

Well, you know, it's something I say about Quakers, that we try so hard not to come on too strong, that we don't come on at all. We don't seem to have that problem in Savannah [laughing]. And I do think we've learned to moderate it just a little bit, so we don't actually set people running. And we don't scare anybody. That I know of."

As we've seen, both groups have been mostly Democrats, with at least one Republican and a career soldier in the Savannah group's past. There's a strong sense of community in the Savannah meeting, and they enjoy each other's company over regular meals, as did the Statesboro group. Their manner of dress tends toward the casual, in contrast to many of the Methodists who worship at the same time in the same building as the Savannah meeting. Friends enter and leave through a side door at a stairwell in the back of the church, which physically sets them apart from the Methodist congregation.

¹ In 1982, a small park in Statesboro was dedicated in memory of Donald Olewine. Olewine Memorial Park is located on the campus of Georgia Southern University, beside the Russell Student Union and behind the Biology Building.

² Laura's House was a tearoom in a circa-1800 home, built by Isaiah Davenport at 122 Houston Street and later moved to 416 East State Street. It was named after Laura Jones (Johnson 2007:53-64), "a colored woman who lived

there for 50 years and was known throughout the neighborhood for her flowers and friendliness" ("Laura's House"). After Laura's House was carefully pieced together in its new location, Beatrice Stroup restored it into a tearoom by 1972. The home still stands in the National Historic District, and is now a vacation rental property called Laura's Cottage, with its own Facebook page. It is marketed as a haunted place, and also as a filming site for *The Conspirator*, a 2010 film directed by Robert Redford.

³ Also known as "preparatory meetings," "preparative meetings" are a step toward becoming official monthly meetings.

⁴ It is unclear whether this meeting led to informal gatherings resuming in Savannah. It is also unclear when people began gathering in Savannah again.

⁵ Data from 2000, collected by the Glenmary Research Center, indicates that Quakers, as a percentage of each county's population, are more common in McIntosh County (between St. Simons Island and Savannah) than anywhere else in Southeast Georgia, as shown at

<http://www.valpo.edu/geomet/geo/courses/geo200/religion.html>.

(Additional data on distribution of Quaker meetings and populations are available at

<http://web.archive.org/web/20080113143946/http://www.localquakers.org/Quake>

[rNA.html](#) (“The Breadth, Depth, and Stretch of Quakerism in North America, courtesy of the Western Quarterly Meeting”); WorldMapper’s map of Quakers worldwide at http://www.worldmapper.org/display_religion.php?selected=562; and the QuakerFinder directory of Quaker meetings in the US and Canada, at <http://www.quakerfinder.org/OF/qfind.php>.)

⁶ The current ad in *Friends Journal* reads as follows:

SAVANNAH- First Day, 11 AM, Trinity United Methodist Church, Telfair Square, 3rd Floor. Use side door and follow signs. savannahquakers@gmail.com

⁷ I’ve found that the entire document is available online at

<http://www.seym.org/FP.pdf/EstabMM042606APPROVED.pdf>.

⁸ FGC refers to Friends General Conference, the larger group with which SEYM affiliates.

⁹ Savannah Friends meet in an upstairs classroom in the rear of the Trinity United Methodist Church building, entering through a side door below.

CHAPTER 4

21ST CENTURY SAVANNAH FRIENDS: OFFICIAL AT LAST

“It was something that I always wanted,” says Joe Guy, “to become a monthly meeting, to be a little more organized or to be connected with other Friends, but it was not something that a lot of people felt really compelled to do, or would think that was necessary. I mean we were just out there worshipping as Friends, doing our thing...Why do we have to be affiliated...? And it was a relevant question...It’s more important to some people than others...But I think the people that did think it was so important were the ones that stuck around, and the people who didn’t think it was so important are the ones who had kind of gone their own ways, which I think...says something for why it’s continued [laughing].”

Liz and Frank Perch began talking about moving to Savannah around 1985. Twenty years later, a Friend from Savannah contacted the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting they attended, looking for a place to stay in their area. Liz was pleasantly surprised to learn that there were Friends in Savannah. In February 2005, Liz sought out and began attending the Savannah Friends Meeting (at Trinity United Methodist Church) while on vacation, and decided, “Okay, we

could move to Savannah, because there are Quakers here." By November 2006, she and Frank had moved in for good.

Liz had already been connected with Friends in the Southeast for quite some time. She explains:

I worked for both the American Friends Service Committee from 1989 to 1996, and then for Friends General Conference from 1996 till 2006. And when I worked for the American Friends Service Committee, I did go back and forth to Atlanta several times, to visit...the Southeastern Regional Office of AFSC; and would visit with the [Atlanta Friends] meeting at the same time. And then later, when I worked for Friends General Conference, I occasionally visited Atlanta. Atlanta's a good place to host committee meetings, because they're a big meeting, they have a really nice meeting space, and it's on public transportation [laughing]. So it gets to host more than its share of Quaker committee meetings that want to meet outside of Philadelphia.

And then right after I moved here, I actually took a job with Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association [SAYMA], which has meetings in Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, North and South

Carolina, West Virginia, and Kentucky. So geographically, it's one of the, if not the largest, FGC meeting in the US.

And one of the conditions on which they hired me was that I not have any expectation that this was an invitation to Savannah. Because they had recently added Oxford, Mississippi, which pushed their boundaries south and west of where they had been; and had some chatter from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, which...would push their boundaries east and a little bit north in that area...The distance from Memphis or Oxford to Asheville is a long way. So they were already feeling very stretched, and the feeling was that adding Savannah, although only three hours from Columbia, South Carolina, which is in SAYMA, would be another pull to the south and east. And you can imagine...the geographical area. Charleston, South Carolina, is in the Southeastern Yearly Meeting...Charleston's closer than Columbia, but it's kind of in a geographically funny place. And Savannah already had a relationship with Southeastern Yearly Meeting, so I didn't have any expectations about that, but they wanted it to be [laughing] abundantly clear that wasn't a part of the job offer. And I took the job anyway, because I can mostly do it from home. And most of their representative meetings, which meet two or three times a year, are in

Nashville or Knoxville or somewhere in Tennessee, because that's central to everybody coming in...

So in that way I've become connected to the other Quaker meetings in Georgia, which has led to some alliances with the Friends, particularly in Atlanta Meeting, who are doing work with the Georgia legislature, and Senators from Georgia. And sometimes we have friends in Columbia who wanna hit [visit] the people we know who live in South Carolina [laughing], because we have some overlap there. So in addition to having the now connection with Southeastern Yearly Meeting, we do have these little extra connections. And it also means I'm on every mailing list in the free world, so we...get at least three copies of many annual reports, because one comes to us personally because we're donors, one comes to Savannah Friends Meeting, and one comes to SEYM [laughing]. And sometimes one comes to each of us, because we're both donors. I haven't quite figured out how to make that stop. I keep trying. But SAYMA puts me on more mailing lists than anything else, although people are finding out about Savannah Meeting, now that we've put it out there that we exist. And we're in *Friends Journal* and QuakerFinder...

A Turning Point

Although the Savannah group had already been gathering informally for worship, Joe identifies the Perches' arrival as the turning point in the growth of the meeting. Liz doesn't attribute the growth to her and Frank's presence, but rather to:

...getting in *Friends Journal* and getting on Quakerfinder [and advertising in *Connect Savannah*, a free weekly alternative newspaper]. Some people actually [laughing] found us on Facebook, in a sense. Becoming friends with people, or having friends who are friends of Quakers in Savannah...That really makes a connection in people's, in our friends' minds, and they have friends. So that's what's brought some people in. Talking more, as we do more together, activities and religious [education], meetings for business and things like that, has given us things to talk about with our friends in Savannah...And...being more organized and having some activities and having some meaningful spiritual experiences like religious education, and having books that we talk to people about, things like that attract people. Whereas just being a group of people who usually sit together on Sunday mornings being quiet doesn't attract anybody. Even if they're curious and they come to see what it is, they

don't get what it is, so they're gone. So that's been what brings people in, or what keeps people there...Quite a few people find us on Quakerfinder. Of course, a lot of those people are from out of town, and they're just coming by, and some of them are here because their kids are getting ready to go to SCAD [Savannah College of Art and Design]. They actually think we'll ever see their children again [laughing]. I always liked that kids from the University of Pennsylvania would always bring their parents to meeting on Parents Weekend, and they'd be trying to act like they were here [laughing]. "I haven't been here for a few weeks," like about 25 [laughing]. Well, if your parents know you don't get up on Sunday morning, just let it go. They're happy you remember where the meeting house was.

