

Tombstones Tell Farmington's History...

By CARL DAVIDSON
 Many residents are somewhat curious about the faith of the founders of Farmington and Livonia. Who were the Quakers? What did they believe, how did they live?
 Two old landmarks in the area remain to give some clue about the faith and practice of the earliest settlers in the vicinity. Arthur Power was the first white settler in Farmington in 1824 and lies buried in the old Quaker burial ground on Gill Rd. south of Grand River.

Nathan Aldrich, likewise, was the first man to take up land in 1824 in what is now Livonia. He was a founder of the Quaker meeting which gathered in the old Friends Meetinghouse built in 1846 on Seven Mile Rd. west of Farmington Rd.
 Both of these founders came from New York State via Canada and were strongly attached to the Society of Friends (Quakers) which had its origins in Britain and the American colonies in the 17th century.

DURING THE SOCIAL and religious upheaval of the Puritan Revolution, many restless, seeking spirits broke away from the rigid formalism of the Church of England and the sterile orthodoxy of Puritanism. They turned inward in quest of a religion of personal experience and direct communion with God.
 George Fox (1624-1691), founder of the Society of Friends, was one of these "seekers".
 One day he recorded in his journal, "when all my hope in

men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then O then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is One, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition' and when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy."
 In 1847, he began to preach a simple Christian faith and experience that required no ordained clergy, sacraments or formalized creeds. The movement gathered momentum as a religion based upon the experi-

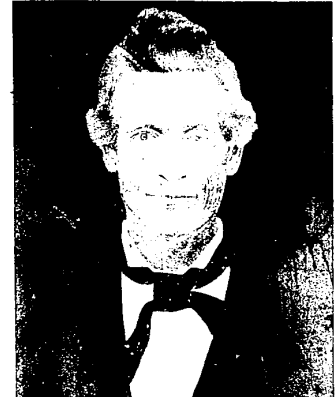
ence of the Holy Spirit which appealed to the poor classes.
 Fox gathered around him a band of youthful disciples known as the "valiant 60" who proclaimed a simple gospel devoid of theological complexity which stressed universal salvation, direct revelation, brotherhood, social equality and peace.
 "We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or any pretense whatsoever, this is our testimony to the whole world," the Quakers declared to King Charles II in 1660.

These young Christians, banded together, were called "Friends of Truth" and were social non-conformists—they refused to kill, wore long hair and refused to take off their hats or take oaths when brought before magistrates for preaching and refusing to pay taxes to support the state church.
 The Protestant churches, with the sole exception of the Baptists, ruthlessly persecuted them not only in England but in Holland, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Poland where the movement spread.
 Quaker women, who were dynamic preachers, were stripped, beaten and lashed

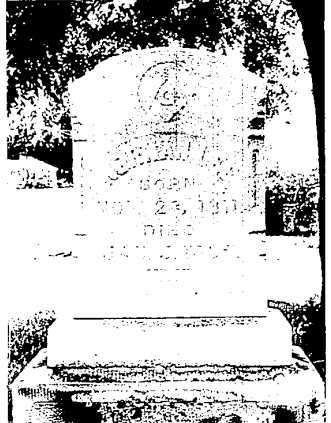
on Boston Common by Puritan elders. However, as years passed, the evangelical fervor declined as succeeding generations sought to live out in quieter ways the teachings of George Fox and the Bible.
 WORSHIP GROUPS were organized, and all authority in the religious community came from a monthly meeting for business. All members were participants; however, no votes were taken.
 A clerk would preside as the group tried to come to some decision and finally, after full expression by everyone, he would enter into the records of the group a statement reflecting "the sense of the meeting." These monthly meetings belonged to similar regional organizations called quarterly and yearly meetings.
 The New England yearly meeting consisted of Quaker churches in the northern colonies and was organized in 1661.

