



Lincoln Historical Society
www.lincolnvthistory.org

The Records of the Quakers of Lincoln, Vermont

Note: This information was written by Mary H. Turner Purinton (1889-1991) probably about 1945, after the fire mentioned below. Noted by Beverly Purinton Brown, daughter of Mary, July 2002.

For some little time before the flashes of lightning became vivid and the rains came down, there had been the sound of distant thunder; and when Miss Carrie Purinton of Weybridge got out of bed to close her window, she saw a red reflection in the Eastern sky which could only mean one thing, a bad fire.

How little she realized at that moment that it was the home of her grandfather that was ablaze and that burning with it were the records of the Quaker Society of Lincoln.

The charter of this town was granted November 9, 1780 and on the spot on Quaker Street, now marked by a monument, the first town meeting was held in 1798. The early settlers of the town belonged to the Society of Friends and for years it was the only Society that held regular worship services in Lincoln. The people who did not belong were the exceptions.

The Friends first organized on July 16, 1801 with James Varney as clerk, although meeting for worship had been held for two years in the home of Levi Meader's log house, which was situated in the north end of town on a farm now known as the Hiram Hamner place and occupied by a family by the name of Fletcher Zeno.

In 1802, at Easton, NY, the Quarterly meeting of the Lincoln Society submitted for approval a proposed plan for a house of worship. They then hoped to build a church 24' x 36' with 10' posts at an estimated cost of \$500. The report from the meeting was quite discouraging as no assistance seemed to be forthcoming. An extract from the report shows "That Friends of Lincoln had better for the present endeavor to

accommodate themselves with such a house as they are able to build among themselves.”

The rebuff apparently made the group more determined than ever, and eight years later, in 1810 the Lincoln Quaker Church was built, and it was the only church in town until 1863. It was larger than first planned, but on special occasions it was still too small to accommodate all who attended.

The church, typical of all the houses of worship erected by Friends, had two doors. The men used one on the right and sat on the right side of the church while the women entered by the other door and occupied seats on the left. A shoulder high partition running down through the center of the church was on a pulley so it could be drawn up or down. At the front there was an elevated section in which the elders sat, but there was no pulpit because at the usual service there was no speaker with a regular sermon although visiting preachers did sometimes deliver an address. But the members of the congregation spoke as the spirit moved them. If the spirit moved no one, then the hour passed in silence at the close of which the Elders shook hands as a sign the service was over. There was no communion or singing, and instead of kneeling they stood during prayer.

For over 100 years there were services from eleven to twelve o'clock on Sunday and Wednesday and the Guindon family had regular services in their home when they became the last members of the Society. The church was later taken down (1903) and its timbers were used in building a house on Taylor Avenue in Bristol by George Farr. (Now owned by Jess Corliss.)

The church rolls included the following names:

Quaker marriages were as simple as were the services for worship. A man and a woman got permission of their parents and the other members of the Society to which they belonged and then joined hands at church and married themselves by so saying.

If a member married outside the church, it was customary for a committee to go to see what went on.

Miss Purinton has the wedding certificate of her great grandfather Dr. Benjamin Taber, born June 30, 1785, who married Phebe Carpenter in 1808 and settled in Lincoln as the

first doctor. Seven sons and three daughters were born to them. She also has the wedding certificate of her grandfather, Peltiah Gove who married Phebe Tabor in 1846.

Long pieces of white unlined paper rolled up like a scroll and beautifully written with pen and ink took the place of printed forms so often used in other faiths.

Having the consent of their parents and the Monthly Meeting to which they belong, on 10 June 1846, Peltiah Gove and Phebe Tabor appeared in Public Meeting of the Friends and did on that solemn occasion take each other in marriage according to the custom of the Friends by promising with divine assistance To be unto each other kind and affectionate until separated by death and they (she taking the name of her husband) did then and there to these present set their names. Then all who witnessed the ceremony signed the sheet, even to the smallest child.

For many years the church records were in the possession of Peltiah Gove who made a case for them, using a 4x7 barn window as a door for it, and that case stood on a stand in the hall of his home for many years, until finally after his death, it was stored away in the attic. There they were when the building owned by Flora Purinton was struck by lightning on April 1, 1945, and all was lost.

In the little old cemetery at the height of land on Quaker Street not far from the place where the church once stood the Friends lie buried. Situated in a spot a few hundred feet from the road, in addition to 75 marble markers neatly engraved, the cemetery contains about 35 field stone markers, some irregular in shape and others with flat surfaces bearing rudely carved initials, now barely discernable.

Miss Purinton, two Phebes, her grandmother and great grandmother lie in plainly marked graves, bearing the inscriptions:

Phebe Tabor

9-21-51

62 yrs

Phebe Gove

Age 72 yrs 3mo 10 d

Died

3rd mo

12th d

1892

The three stones with the earliest dates are marked:

Timothy Chase

4th m 18th d

1832

Age 72

Dolly

Wife of Nathan Gove

1832

J.T.

1832

The next oldest stone:

James Varney

Who died Feb 7

1835

Age 67

Only one stone in the cemetery has an epitaph:

Phebe

Wife of Levi Green

Died Feb 15 1861 Age 53 yrs

Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain but a woman who feareth the Lord she shall be praised.

Thus can it be said of the Friend "as in life, so in death, simplicity"

Written by Marion S Rowley