But I also know that there are people who have visited, who have told people in Savannah that there are Quakers here, so there's a word of mouth, and then there are huge numbers of people who are going, "What's a Quaker?"

In the summer of 2005, Liz recalls, "...We started meeting together in formal ways for business, first to make a decision that we were going to apply to Southeastern Yearly Meeting, and then to do all of the business things that we

have to do now if we're a meeting. And doing different kinds of educational opportunities. We have religious education about once a month, not during the summer, but we close meeting a little early and have about 45 minutes of something someone's prepared. We may read something together. We've had a couple of opportunities to have potlucks where we had...a more spiritually grounded discussion, not just social time...A large group has gone to Southeastern Yearly Meeting the last 3 years, and had that experience together. And what's come out of that experience is a core of people, and usually the majority of people at meeting are coming to meeting for worship and do know, do have that sense of what it is. As long as you have that core, you bring in the rest of the people. And there's been a dramatic change in the last 2 to 3 years of what that is."

On March 22, 2008, five attenders of Savannah Friends Worship Group wrote to Susan Taylor, Clerk of SEYM, to request recognition as a Monthly Meeting. They explain that "a core group of six or seven," four of whom are members of meetings affiliated with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, meet weekly for worship and lunch, along with social activities during the week. They are "warmly hosted" by Trinity United Methodist Church, where they meet for worship in the "New Beginnings" classroom on the third floor. Trinity, known as the "Mother

Church of Savannah Methodism,” is on Telfair Square in the National Historical District [Figure 2]. An adjustable-lettering sign sometimes welcomes SCAD students, or advertises Trinity as “An Uncommon Church.” Most attenders park in the parking deck behind the church. The parking deck entrance (Latitude 32.078678, Longitude -81.095759) faces the back of the church. Although mine is the only Toyota Prius hybrid I’ve seen among Savannah Friends, Frank Perch joked on my first visit that “the Prius is the official Quaker car.” He said that when the Friends General Conference meets, the parking lot is full of them.



Figure 2. Front Entrance, Trinity United Methodist Church (site of Savannah Friends Meeting)

We head around to the left side of the building, where the side door opens to the stairs to the 3rd floor. There is a sign on the bulletin board, directing visitors to the meeting room [Figure 3]. Restrooms and a water fountain are just outside the meeting room. The meeting room has hardwood floors, antique wooden furniture including corner chairs and a sofa, and antique tapestries on the walls [Figures 4-5]. A small adjacent room holds a box of books, an informal Quaker lending library.



Figure 3. Sign, Interior of Trinity United Methodist Church



Figure 4. Meeting Room, Trinity United Methodist Church

[blank space intentional]



Figure 5. Table Used for Lunch/Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (in previous years), Meeting Room, Trinity United Methodist Church

Since 2010, there are usually at least twelve people, sometimes as many as eighteen, but generally fewer in the summertime. Prior to worship time, the attenders greet each other and tend to have light conversation. A few people commonly enter the room after worship begins, and if they enter in the silence, there is no verbal greeting. One woman worships barefoot, sitting cross-legged in a corner chair. Spouses often sit in different spaces within the circle, rather than next to each other. The walls are acoustically effective, and the silence is

only punctuated on occasion by horses passing on the street below, or by the muffled sounds of tour guides on trolleys. Children are rare in attendance at the Savannah Meeting, and although encouraged, there has not been a program in place for them.¹

One couple visiting for the first time in July 2010 found their four-year-old son highly uncomfortable in the silence. He began the meeting seated at the dining table near the worship circle, coloring on paper. After about five minutes, he whispered, "Mommy!" to his mother on the far side of the circle. She didn't respond audibly, and after another five minutes, he made three loud and quick sighs. His mother went to him and shushed him, but he began to whisper to her, "We need to go to a big church. I can't be quiet. We need to go to a different place. I don't like it." She continued to shush him, and there was no audible response from the group. She then led him away from the table, as he asked, still whispering, "Where are we going?" She took him to sit in his father's lap in the worship circle. He was nearly silent for the rest of the meeting.

There was only one spoken ministry that day, from Joe Guy. He spoke of how in earlier years there were usually 2-3 people attending each week, and sometimes only one would show up. He said that he was so happy to see so many people attending now, and glad to see a couple with a child. It's hard for a

child to keep still, said Joe, but it's very nice to have them there to worship with us. "See?" the boy's mother whispered to him, followed by a few more whispers. The child gave one more sigh and returned to watching the group silently.

The parents apologized to the group afterward. However they were encouraged to continue visiting, and were assured that no insult had been made. This was the only time I have witnessed a young child at the Savannah Friends Meeting, other than a woman who had brought her children to the potluck celebration of the new monthly meeting. (They do not live in that county, and had not attended worship that day.)

"...There's always a dilemma in tiny meetings," says Liz, "about whether you wait and have enough children to have First Day School, or if you plan First Day School and then you're ready when they come. And I think we may be edging towards that. Let's plan some activities that we could have, and if there's one child or more than one child, we're ready to go. We have a good setting there [at Trinity], because we could close off one of those rooms and have a small number of children in it, and unless they were playing freeze tag at a high decibel level, I don't think it would bother us. It wouldn't be any more noisy than the tour going by, or whoever's...upstairs...In some meetings, that would

be a real deal-breaker that [whispering] you might hear laughter in the next room [laughing]. But we could probably cope with that with a small number of children, so we do have a pretty good setup for that.”

George Cox recalls that at Ogeechee Meeting, children were more common. “...When they got to be of an age of accountability and reason, they would stay halfway, maybe, and learn the discipline of being still. Wouldn’t hurt most American children...We had First Day School. So they would stay halfway through, and then someone would take them into another room.” There was no fixed age range, but on “any given First Day, you might have four or five, and they would generally be early grammar-school age.”

Worship generally lasts for an hour. On one occasion we closed the meeting at 10:50, ten minutes earlier than usual. Liz Perch, the clerk, explained to the attenders that sometimes it’s obvious that the group is “awakening” and that the service is ending before the regular time. Following the worship hour, all rise in a circle, smiling at each other with open eyes, with hands joined for several seconds. We then close our eyes, reflect for several seconds, then squeeze hands and open our eyes again to signify the end of the meeting. Visitors are then welcomed, announcements are made, and lunch plans usually materialize. As Frank Perch says, “In typical Quaker fashion, we often take a long time to

make a decision about where to eat.” There are small paper slips to pick up after meeting. These slips act as free vouchers for the nearby parking deck (in lieu of church bulletins).

Friends usually walk to lunch after worship, often to the Café at City Market for their favorite smoked salmon pizza (or on one occasion, to the concession stand at the Telfair Art Fair on the grounds outside the church), where they discuss politics and/or share humorous stories about Quaker meetings they’ve experienced in other places. One day over lunch, Frank Perch told a story about how a meeting elsewhere once had a controversy over the use of multi-colored feathers during worship. The feathers had been scattered on the seats prior to the meeting. One Friend spoke about the wrongness of coloring the natural feathers. Another was sure that the feathers were meant for some sort of game, and games were not appropriate during meeting for worship. A worship leader apologized for the misjudgment. Frank said that Liz had been sorry to miss that service, as it was unexpectedly so eventful. The group got a good laugh out of the story.

On my second visit in September 2008, eight of us walked to an art gallery after lunch, to help transport a couple of sculptures back to the parking garage. Joe Guy carried the larger piece, a lightweight, life-sized statue of a nude woman

reclining, resting upon one outstretched arm. A woman in the group had used a dust cloth to remove several cobwebs from the statue, saying, "Excuse me" to the statue as she dusted it, prompting laughter from the group. After she finished dusting, and Joe stood there holding the statue around the waist from behind, Liz said, "I wish we had a camera." "Ah, but we do," I said, holding up my camera case. "Shall I get an incriminating photograph for posterity?" "Yes," said Liz, "please do get an incriminating photograph. But this photograph can not be used for any sort of anthropological research!" So I obliged, promising that it would not be. The other statue, also lightweight and smaller, was a green and yellow abstract human form with round flower petals framing the head. The woman carried it, after I took the heavier wooden umbrella stand from her.

As we walked along the sidewalk past restaurants and shops, Liz laughed loudly a couple of times after she saw the surprised expressions in people's faces as they looked up from their dining tables to see Joe with the nude, followed by the woman with the other statue.

Just as Liz was commenting on this, a tour trolley passed us in the opposite direction, with more curious faces, staring at us with their mouths open. Liz began laughing again, and I said quietly, "Welcome to Savannah." This

experience certainly helped me to feel like a part of the group, who has always welcomed me even after long spans of time between my visits.