William Penn had founded the colony as a refuge for not only Friends but Jews, Catholics, Mennonites and all groups willing to live in harmony in a new social order.
 DURING THE 18th Century, Quakers lived on the frontiers from Canada to Georgia. Hardworking, frugal, temperate, honest and strong-willed, they resembled in many ways the Amish Mennonites who dressed in simple garb and spoke "plain speech."
 However, in spite of inward direction and rigorous spiritual discipline, many Quakers were sensitive to oppression and injustice. German Quakers in Pennsylvania denounced slave-holding, others tried to prevent exploitation of Indians, women and children and the abuse of the mentally ill.
 Their social testimonies informed the conscience of the wider community. Their testimony against war was de-

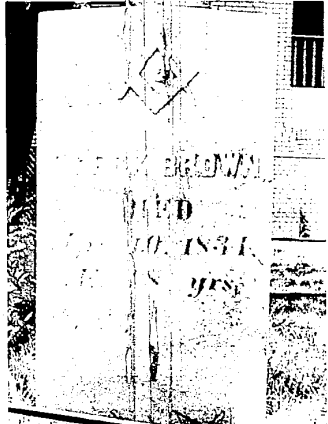
nounced by fellow Christians and many were fined, imprisoned, exiled or killed by both Loyalists and Revolutionaries during the War of Independence. Two Quakers were signers of the Declaration of Independence and one Friend, General Nathaniel Green of Rhode Island, was disowned for taking up arms.
 By 1800, two tendencies were apparent among American Friends. While both had origins in early Quakerism, one emphasized the "inner light" as the basis of faith, while the other stressed Biblical authority and evangelical experience. There were divisions in many Protestant denominations over doctrine, at the time.
 In 1827, liberal Friends who stressed the inner light and held to universalist and unitarian beliefs were disowned by "orthodox" Friends in Philadelphia yearly meeting, and a similar division affected Quakers in New York State. The division in New York had great effect on the Quaker settlements in Michigan.
 THE QUAKER SETTLEMENT at what is now Farmington was named after the



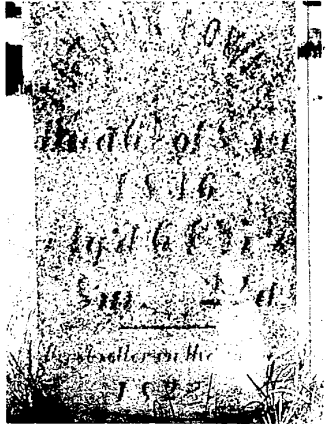
GRAND MASTER -- This oil portrait of Norman Lee still hangs in the Farmington Masonic Temple at Grand River and Farmington Rds. Lee was grand master of Farmington Lodge 151 F&AM exactly 100 years ago, 1869-70. He was one of Farmington's earliest settlers and now lies buried in the Quaker cemetery. (Ralph Evert photo)



LEE'S TOMBSTONE -- This tombstone of Norman Lee (see portrait at left) can be found in the old Quaker cemetery on Gill Rd. just south of Grand River. Lee, born in 1811, died Jan. 5, 1885. Ledger on the stone reads: "Asleep in Jesus," (Evert photo)



HISTORICAL MYSTERY -- The tombstone of Esek Brown in the old Quaker cemetery on Gill Rd. presents a historical dilemma of first glance. The Masonic symbol at the top indicates Brown was a Mason, but the inscription below seems to indicate he died at 18 years old, an impossibility because he could not be a Mason that young. Actually, the 18 is misread and should say 48 years old at time of death in 1834. Brown, a Quaker, moved here from Farmington, N.Y., and was a friend of Arthur Power. Brown's descendants still live in Detroit. (Evert photo)



HISTORICAL RESOURCE -- A wealth of historical information about the Farmington area lies in the old Quaker cemetery on Gill Rd., just south of Grand River. Unfortunately, age and vandals have abused many tombstones making it difficult to read all the inscriptions. Buried here is Arthur Power, Farmington's first settler, and Norman Lee who was grand master of the Farmington Masonic Lodge exactly 100 years ago. (Ralph Evert photo)



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