

Below is the history of East Lansing Monthly Meeting (now Red Cedar Friends Meeting). The East Lansing Monthly Meeting was renamed Red Cedar Friends Monthly Meeting June 4, 1978.

The history was compiled by Jim Booth and was published in March 1976. This history was part of the original Blue Book which included both the history and Charge to Committees. The Charge to Committees was written by Colleen Tootell, Kathy Booth and Jim Anderson. It was also typed by Kathy Booth on her Hermes manual typewriter. The revised Blue Book (1992) did not include the history of the Meeting. The RCF History Committee is working on additions to this history. Look for future updates in 2007.

HISTORY OF EAST LANSING MONTHLY MEETING written by Jim Booth

In 1939 Anne C. Garrison moved to Lansing. She was a recorded Friends minister of Five Years Yearly Meeting¹. Anne had joined Friends in 1932/33 and previously had helped found the Mohawk Valley Meeting in New York State. In her search for religious meaning, the writings of William Penn, John Woolman, and Rufus Jones were of particular influence on her and had drawn her to Friends. In 1938 she had participated in an AFSC work camp with Jewish refugee families in western New York and had found this a seminal religious experience which strengthened her mystical and social justice insights.

Anne arrived in East Lansing with the name of Harrison Hunt as a person interested in Friends. Dr. Hunt, a zoology professor, had been strongly influenced by the antiwar writings of David George, President of Stanford University, by his World War I experiences, and by the diseugenic aspect of war. Anne and Harrison talked and shared their interest in Quakerism and started, along with others, sharing Quaker-style worship. Some of the persons who shared the early worship were Christine Steen, Jane Fisher (Mrs. Harrison) Hunt, and Robert Adams. This statement was prepared in 1954 about the founding of East Lansing Friends Meeting:

The coming of the second world war stimulated a number of earnest church members in this area to search for a religious means and motivation which would help the world to avoid violent, cruel, and costly conflicts. Being acquainted with the teachings of Jesus, they sought the source of solutions in his life and teachings. They found that three hundred years previously others had secured answers in a troubled time from the same source. A group of English men and women, under the leadership of George Fox, had organized what they called the Society of Friends which came to be known as Quakers.

By the fall of 1942, a group of seven to ten persons were holding Quaker worship in the homes of the various attenders. However, between 1943 and 1947 there were only two persons considered as members of the group. Harrison and Jane Hunt frequently traveled to Ann Arbor for Meeting for Worship and Business. Arthur and Esther Dunham and

¹ Five Years Meeting eventually became Friends United Meeting.

later Kenneth and Elise Boulding of Ann Arbor were supportive of the “Lansing-East Lansing group” through visitation to East Lansing.

After 1947, the worship group met in the basement and then the College House of the Peoples Church with three to seventeen attenders. Robert Noble was Clerk during much of this period, and by April, 1951, the group had requested Preparative Meeting association with Ann Arbor. On June 3, 1951, a group from Ann Arbor came to East Lansing to worship and participate in a Meeting for Business to establish the preparative meeting.

Meeting for Worship may have been monthly rather than weekly for a period of time during spring of 1954. Margaret Palley was Clerk in the mid 50's, and by 1956 eight to ten attenders worshipped weekly. Allyn F. Roberts was Clerk in 1957. The Meeting had a First Day School program and was growing and anticipating Monthly Meeting status. Robert Blood of the Ann Arbor Meeting was remembered as “tireless” in his bringing Ann Arbor Friends to support worship, youth activities, and committee meetings of the East Lansing Meeting. Ann Arbor also helped finance outreach efforts.

In 1958, three of the families active in support of Meeting moved from Lansing, and fears were expressed that Meeting would possibly be laid down. However, by 1959, more than 20 were in regular attendance, and Ann Arbor felt able to end its regular travel to support Meeting for Worship.

The 1961 minutes of Ann Arbor report a small but stable group of attenders under the leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Steve Deutsch, with Meeting for Worship, a weekly study group of Faith and Practice, and monthly potluck. The 1960 budget was \$1000, and the 1961 budget was \$1,200.

Jim Pino and then Peter Stettenheim served as Clerks through much of the 1960's. Year 'round Meeting for Worship was initiated in the mid 1960's, and a religious education/child care program again in 1969/70. A search for a Meeting House/Women's Co-op Housing facility was undertaken in 1965 but was found to be not feasible. Meetings were held in the MSU Union and the Grange Hall on Trowbridge Road until moving to the library of All Saints Episcopal Church on Abbott Road.

In May of 1970, Jane Fisher Hunt died after a long illness, and Harrison, a founder and prime sustainer of the East Lansing Meeting, moved to California to be nearer his daughter. Harrison is remembered for his keen scientific mind (he served as chairman of the MSU Department of Zoology), his contributions to vocal ministry, and his determined advancement of Quaker testimony in the community. When others were not able to undertake the clerking or treasurer responsibilities, Harrison would assume these duties to sustain Meeting. He frequently traveled to Ann Arbor to participate in worship, Meeting for Business, and the summer weekend campouts. At Quarterly Meeting, Harrison would gather the young Friends for long hikes in the woods which were very popular and appreciated. Jane Hunt was very interested in and responsive to vocal ministry, and her efforts at providing hospitality are remembered.

In the early 70's the slow growth of the 60's accelerated and in the spring of 1973, with 15-20 adult attenders and a religious education program, the Meeting asked for and received Monthly Meeting status from Green Pastures Quarterly and Lake Erie Yearly Meetings. On Eleventh Month 11, 1973, a Meeting for Worship with representatives of various Monthly Meetings present and Jim Anderson as Clerk was held to celebrate Monthly Meeting status after 22 years as a Preparative Meeting and 10 or more years as a Worship Group.

Meeting growth continued and in 1975 work was started on a new committee structure. Attendance was 20 – 35 adults and 5-15 children, and Jim Booth was clerk.

Peace and Social Justice concerns have been present throughout the history of Meeting. During and after World War II, refugee work was a major concern with the resettlement of a refugee family into a remodeled farm house in Berrien County as a major activity. In the early 1970's concerns over the Vietnamese War led to: a Peace Vigil (organized and sustained largely by Sam and Margery Wetmore), Meeting's non-payment of the telephone tax imposed to pay for the war, and aid to Vietnam for reconstruction after the war.

The East Lansing Meeting has had an erratic growth pattern. We do try to continue in the spirit described in the 1954 statement about the founding of the East Lansing Meeting:

These Quakers believed that there is something of God in every human, and that if a person will listen in quietude and open-mindedness, God will sometimes [provide leadings]...

Another vital principle, derived from the teachings of Jesus, was that love must be the motive force in all human activity including dealings with those who seek to do one harm. Violence in thought and speech, or in act, violated this. Simple worship and living, plain and truthful speech, and common honesty must become habits. Those who consciously live hour by hour in the presence of God can become the kind of people who bring peace and happiness to a troubled world.

End of the written history of "East Lansing Monthly Meeting" (March 1976)

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