For the monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, in an informal atmosphere, they share a light potluck lunch, sometimes including artisanal cheeses, salads, smoked salmon, and on one occasion, Scotch eggs. Until a few years ago they would gather around a dining table adjacent to the worship circle [Figure 5], but upon request by the church staff, they now conduct business over lunch in the fellowship hall.

Joe recalls, "...In the beginning we were very informal. We didn't have regular meetings for business, and did not keep notes when we did discuss business. I think that to have that is part of what keeps Friends going, so I'm glad that we have that now, and I'm glad you're doing this [thesis research] too, so that people-- we have some kind of a document [laughing] which will be...[useful?]"

Outreach

In May 2009, Savannah Friends discussed outreach to the community. As recorded in the minutes:

A Friend noted that outreach is about more than bringing in new members. Some Friends suggested showing certain films as an outreach

event – such as a film...about the Millennium Project [“Sustaining Life”], and a Canadian documentary film...called “Fierce Light.” Another Friend suggested working with Iraq Veterans Against the War.

There was an extended discussion about starting a newsletter for the Meeting and how a newsletter can serve as an outreach tool. Friends discussed various distribution channels such as the colleges, stores like Brighter Day and the CVB. The Clerk will work on contacting the student life offices at area colleges and the CVB.

Friends made various suggestions on the content for the newsletter including:

- News about ourselves
- Events
- Opportunities for service
- Quotations and articles
- Information about what we do and who we are
- Book and film reviews
- Profiles

Friends agreed on starting out with a short (1-2 pages) bimonthly newsletter beginning in September. A Friend suggested the Meeting should collect samples of other meeting newsletters as examples and sources for further ideas.

Location, Location

Sometimes Friends join Trinity for special events, and vice versa, including church potlucks and presentations by visiting Friends. Rev. Enoch Hendry, Pastor of Trinity, attended the celebration potluck lunch upon becoming a Monthly Meeting, and spoke some congratulatory words to the group. Friends also attend SEYM gatherings regularly, “where we have enjoyed the conviviality and hospitality,” even before becoming a Monthly Meeting.

Before relocating to Trinity, Joe recalls the group meeting for worship in the Jewish Educational Alliance building, “which was a very small, small room. And it wasn’t particularly personable or anything. But it was comfortable, and it was quiet. And it was just-- small [laughing]...They were...really concerned that we’d bring non-kosher food in there..., so basically we couldn’t have any kind of potlucks there or anything, so it’s kinda like we went there and worshipped for an hour and then we left...They were very nice to us...And then once we came here, the people at Trinity are wonderful. We’ve been worshipping here for quite some time, and...the room that we meet in hasn’t always been so comfy as it is now...There was a little lectern in there, and they could teach Sunday school classes..., and so they had more straight-backed, cushioned chairs that were kind of in rows, and we would come in and rearrange

them in a circle. And then we worshipped in another room down the hall while they renovated the room, and of course, now it's almost too nice. It's like [laughing], it's, with the antique furniture and stuff, I probably like the fact that there are couches, but I don't know, I'm always afraid that somebody's gonna break something...[laughing]."

Joe reflects that "...we stayed here because, you know, worshiping at homes can be-- Getting new people to come in, I think, it's a little awkward to go to somebody's house. So we like keeping it at a neutral place. That's kind of hard to find. I wish we could be on a ground floor somewhere, with something [laughing] that would a bit more obvious." Liz agrees about Trinity as:

...a good location..., because it's really nice for visitors. Visitors should be able to find us without too much trouble [laughing]...We haven't had any tourists the last few Sundays, but we get a fair number of drop-in tourists from all over the place who come to Savannah to visit, and come to meeting...But yeah, it's a really good location in terms of directing tourists, and tourists being able to come. And when I say tourists, I mean people who are tourists in Savannah but who are Friends. And I think they always bring something to meeting, whether they're from a meeting that's bigger or smaller or a different tradition.

Enoch Hendry and Ann Curry, the pastor and his wife, couldn't be nicer and couldn't be happier to have us there. Ann's older sister is a woman named Connie Curry, who wrote a book for the American Friends Service Committee called *Civil Rights*...It's the story about the desegregation of one school district in Druid County, Mississippi, in the '60's, and one family who had 10 or 12 or 14 kids single-handedly desegregated the school district, by making the decision that they would do it. Because there were gonna be consequences, you know, and their credit got pulled at stores and things like that. But she interviewed the family and kids and did a book about it. So Ann has this long...connection to Friends. But they are actually genuinely happy to have us there, and it can't be because of the \$75 a month we're paying for the space [laughing]. I know every little bit helps with the church, but...they're not getting rich on us, and I don't think they're getting rich on the AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] group that meets there either, so [laughing] it must be Christian love. But we're not gonna get that kind of deal many other places.

Actually, I have a running joke that if we got really rich, this house [Liz and Frank's home in East Savannah] would be a good meeting house. I know exactly how it needs to be modified [laughing], and we've got a

school across the street, so we've got parking...on Sundays or in the evenings, when you'd have people at the meeting house, and we've got an apartment. You could have a resident upstairs, and you could rent the apartment for income, and all you need is a ramp and a handicapped bathroom...Except that we still live here, you see [laughing]...When we talked about the budget last year, we talked about, at some point, starting to set a little aside, but we're not there yet. Most of us are savvy enough to know that buying it is just the first expense. And so, you know, we're just really clear that we don't have that-- And...because we have a good relationship with Trinity, when we had our organizational celebration in November, they not only let us use the kitchen and the plates and the dishwasher, and you know, Enoch [Hendry, the pastor of Trinity] came. They brought flowers for us and a card, and Enoch came and gave us a little greeting...

A couple of years ago, there was a fellow traveling around from Madison Meeting, talking about a project that they've done in Viet Nam, a reconciliation project that that meeting started in Viet Nam, and he's been going around talking-- And he came and brought a slideshow. And we used their fellowship hall, and some members of the church came and

joined us. So anytime we've needed a bigger space for something, it's been available there for us to use. And equipment, anything, it's just been available to us. So the need to use money for a space is not consuming us at this point. And it does mean that we can put aside money to provide scholarships for, we hope, for families to go to yearly meeting or to a Quaker event, but we did send money to AFSC for their Haiti program when that was a big issue...after the earthquake...So...the general feeling at this meeting was we would much rather spend our money that way. At this point we're not even prepared to start putting something into a savings account for a building fund. And I don't know how many, what a critical mass is when that would seem to become important. I know meetings that have never had a meeting house, and they've been around 50, 60, 70 years. Because they had a situation that was not only completely tenable, but pleasant, and they can use their money for something else. And I've worked with meetings that have gone through the process of deciding to buy a meeting house. And Memphis Friends just recently bought a meeting house. Columbia Friends are still, they've been on this three years, and they found a property and they thought they were gonna buy it and they couldn't get it zoned, and then a whole bunch of people

went, “Whew! We didn’t wanna buy it anyway.” [laughing] And then they realized they really needed counsel about whether they were gonna buy a property, not whether they were gonna buy *this* property. So I’ve watched meetings go through it, and for some meetings, it’s almost destroying... I don’t think that would be the case in Savannah. I think if we had a reason to buy a meeting house, we would come together, but I don’t know that. I think it’s certainly possible, and certainly as the meeting grows, that there are people who would feel very strongly about not putting money into bricks and mortar, and people who would feel very strongly about doing it, and for different reasons. And that’s where you get this tug...And some of that will depend on how the meeting grows in business practice, which we’re getting better at. Friends business practice is even more difficult for people to grasp than Friends worship. You can sit in Friends worship, and if there are...that core of people there worshiping, you could start to get it. Until you really understand consensus decision-making, and spend some time in business meeting where it’s well practiced, all you need is one person [whispering] to totally screw it up [laughing].

And so I think we practice at business practice before we even dare tackle something like the purchase of real estate. Or even a rental of a space that would be ours entirely. But that is not to say that people don't think about it. Joe thinks that the art gallery concept has some value.

Charleston Friends for a while were meeting in an art gallery, which actually, it's a nice space, there's a big open space, you put in some chairs, it's not usually being used on Sunday morning [laughing]. But his idea was to buy the art gallery, because we have artists. You know, we [would have] our venue for their work, which we could then sell and raise money to keep our meeting house.

I of course want to start Savannah Friends School, because I thought a really nice Friends school would bring Quakers to Savannah...I wanted to buy Calvary [Calvary Baptist Temple, formerly known as Calvary in Savannah] when it was for sale; because I was sure there'd be a room in there we could use for meeting for worship, and the rest of it could be our school. Most people think you should start with just a couple of grades and add one each year. [laughing] That's so slow.

