



The Philbrick Tavern, located at the northwest corner of 11 Mile and Power, remains a symbol of the Farmington area's involvement in the Underground Railroad movement. Used to hide slaves before the Civil War, it now is a privately owned home.

Farmington's foundation rooted in the battle against slavery

Farmington was an active center for the Underground Railroad and radical reform activity prior to the Civil War, largely because of the two Quaker meetings in the area.

Although the Quaker founders of the communities lived quietly and simply, they were strengthened by a spiritual conviction that slavery and oppression must be challenged.

FARMINGTON Friends of the Orthodox branch of Quakers organized their meeting in 1831, while liberal Friends in Livonia and Plymouth gathered informally until 1833, when a committee of Liberal Quakers in Farmington, New York, encouraged them to establish a monthly meeting for business and worship.

In January, 1834, Nankin monthly meeting of the Religious Society of Friends was founded as a constituent of the Genesee, New York yearly meeting.

Liberal Friends were sometimes called "Hicksites" because one of their number, Elias Hicks, a farmer-minister from Long Island, was disowned by orthodox Friends for stressing a Universalist theology.

Hicksites were scattered in Plymouth, Livonia, Nankin and Ann Arbor townships. Nathan Aldrich was the first

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man to purchase land in what is now Livonia, and his brother, Alanson Aldrich, the first settler in Plymouth, adhered to Hicksite Quakerism.

They, along with Erastus Hussey and members of the Lapham family, had all settled the area prior to 1826, having traveled via Canada from central New York. In 1835, the meeting was renamed Livonia monthly meeting since most members lived in the township.

SINCE 1775, all Quakers had been forbidden to own, trade or sanction the holding of slaves. Earlier in 1688, German Quakers raised one of the first protests by any Christian group against the "peculiar institution."

Quakers were led to believe that slavery was contrary to the ethics of Jesus. Their convictions were shared

by schismatic bands of Free-Will Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists and "New Light" Presbyterians.

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Thomas Chandler, a Hicksite Friend, together with other Quakers and Wesleyan Methodists in Michigan organized the Michigan Anti-Slavery Society in 1836 in Ann Arbor to agitate for emancipation of blacks. Almost simultaneously, Friends in Indiana began the development of the "Quaker Line" of the Underground Railroad.

The line started in Quaker settlements in Eastern Tennessee and continued through Cincinnati, Richmond, Indiana, Cassopolis, Schoolcraft, Battle Creek, Parma, Ann Arbor, Plymouth,

Farmington and had Detroit as its terminus.

The "superintendent" was Levi Coffin of Newport, Ind. All activity was kept secret and the names of depot operators and conductors were kept in confidence.

Black fugitives were transported by night from station to station by conductors who saw that they were fed and housed. It was a violation of federal law to harbor escaped slaves, and many Quakers were imprisoned or fined heavily for concealing them in their homes.

Contrary to popular myth, most northerners did not espouse antislavery views; in fact, abolitionists were stoned and harassed in Michigan before 1861. Quakers were ridiculed by their neighbors as "Negro-lovers" and their communities called were "Negrodens."

Three prominent Quakers active in the Underground were Erastus Hussey of Plymouth, Robert Glasier of Livonia meeting and Nathan Power of Farmington.

ERASTUS HUSSEY and his wife, Sarah Bowen came from Scipio, New York, and built a log shelter during the winter of 1826 on their homestead near Plymouth.