But I actually do think if you had a Friends school, you see, people would move here for the Friends school, and you would get more people in the

meeting. It would pay off. *If* you wanted a school-- detail. And it does need to be a little more steady. I'm not entirely sure Savannah needs another independent school. I don't know where the population is going along those lines. But if they did, I think a Friends school would be a [whispering] really good idea.

So it's not that people don't think about it. Like I was thinking, a house like this, [it's] got that big room for worship; you've got a room over to the other side for-- I'd put a door on that sunroom. So you could have First Day School and they could go outside; you could put a library back here; you've got a nice kitchen for potlucks; and as I said, upstairs you could have the office; [with] minor modifications, you would have a residence apartment; you knock out this closet here and make this bathroom handicap accessible; maybe put in a smaller bathroom and a handicap accessible one. I've thought it all through. Maybe not this house, but a house with a similar floorplan, you know...

Well, I've been in an awful lot of meetings that have had houses that are modified, and do have then a place for a resident Friend; which maintains some security and continuity. Parking's always a big issue. That's what makes me think about it. And I'd say, for a meeting of 30 to 50, it's

usually good. If you have 50 people in your meeting, a lot of them do not come to meeting on the same Sunday. With Quakers, they don't even all show up on Easter, so [laughing] it's not a risk. They may all show up for potluck.

The 2010 Christmas potluck gathering also served as a retirement celebration for Liz Perch as the first official Clerk of Savannah Friends Meeting, with Sandy Branam stepping into the role at that time. This sharing of responsibilities might strengthen the meeting, instead of having one "clerk in perpetuity," as George Cox of Ogeechee had called himself. The rest of the new slate of officers rotated on as well, with Joe Guy as Assistant Clerk, Robin Noll as Treasurer, and Mary Alpern as Recording Clerk. Mary Alpern is continuing as the Librarian, and Harold Branam as the Newsletter Editor. With more people investing their time and other resources into their roles within the meeting, this should increase their level of commitment over time.

Now that we have looked at the recent history and culture of the Savannah Friends Meeting as a group, this chapter concludes with their own State of the Meeting report from January 2011:

Savannah Friends continue to meet on the third floor of Trinity United Methodist Church, Telfair Square, and we enjoy our relationship with that

church and its members. While our number of full members remains at six, our worship and business meetings are enriched by nine regular attenders who participate fully in the life of the meeting. Our meetings for worship during the past year were also enriched by visits from traveling Friends, tourists, and students from local colleges. We were particularly blessed with the presence of some soldiers from nearby bases who were struggling with their roles in the military. We hope we have provided the support these people needed to continue their spiritual journeys. Our sojourning members Don and Judy Bender returned to Atlanta, and we miss them.

We are building community through our bimonthly meeting newsletter and our monthly religious education program. Everyone is invited to contribute news items, book reviews, announcements, recipes, and other items to the newsletter that reflect the diversity within the meeting. The first First Day of each month we have a religious education experience that is facilitated by a member or attender on a subject of their choice.

Topics have included "Using Essential Oils to Deepen Meditation," "Holding in the Light as Practice in Prayer," a cello performance of Bach's "Allemande from the G Major Suite," and discussions of metaphysics and

Christianity. These spirited discussions and newsletter contributions involve individuals hesitant about speaking in meeting for worship. Last year as a meeting we contributed financial support to a student in Uganda, the Penn Center on St. Helena Island in South Carolina, the Union Mission in Savannah, PRONICA, and AFSC Haiti earthquake relief. We have also been inspired by individual members' participation in various peace and social justice actions, such as the NAACP protest of Charleston's "Secession Gala."

Other members and attenders expanded their understanding of Quakerism through travel. Janie Brodhead, Joe Guy, Russell Wells, and Amy Wells attended the Atlanta Friends retreat on "Quakerism 201: Finding Our Way Once We've Discovered the Path." Joe Guy also visited Palmetto Friends Meeting in South Carolina and attended SEYM's workshop on ministry held in Tallahassee.

On weeks when we have no business meeting, we continue our fellowship over meals at local restaurants after meeting for worship. We have found this to improve our connections between members, attenders, and visitors. Frank and Liz Perch and Peter and Janie Brodhead have also been generous hosts of several potlucks.

CHAPTER 5

HOW FRIENDS ARE MADE

Aside from the culture of the Savannah Friends Meeting as a whole, we should look at what brought some of those individuals into Quaker meetings in the first place. During their interviews, Joe Guy and Liz Perch both shared with me about how they came to be Friends.² These are intriguing narratives that I'd like to share here. I have edited out my questions, since they only served to keep the conversation flowing. The following stories consist of transcribed quotes from the audio recordings, so Joe and Liz are really the authors of this chapter.

Joe's Story

I have a Quaker friend in Fort Lauderdale, who always says one of these days she's gonna write a book about different ways that people come to Quakerism, and she thinks my story is hysterically funny. Because the first Friends meeting I ever attended was part of my Presbyterian confirmation class [laughing].

We had a comparative religions aspect to it, and we went to a Catholic mass, and I can't remember all [of] what we did, and one of them was going to a Quaker meeting. And we always did have a very short period of silence in the order of worship in the church that I eventually ended up joining, but it was

short [laughing]. And it was always bracketed by the more formal, and it was never long enough for me. It was always kind of awkward. And...it always ended with "Let us pray" and then the pastor praying for all of us [laughing]. Which now as an adult, I kind of look at that and think, "What is this 'us' business here?" [laughing]

But my dad's youngest brother died at a relatively young age very suddenly. He had a heart attack at a very young age, and he was a very well loved uncle, a very special man. And I came home from school one day, and my dad sat me down and said, "Do you remember Uncle John?" And I was like, "Well, of course I remember Uncle John." And my dad just started crying, and I had never seen my dad cry in his life before, and it was like a really, really traumatic thing for me, to say the least. Losing my uncle and everything, and of course my uncle was in St. Louis, and so my parents left on a plane the next morning. We were shuffled off to-- I can't remember who we stayed with or whatever while my parents were there. My parents didn't think it was appropriate for us to go the funeral or anything...Well, I guess they couldn't manage the logistics, partly because he was in St. Louis, he was buried in my family plot in Minnesota. So I think they ended up going to St. Louis, and I think they drove his car up there, and it was logistically a nightmare...

But I was really traumatized by this. I mean, I'd had a few family members die before that, but they were mostly old and not people I was close to, and I was 12 years old, I think, and it was just an incredibly traumatizing and confusing period for me, and it was just like "Whoa!" I'd come home from school, and have this thrown at me, and I'm thrown into someone else's house, and that weekend just happened to be the weekend that we went to the Friends meeting. And it was Hockessin Monthly Meeting in Hockessin, Delaware, which is where I mostly grew up. And I didn't realize it at the time, everybody was like, "Oh, I'm so sorry," but there was so much hubbub and so much going on, and sitting there in the silence, and it just really gave me a time to remember him, but also just to sort out my own emotions and my own things, and it just was an incredibly powerful experience for me.

And I would like to say that I stepped out of my confirmation class and just became a Quaker at that point, but I didn't...At 12...[laughing]...you're not quite that-- But I can tell you, I very often sit in meeting for worship, and I remember that first meeting. There were two messages that...both really spoke to me...One was very simple, and just really touching. The other one was a more political kind of message, which I tend to dislike as a more mature Quaker now [laughing], but understood. I mean it was kind of like it was still something I

could relate to...It was just a really powerful experience for me. And so part of our confirmation class, the culmination was that we had to put together our own service, and my thing was, "We need more silence, we need more silence." And it still wasn't-- Even though we had more than we usually did, it just made people fidgety [laughing]. It didn't have the same quality.

And I think already at that age, I had some issues with the Presbyterian Church, and...I kind of went there by default. It was my parents' church, and when I was with my grandparents, we went to the Presbyterian church that my grandparents helped build [laughing]. My uncle was a Presbyterian minister, and [his wife]...was actually Secretary General or something like that of the national presbytery, and...it was very much a family thing, but it wasn't my thing. And I'm very much for tradition and very much for familial worship..., but...

Well, for starters, there was always a huge issue with gay people that was already starting then. Of course I didn't identify myself as gay at the age of 12 or 13, but a few years later it started to become an issue. And when I went to college, I think that's when I really...There was a Presbyterian church in Lewisburg, where I went to Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and there was a Presbyterian church in town...

The pastor at the church that I grew up in, Reverend [McFall?], he was a pretty quiet, loving person. He was not a Bible thumper by any stretch of the imagination. The Presbyterian church that we belonged to in Wilmington, there was a female assistant pastor, so it was probably one of the more liberal, progressive...And when I went to Lewisburg, and the first time I heard the pastor of that Presbyterian church speak, I was just like "Whoa" [laughing], and that was the first time and the last time. I was just like, I'm never gonna have anything to do with *this* Presbyterian church.

So I started attending the multi-denominational chapel that was associated with the university. It was run by an Episcopalian priest, Reverend George Gardner, who was a really, really great man, and very loving, very special person. And...it's kinda gonna sound funny, but I really liked the form. It was a little more formal than what I was used to. But I really felt the spiritual connection there, and...so I did enjoy the chapel...We used to joke that he was the Reverend George "You May Be Right" Gardner, because he was a very liberal, never wanted to say, "You must believe in this, and you must not believe in that" kind of thing. But a lot of people had issues with that [laughing]. Bucknell's a pretty conservative place. And I kinda looked around me, and I said, "These people are not coming here because of spiritual connections.

They're coming here just...because it's what you do on Sundays, you know? I mean you go out and party on Saturdays and then you come to church on Sundays," and you know, they would joke about being hung over..., and the choir's being too loud ...[laughing]...

And I always kind of remembered that the Quaker thing was in the background there. There was a Quaker worship group at the university. It was very small, and I attended there a couple times, but you know, when you're in college, it's like you're torn in ten different directions...so it wasn't until...

After I graduated, I lived in Mexico for a couple of years, and then when I came back from Mexico, I kinda went through a period where I was again kind of in a state of turmoil, and I was looking for some spiritual peace, and I kinda remembered that Quaker meeting, and that's when I started attending Wilmington Monthly Meeting and got involved in Quaker stuff. So I was in my mid 20's by the time I came back, so more than a decade later, but...I'm forever thankful [laughing] to the people who introduced me to that, however unwittingly. They lost one for themselves, and the Quakers gained one, but...it worked out well...

I do [attend worship in other traditions] from time to time. I definitely don't think that the silence has any kind of lock on spiritual connections...We've actually had two write-ups in the Savannah news press...And I don't even remember saying this to [one of the reporters], but she quoted me as saying in there, so I must have said it [laughing], something along the lines of, "I've felt that spiritual connection in other forms of worship, but not as easily and as often as I've felt it in the silence," or something along those lines. And she thought that was such a great quote that she put it in there, and I was like, "I don't even remember saying that, that's funny." But it's very true. I certainly loved going to church when I was a kid and growing up, and I definitely felt a spiritual connection in church that-- Of course I probably didn't identify it as that, but-- And I certainly enjoy the singing...

I don't do it as often as I would like, probably, go to other forms of worship. But the last time that I went to a Presbyterian meeting, a Presbyterian service-- I've become so disassociated from it, I don't even know what the proper terminology is anymore, but it was my uncle's, another uncle's funeral. And I have a great family, I just have to say. I'm very fond of my aunts and uncles and cousins and my immediate family. And family means a lot to me. And my uncle...the church that he belonged to is something like Collegiate

Presbyterian or something like that, in Ames, Iowa. And when he left home at the age of 18 or 19 or however old he was and...moved to Ames, Iowa, to go to college, and that was where he started going to church again,...he was very much a part of that church community. And the pastor knew him very well and helped him through his final illness and everything, and they had a really, really good connection, and it was one of the most touching funerals that I've ever been to, because it seems like a lot of times-- I mean that seems to be my connection with other religions, is when I go to...somebody's funeral who's from another religious tradition, and very often they kind of get a little impersonal.

But this was very personal and very touching, and I was really zeroing in on all the things that I missed and that were so special about my uncle, but also about the faith that I was brought up in and those kinds of things. And I was really focusing on that, but as very often happens in situations like this, all of a sudden there's one thing that just goes "Bzzz!" and hits my nerve, and in this case it had been so long, and I had forgotten how they do the "Let us pray" thing, and then the pastor starts talking [laughing]. And I just think, I sit there and...I'm all ready to go into the silence. I'm all ready to center myself and to do that, and it's just really kind of strangely jarring to have-- and...I was in such a place, and I was just so ready for it, and then he starts this "Let us pray," and

“Gah gah gah gah gah!” [laughing] and I’m just like “Ah, man, bzzz!” and that little button got pressed. And I think that might have been the last time-- I can’t remember if there’s been another time. I mean that was certainly the most impressionable last time...

Philosophically, I probably would identify most with...Buddhists...or maybe Unitarian Universalists kind of, but just philosophically...And I think as far as the spiritual part of my life, I, 100%, identify myself as a Quaker, and that’s what I’m comfortable with, and it’s what I live in and live around, and make a point of living in and living around, as much as I can.

Liz’s Story

Well, I grew up Presbyterian. I met Frank at a Presbyterian-UCC church where, oddly enough, I was Presbyterian and he was UCC. And we married in that church in 1982. Our daughter was born in 1984. The church was heavily involved in some social action around Guatemala, Central America; and very not involved in any pastoral care. I had a Cesarean section, I was in the hospital five days, and the minister never came to see me.

...Frank was a trustee, and I was an elder in the church. I mean we weren’t casual members; we were very involved in the church, and had been [since] before we were married. And I was maybe more upset about that than

[anything else]. But we did go to Pastoral Care Committee and say, "You know, you dropped the ball," and they go, "Hm, that's nice." I mean they sort of, I felt like they blew us off. And we stopped going to church. And the next that we heard from anybody in the church was somebody calling about the Every Member campaign. Somebody we didn't know, incidentally. Probably because everybody we knew didn't want to talk to us. Because they figured they'd get an earful. So that was fine, you know, if we didn't go to church. But then we realized if we didn't go to church, somebody was gonna have to give religious education to our kid, and we couldn't agree on it.

So we started shopping for a church. And we had moved from West Philly to Germantown, which is not real far, but geographically...A lot of our friends went to First United Methodist Church of Germantown. It was a big social action church. Every time I've ever been to a Methodist church, they preach on tithing. That can't possibly be true that they preach on it every month or every week. But every time I go, they do. And sure enough-- And it was a huge church, nice big church. And a friend of mine invited us to this little St. Peter's Episcopal Church, where we lowered the median age by 35 years. Nice church, she was the organist. Pretty little building. And talking about enthusiastic, they were like, "Oh my God, people with a kid! That'd be great!"

[laughing] Wouldn't do it for us. We tried the Lutheran thing, wouldn't do it for us. Then a friend of mine said she went to Quaker meeting, and I was like, I never heard of Quaker meeting. I grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas. Frank...had heard of Quaker meeting. We went to Quaker meeting with her; I was like...[Wow!]

So we sort of went off and on until Katie went to Friends school. So we started going to a Quaker meeting that was attached to her Friends school, and joined there a few years later. And you didn't really have to worry about the pastor doing something, because there wasn't one. So anyway, that's how I quit being a Presbyterian. How Frank quit being a Catholic is another story altogether [laughing].

My mother's still a Presbyterian. She'd be a Quaker maybe, except the Quakers meet at 10, Presbyterians meet at 11, so it's much easier for her to get to 11. She's a Quaker when she's with me.

My sister's a Buddhist Quaker-- or mostly a Quaker, but kind of a Buddhist. And my nephew's started saying..., "My mother's a Quaker, my aunt's a Quaker, and I haven't decided yet." He's nine. He's like, you know, I really wanna think about it; he's not gonna commit [laughing]. Which I like; but I took him to Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting this year, without his

mother, and he really enjoyed it. And he goes to gathering; his mother goes to gathering, and he goes to gathering with us, and he's getting it, but he's not gonna commit. And my brother's a Catholic. So none of us stuck to being Presbyterian [laughing]. Although...we went to church every Sunday..., and when I was in high school, my parents went less frequently, but I went. And I actually went to church almost every Sunday when I was in college.

[I identify with] Universalists, but just as a subgroup of Quakers... But I don't call myself a Buddhist or anything like that. I go to Catholic Mass-- one of my nephews got baptized, and occasionally if we're there for Christmas or Easter. I try not to make ugly faces. I actually have not been in several years, because I have less than zero respect, not for just the Catholic Church in general, but for that particular Catholic church; which both has a head usher who wears a Confederate belt buckle and a Confederate lapel pin, which I just found a little bit offensive in a head usher; and because my oldest nephew is autistic, and one of the things he responds to is scent, and he starts what they call stim behavior, you know, flapping or doing some movement. And the church has asked them not to bring him. And they have not-- His younger brother has taken First Holy Communion, gone through CCD; and they won't allow Joseph to go through CCD. Or even try. They've made just no effort. Which I would've left. I

would've packed up and left [laughing]. But my brother and sister aren't doing that, and it just lowers my respect...for being a community that professes one thing and acts another way.

I went to a Presbyterian church on Pentecost last year because of my mother's birthday. She really wanted us to go there, so we went there. And they actually sang a hymn by Elton Trueblood [a Quaker]...Of all the mainline traditional church calendar days, Pentecost is the most Quaker one [laughing], at least one I can relate to. I'm not so good with Christian Easter, but I can relate to Pentecost.

And I also kinda lost it with my brother and sister-in-law's church, where I was supposed to be my nephew's godmother. And they took me in there, and they said, "Now, we're going to ask a series of questions, and you're gonna say yes." But some of the questions I couldn't say yes to. And they said, "Oh, just say it." [laughing] But it wouldn't be true! So they wouldn't let me be the godmother. Because I wouldn't, you know, I'm sorry, but...well, apparently not everybody listens to the questions...Well, you know, in the Catholic Church, you learn the answers. You don't really pay attention to the questions; you just learn the answers [laughing]. So I'm not a godmother. "I'm sorry! You didn't tell me there was a test."

² The other narrators shared background stories as well. But in order to protect their confidentiality, I have not included them here. Instead of their personal histories, we rely on their memories of the Ogeechee Friends Meeting. Appendix A is the interview guide for Sheila and Earl Parks. Similar questions were asked at each interview.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

Ogeechee was based in the rural setting of Statesboro, and Savannah is urban. These two communities are closely linked across 55 miles, or an hour's drive. (For example, George Cox lives and worships in Savannah, and at the time of the interview, was working in Statesboro.) Statesboro's 2008 micropolitan area population was 67,761, compared with Savannah's metropolitan area (not including Hilton Head, Beaufort, or Statesboro) at 334,000 (Census 2011).

The preliminary analysis of the Ogeechee Friends data was limited, due to the conflicting memories of the narrators. George Cox tells me that the "minute book" (official written record) of the meeting was sent to SEYM when "we set the meeting down in the very early 90's." The minute book should have valuable historical data, and its location will hopefully be confirmed soon, and if so I will analyze that data as well.¹

According to Earl and Sheila Parks, Friends in Statesboro and Guyton first came together around the social concerns of "peace, [and] integration, but we didn't have anybody standing on the street corner holding placards...We weren't-- militant." They began meeting in Statesboro around 1970, in the living

room of their own home or in the Olewine residence. Three families, sometimes joined by others for a total of seven or eight adults (ages 30-50) in attendance along with their children, would meet “on Sundays, more or less, and have a potluck dinner afterwards.” Sometimes they would meet at the Parker residence in Guyton (about 30 miles or 45 minutes from either Statesboro or Savannah, but within the Savannah metropolitan area; with a 2006 population of 1823 (Census 2011)). Earl alludes to a period when “after the meeting was over and...sort of disappearing, Cox came; we still went over to Guyton.”

During the early years, it appears that around nine adults and five or more children were present. During Cox’s later experience, “at its largest, there were about a dozen adults and eight to ten children.” This would have been a slightly larger group than the one currently meeting in Savannah. The Savannah meeting has recently grown to an average of 12-18 attenders. The adults at Ogeechee were mostly couples, according to George, with no predominance of one gender over the other. “Young families; young individuals and young families; I would say the age range was...maybe 30 to 45...”

The disagreements about the meetinghouse and proselytizing arose around 1985, according to Earl, when the meeting had dwindled to only four or five people. Cox recalls the meeting lasting for only four or five years, from the

late 1980s to the early 1990s; records show that he was involved with the worship group as early as 1983. The archives show that there was in fact a mostly continuous meeting in Statesboro and Guyton, although informal and perhaps irregular for a time. The written records span from 1971 to 1995.

The reasons for the meeting's dissolution, according to Cox, included a lack of clear direction or goals; the transient nature of the academics who attended; and the lack of religious education for the children. By the time that the Ogeechee Friends Meeting was officially dissolved, or "laid down," Cox says that "there had been several attempts at establishing a worship group in Savannah, none of which had been successful...I visited with them when they were on Tybee [Island, near Savannah], and that didn't last very long; that was in the 90's. And then I visited with them [in] downtown Savannah in the early 80's; that didn't last." As previously discussed, newspaper announcements confirm the existence of a worship group on Tybee Island in 1993-1994.

The current group of Savannah Friends have a strong rapport and concern for one another. Their sense of community is evidently reinforced during their regular lunch at nearby restaurants, where they walk together following the weekly meeting for worship. However, the small size and advancing age of this close-knit group represent dangers to its own longevity. According to Cox's

assertion, the minimum threshold for a successful congregation is “about 50 adults.” This, he says, prevents burnout and ensures having enough young couples with children (and energy).

On that note, I was encouraged to meet Christen Clougherty, a woman in her 30’s, on a couple of visits with Savannah Friends. Having recently completed her PhD in Quaker Studies in England, she now operates a luxury inn and a new nonprofit educational organization in Savannah, and she plans to open a Quaker school (Star 2006). She and her artist husband have the potential to attract a network of young professionals and families to the meeting.

Liz Perch ponders the future of the Savannah Friends Meeting:

Right now I’d have to say that it’s gonna continue to grow slowly, which I don’t think is bad; but...there will be an even more slowly growing core...People who are essentially members, that’s solvent and will hold the center. What I don’t know is whether or not we’ll reach a point of stability, or we’ll keep growing to the point where things change. Like for right now, I see it still growing, probably a really very steady, slow but steady pace, and whether that’ll reach a point where it levels off more, I don’t know yet. I think a lot of that depends on social forces and the community at large, to some extent. I think Savannah is still really

growing, and actually experiencing higher than normal growth...More people come to Savannah, some of them are bound to be attracted to Quakers. So that's a big factor. And I also think that with that subgroup, we're doing the right things to maintain or increase the depth of spiritual quality in the meeting, and not just at worship, but just as a community. We've got the right idea, and we're doing a good job at trying to maintain it, despite the fact that we get busy...

[It's important] that you do maintain a core that will heavily influence the depth of spirituality in the meeting. That you have enough people who aren't afraid to be peculiar, which we're really good at; because let's face it, Quakers are gonna be peculiar in the Deep South. We're peculiar enough [in] other places, but-- that you have a variety of skills, and people willing to do things, like be clerk or be newsletter editor or be treasurer. And that you pass some of those skills on, so that nobody is stuck being clerk or newsletter editor or treasurer forever.

But I think the biggest thing is having some, even tiny, core of people who are committed to maintaining that spiritual depth, because that ultimately is gonna keep people. We saw it in 2001, and I went to a lot of meetings between 2001 and 2006. And in 2001 and 2002, as apparently happened in

the '60's, by the way, a lot of people came into meetings for social action reasons. They wanted to find other people who were opposed to the war. They needed to find other people that they could talk to, in communities where being pro-war, in the kind of meanest, angriest sense, was a thing that was happening. But they came for social action. And in some meetings, they found exactly what they were looking for. And that was okay, apparently, with everybody...Social action was an outgrowth of the depth of spirituality. And some people stayed. Because what they thought they were looking for was like-minded peace activists, and what they were really looking for was something with some spiritual hunger, that the peace activism was an outgrowth of in themselves.

And in some meetings, it's become a conflict of the people who want that spiritual core, and the people who need social action, but don't relate to the spiritual dimension at all. But that cycle has rolled over a little bit at this point, and most meetings have resolved it, and gone sort of one way or the other. But it will come up again and again, until the United States and other countries find other ways to resolve conflicts besides bombing the shit out of each other. And without that spiritual center and that commitment that this is a spiritual community first, you will dissolve into

a social action group that meditates once a week [laughing], and that's not gonna work for some people. And finding ways to grow that and to tell people about it and communicate with them what it is, and let them find their own journey, is the challenge. And we've got some people who are really good at that. And even people like [one Savannah attendee], who denies that she's ever gonna join anything [laughing], and she's a mystic, not a Quaker, did a First Day program, a religious [education] program, about mysticism and some of the mystics that she's studied and read about, and people were just blown away.

[Another individual is] an ex-Catholic nun. And she does not self-identify as a Christian, or a Quaker. And she did a program about holding people in the Light, how you hold someone in the Light, and some very personal experiences of being held, or asking people to hold a concern of hers..., and got other people talking about what, if I said "holding someone in the Light," what other people did and how they practiced that. And just talking about it, and saying, for the people who didn't necessarily have the same experiences, allow people to say, "Oh, well, I do that. Or maybe that's what I'm doing, finding that depth." And so we found some ways to get everybody included, and everybody brings

something to the table, and that will make for a strong spiritual community.

And even if it doesn't grow, it will still provide a strong spiritual center.

And my experience with Friends is that they-- partly because they have to create their own spiritual center, they don't have anybody out there telling them how to do it-- provide a disproportionate amount of spiritual center to other groups and organizations and places that they are, and communities. And so even if Savannah Friends Meeting remains small, which I think we're beyond actually being called "tiny" now [laughing], we're past the tiny mark-- but even if we remain small or moderately small, we would still provide important spiritual center for people who are there, and for some second or third ring...That'll be okay. You know, there's something to be said for only having 15 people in your meeting, if that's the right number, and besides, we have all these other people praying for us, because we haven't been baptized [laughing]. We're playing with fire.

Her last comment alludes to a story that Joe Guy had told the group over lunch, about when he had jokingly told an acquaintance at a funeral that Quakers practice baptism by fire, and the man believed him. The group laughed

heartily about this. This is a fine example of how Friends in Savannah leaven their community-building with a strong sense of humor about their own tradition. This could be one of the ingredients that sustains them over the long term.

¹ The 2010 SEYM minutes

(<http://www.seym.org/ymMIN.pdf/ybmMIN2010.pdf>, Attachment 3: Archive Committee Report) note that the missing archival records were delivered to the University of Florida's library after my research visit there: "On Thursday March 18 2010 four Friends from Clearwater Meeting spent the day at the Smathers Library taking with them for deposit minute books from Clearwater for 1958-1980, and records from Ogeechee Meeting and Savannah Friends Worship Group that had been brought to Orlando in January." However, the librarians at Smathers Library have not yet been able to verify the location of these records.

CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE AND EVALUATION

The cultural and historical data from the Ogeechee Friends Meeting might bring to bear some positive and negative examples for the Savannah Friends Worship Group, as they have recently become a monthly meeting. Although memory has proven to be an unreliable data source among former Ogeechee members, the archival records have shed more light upon the history and culture of the group.

The data from the interviews and observations could suggest that communal meals, whether in potluck or restaurant settings, appear to either strengthen or reinforce community bonds; and their declining frequency among Ogeechee Friends might prove to have signified the meeting's gradual dissolution.

Savannah Friends, as they have recently grown into an official meeting, might benefit from examining the data on Ogeechee Friends; and possibly by following George Cox's idea of growing the meeting to a sustainable size by involving young families with religious education. The relative stability of the older members could balance the transient lifestyle of younger academics and other professionals, and could provide continuity within the group.

My familiarity with Quaker etiquette and customs made me at ease in the meetings and interviews. It also seemed to make the narrators more comfortable. The questions I asked in the interviews, and my conversations with Friends in both cities, were shaped by my own experiences and studies. My previous coursework with Earlham School of Religion (a Quaker graduate school), my brief history of the Birmingham Friends Meeting, my *Encyclopedia of Alabama* article on Alabama Quakers, and my involvement with the local Democratic Party also provided me with important credibility as an insider with both groups. The interactions I had were therefore different than they would have been with another researcher, who might have gained a different set of data with a similar methodology.

I intentionally tried to focus upon certain cultural elements that might be compared among meetings, such as intellectual culture (influential readings), programmed/unprogrammed worship, and Universalist/Christocentric traditions. I had found in my previous research that these elements can be important markers of group identity among Friends in the Deep South. In the process, I was surprised to learn of self-reported prejudices of one former Ogeechee Friend. I had anticipated more of a Universalist tradition than I would find in the Ogeechee Meeting, because it is such a strong element in the

Birmingham Friends Meeting. Indeed, I had expected to find Universalism to be common among Friends meetings in the Deep South, and it is certainly present among Savannah Friends.

I have observed in these and other Friends meetings in the South that transplants from the North are common. In Birmingham, for example, at the time of my research, there was only one native Southerner who attended regularly. As we have seen, some Quakers who migrate to Southern meetings are from Northern areas with strong Quaker history, such as Pennsylvania or Delaware.

I was disappointed to hear that the Parks couple preferred confidentiality, because I had already interviewed George Cox and he had been more open to sharing his identity. This made the ethics of my research more challenging, since they had been in the same small group. I have had to proceed carefully, so as not to give an undue power to the pseudonymous when they speak of a known person.

It would be useful for me to analyze the minute book of the Ogeechee Friends Meeting. It is likely written from Cox's viewpoint, and should contain a brief history of the meeting. It also might reference earlier dates than he now recalls. Since there are also records of the Savannah Worship Group that have

reportedly surfaced, these should also yield valuable data about the community's early years.

Queries

In light of the Quaker tradition of using "queries," reflective or provocative questions, in their discussions, let's examine the central questions that the Savannah Friends have been pondering, along with some related queries that Friends might be led to discuss.

- What are the goals of outreach to the community? Are these goals being attained through the newsletter, advertisements, Facebook, word of mouth, etc.?
- Is it important to attract young families? If so, how might this be done?¹
- Would a 4:00 p.m. meeting for worship (followed by dinner together) be a better time for college students to attend?
- Would it help newcomers if Friends oriented them to the "seeking" attitude, as opposed to being "too sure" of one's beliefs? If so, how might Friends go about explaining this?
- The clerk of Ogeechee Friends Meeting was "clerk in perpetuity." Does it help to rotate officers every two years or so? Does this allow more individuals to feel invested in the meeting?

- How do Friends thrive in a pro-military area?
- Do second-hour discussions and/or weekly meals help to hold Friends together? If so, how?
- Does a sense of humor also help to hold Friends together?
- Are there other ideas that Friends might be led to explore, in order to help their meetings survive and thrive, even in the Deep South? What do people in long-standing Southern meetings have to say about this?

Directions for Further Research

If its existence can be confirmed, and the data analyzed, what might the Ogeechee Friends' minute book reveal about the history of the meeting, especially regarding its origin and the official reasons for its dissolution? What could it illuminate about disagreements among the group? Along with the declining frequency of communal meals (which could have been a cause or an effect of the decline in attendance and interest), were there "warning signs" that preceded the decline of the meeting? What sorts of cultural markers (events, traditions, actions) were evident in its ebbs and flows?

Now that I have identified other occasional attenders of the Ogeechee Meeting, what could I learn from them about their visits to the meeting, and about their subsequent worship choices in the absence of a meeting? Also,

regarding at least two individual Friends who have since moved to Statesboro, what do they have to say about living as isolated Quakers here?

What would Christen Clougherty and other attenders have to say about their lives in relation to the meeting? Some longtime attenders might have additional memories about the early days, and Christen would have a unique perspective as a Quaker scholar who studied under the prominent Quaker sociologist Pink Dandelion.

As one person from Savannah Friends Meeting asked, “How did Penn Center and the Reconstruction-era work contribute or not contribute to Savannah?” While we have looked at the Jacobs’ project, any links between Penn Center and Savannah would require further research.

Which colonial-era Quakers held seats in the Commons House of Assembly? How were their lives related to the history of Savannah?

Can we identify the exact locations of the earliest meetings in Savannah, led by William Savery and Joseph John Gurney? What further details might exist in newspaper accounts?

How does the cultural and historical context of the Deep South relate to the long-term survival of Quaker meetings in the region?

Regarding my own research, I'm particularly interested in following up on two ideas. First, I've noticed that the geographical distribution of Friends in the United States seems counterintuitive. That is, Liberal Friends are commonly found in the Deep South, and Evangelical Friends are strong in the West. I'd like to explore the question of whether Friends are essentially a countercultural movement. For example, do Liberal meetings thrive in the Conservative culture of the Deep South because their common identity as cultural outsiders makes their small groups more cohesive? Would a similar concept apply to Evangelical Friends on the Left Coast? What about the large numbers of Quaker meetings outside the US?

I've also been struck by Victor and Edith Turner's theory of ritualized communal feeling, *communitas*, and how it might apply to the Quaker tradition (Turner 1972). I have already begun formulating my own thoughts about how their concepts of liminality ("threshold" periods of major transitions), normativity, and spontaneity relate to Quaker worship, and I'm eager to read Edith Turner's new (2012) book on *communitas* with this in mind.

Closing

Often when people ask me about my thesis, they are surprised to learn that there are Quakers in the area, and also that they are different from Amish people. I have attempted to explain, in a readable way, who Quakers are, and how they live and thrive in the Deep South. I have also told the story of how there came to be Quaker meetings in Savannah and in Statesboro; how there never came to be a long, continuous history of Quakers in Savannah; and what happened to the Statesboro Friends. If this study also points to ideas that can help the Savannah community to survive here in the long term, in a militaristic area far removed from the historical Quaker communities in the Northeast, this might also help future gatherings to take root in Statesboro and/or other Deep South towns. This will be of interest to others who ask about my thesis (individual “isolated Friends,” and friends of Friends like myself), and then tell me they wish there were still a meeting in Statesboro, because they would love to attend.

¹ Tom Hoopes (2008) provides a thoughtful article about building multigenerational community among Friends, including a set of queries “for meetings seeking to embrace young families.”

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDE (PARKS INTERVIEW)

I was fascinated to learn from you and Earl that you were involved with a Friends group in Statesboro in the 70s, as this was the first I'd heard about any Quaker work here in that time period; I've been looking forward to talking with you about it.

***Do you mind if I make an audio recording of our conversation? I have a release form here that you can choose to sign after we finish. If you agree with this arrangement, the recording will be preserved in an archive, accessible to the public.**

Would you mind sharing your birth date and place of birth as background information?

I understand that there were worship groups in Statesboro in the 1970s and in the 1990s. Do you happen to know whether the groups were related in any way?

How and when did the Statesboro group get started?

How familiar were the attenders with the Quaker tradition?

Where were the meetings held? Could you please describe the meeting space(s)?

How long was the meeting active?

When and why did the group stop meeting? Do you recall any turning points?

Was it ever recognized as a meeting, or was it always a worship group? Do you recall who served as clerk, if anyone?

Was it a programmed or unprogrammed meeting? Was there any use of music or texts?

Was it Universalist or Christocentric?

How many persons usually attended?

How did people generally dress for the meeting?

Are there other persons you would recommend that I talk with?

Are there any written records from the Statesboro group that I might be able to access?

Do you mind if I ask about your early religious background? How, when, and where did you become involved with Friends?

Do you happen to attend worship in other traditions since those days?

Do you identify yourself with a particular religious tradition now?

***Here are two copies of the release form, one of which you can keep.**

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

An Ethnohistory of Quakers in Two Georgia Cities

A Thesis Project for the Master of Social Science in Anthropology

Georgia Southern University

Explanation of Project: The Religious Society of Friends, which has large memberships in certain geographical areas, has remained a minority religious

tradition in the American Deep South. This project seeks to document and compare the lived experiences of Friends in two cities in Georgia, one of which has an active Friends Meeting. Activities of the meeting will be observed, and an oral history project will be conducted within an anthropological framework.

Tentative Schedule:

Fall 2008: Begin Information Gathering and Research: Collection of background information, written and oral, about Friends in both cities, both individual and in meetings; followed by audio-recorded interviews and transcriptions. Participant observations conducted.

December 2010: Target for Completion: Master's thesis presented to faculty committee; upon approval, thesis placed in Georgia Southern University's Zach S. Henderson Library in print and electronic formats, and will be open to the public.

For Further Information or to Get Involved: Contact Jonathan Harwell (Georgia Southern University graduate student) at jharwell@georgiasouthern.edu or by phone at 205-240-5053 (cell) or 912-489-3654 (home). Please let me know if you would like to find out more, or if you know of additional persons who might be interviewed.

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR GROUP

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a project conducted as part of the research for my thesis for the Master of Arts in Social Science, with an emphasis in anthropology, at Georgia Southern University. For this project I will be doing at least two observations and one interview to examine the “culture” of your Friends Meeting – its activities, rules, values, beliefs, material objects, jargon. The data collection will be supervised by my advisor: Dr. Robert Shanafelt, telephone # 912-478-1581, robshan@georgiasouthern.edu. Initial research will also be supervised by the Ethnographic Methods course instructor: Dr. Barbara Hendry, telephone # 912-478-5362, bhendry@georgiasouthern.edu.

The purpose of this project is to document and compare the cultural patterns of Quakers in two Georgia cities. This research will contribute to the body of knowledge on minority religions in the South. All information obtained will be treated confidentially, unless individuals or groups request in writing to be identified.

For this project, you will: agree that I may observe/participate in at least two activities with your Friends Meeting; announce my purpose to the group and secure their permission; and grant me at least one interview.

For this project, I will: observe your group at least twice; interview local Friends, including some from your meeting; take photographs of group activities and material culture with permission (but not include the faces of individuals unless they request otherwise); use actual names unless requested otherwise by the group and/or individuals; present preliminary results to my class and in a written report for my instructor; and present final results in the form of a thesis, which will be open to the public in print and electronic formats through the Henderson Library of Georgia Southern University.

You are free to withdraw your participation at any time if you become uncomfortable with it. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 205-240-5053. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences and viewpoints with us. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Jonathan H. Harwell

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

If your group would like for its name to be used, please sign below as well.

If your group prefers anonymity, please do NOT sign below.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Compliance
Coordinator, ORSSP, Georgia Southern University, Box 8005, Statesboro, Georgia
30460, Telephone (912) 478-5465 E-Mail Address irb@georgiasouthern.edu

** (modified from The Penn State University and the University of Georgia IRB Policy
Manual)*

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM FOR INDIVIDUAL

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a project conducted as part of the research for my thesis for the Master of Arts in Social Science, with an emphasis in anthropology, at Georgia Southern University. For this project I will be doing at least two observations and two interviews to examine the “culture” of a local Friends Meeting – its activities, rules, values, beliefs, material objects, jargon. The data collection will be supervised by my advisor: Dr. Robert Shanafelt, telephone # 912-478-1581, robshan@georgiasouthern.edu. Initial research has

also been supervised by the Ethnographic Methods course instructor: Dr.

Barbara Hendry, telephone # 912-478-5362, bhendry@georgiasouthern.edu.

The purpose of this project is to document and compare the cultural patterns of Quakers in two Georgia cities. This research will contribute to the body of knowledge on minority religions in the South. All information obtained will be treated confidentially, unless individuals or groups request in writing to be identified.

For this project, you will: grant me at least one interview.

For this project, I will: observe a local Friends Meeting on multiple occasions; interview local Friends; take photographs of activities and material culture with permission (but not include the faces of individuals unless they request otherwise); use actual names unless requested otherwise by the group and/or individuals; record interviews in audio format, and archive them for public access unless you request that they be destroyed; present preliminary results in a written report for my thesis advisor(s); and present final results in the form of a thesis, which will be open to the public in print and electronic formats through the Henderson Library of Georgia Southern University.

You are free to withdraw your participation at any time if you become uncomfortable with it. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 912-682-4442. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences and viewpoints with us. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Jonathan H. Harwell

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

If you would like for your name to be used and for audio to be kept, please sign below as well.

If you prefer to be anonymous and that audio recordings be destroyed, please do NOT sign below.

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Compliance Coordinator, ORSSP, Georgia Southern University, Box 8005, Statesboro, Georgia 30460, Telephone (912) 478-5465 E-Mail Address irb@georgiasouthern.edu

** (modified from The Penn State University and the University of Georgia IRB Policy Manual)*

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW METADATA

First Interview

Narrator: Dr. George Cox (pseud.), male, Professor, Georgia Southern University

Interviewer/Transcriber: Jonathan H. Harwell

Date of Interview: Thursday, September 25, 2008, 2:15 p.m.

Place of Interview: Office of Narrator, Georgia Southern University

Digital Audio Recording: 34 minutes, 34 seconds; fully transcribed

Primary Topic: Statesboro (Ogeechee Friends Meeting)

Second Interview

Narrators: Sheila and Earl Parks (pseud.)

Interviewer/Transcriber: Jonathan H. Harwell

Date of Interview: Friday, October 3, 2008, 12:15 p.m.

Place of Interview: Headquarters of Bulloch County Democratic Party, 10 East

Olliff Street, Statesboro, Georgia

Digital Audio Recording: 1 hour, 19 minutes, 7 seconds, fully transcribed

Primary Topic: Statesboro and Guyton (Ogeechee Friends Meeting)

Third Interview

Narrator: Joe Guy

Interviewer/Transcriber: Jonathan H. Harwell

Date of Interview: Sunday, July 11, 2010, 1:30 pm

Place of Interview: Telfair Square, Savannah, Georgia

Digital Audio Recording: 1 hour, 41 minutes, fully transcribed

Primary Topic: Savannah Friends Meeting

Fourth Interview

Narrator: Liz Perch

Interviewer/Transcriber: Jonathan H. Harwell

Date of Interview: Sunday, July 18, 2010, 2:00 pm

Place of Interview: Perch residence, 330 Goebel Avenue, Savannah, Georgia

Digital Audio Recording: 1 hour, 24 minutes, fully transcribed

Primary Topic: Savannah Friends Meeting