

1st Meeting house In Michigan Was In Farmington

On Gill Road south of Grand River in the City of Farmington is the Quaker burial ground. Amongst the tombstones is one for Arthur Power who was the first white settler in Farmington in 1824.

Two years later, at age 25, Nathan Power arrived to join his father. In the latter part of 1824, Quaker physician Dr. Ezekiel Webb arrived and built a log house which also served as a post office.

Later came Esek Brown, blacksmith, and Howland Mason, a miller. Then came a number of Quaker farmers, and this pioneer settlement was dubbed "Quakertown."

DURING THE first seven years, there wasn't any formally constituted meeting but only occasional gatherings for worship. In 1831, nine Quaker elders visited Farmington and established a formal Quaker society and meeting.

Farmington's monthly meeting was the first Quaker meeting in Michigan. The meetinghouse and burial ground was located on two acres on Gill south of Grand River, donated by Arthur Power. The white frame meetinghouse was built in 1832.

The first burials were Selinda Power, Arthur's wife, and their seven-year-old daughter who died victims of a cholera epidemic in August, 1832. Arthur died five years later.

THE RELIGIOUS Society of Friends (Quakers) originated in Britain and was prevalent in the American colonies during the 17th century.

Quakers wore long hair, never removed their hats, refused to kill humans, refused to take oaths, and wouldn't pay taxes to support the state church.

Women and men were seated separately, conducted business sessions separately, and had their own clerks. The sanctuary was separated by shutters which were opened for worship. The elders faced the congregation, sitting on three-tiered "facing benches."

The Farmington Society was phased out after the Civil War and, in 1870, the meetinghouse on Gill Rd. was converted to a residence by members of the Power family.

ARTHUR POWER settled near the present intersection of 11 Mile and Power Rd., just west of Farmington Township Hall.

Arthur's brother, John, also migrated to Farmington but died four years after arriving. Another early arrival was that of George and Cynthia Collins. On Sept. 26, 1824, Mrs. Collins gave birth to a son, John W., who was the first white child born in Farmington. Mrs. Collins was the first white woman to arrive here.

The Collins home is located on Farmington Rd. just south of Shiawassee in the City of Farmington. Her husband died in 1865 but she lived to be 93 years old.

While living, Collins was postmaster for 25 years, operated a general store, and was township treasurer for many years. Webb was the first postmaster, and the first physician, but let Collins assume the postal duties.

Also arriving in 1824 were Solomon Walker, Robert Wixom Sr., and George Tibbets. In 1825 came George Thayer and Rufus Thayer Jr., brothers, and Timothy Tolman.

In 1828, Tolman built the first frame dwelling in Farmington on 12 Mile near Middle Belt Rd. The first wedding in Farmington matched up his cousin, Nathaniel Tolman, and Mary Lewis in 1826.

P. DEAN WARNER and the Seth Warners also arrived in Farmington in 1825.

Seth started a merchandising business in 1845 until 1863 when he got elected to the Michigan House of Representatives and served as Speaker of the House. He married Rhoda Botsford.

Mr. and Mrs. Seth Warner had no children of their own, but did adopt a son and daughter. The son, Fred Warner, became the youngest man elected Michigan governor and first state governor to serve three consecutive terms.

NATHAN POWER built the first school-house in Farmington and was the first school-master, teaching school in 1827-28.

He was elected to the state legislature in 1854, and in the 1860s was active in the anti-slavery movement. He was believed to have been involved in the Underground Railroad, which tradition has as running through Farmington during the Civil War era.

Twenty-three men from Farmington died in the Civil War and those who lived returned to their home town on Aug. 2, 1865.

Nathan and wife Patience built their residence east of the Quaker cemetery. His homestead probably extended to include the site of the present Farmington City Hall at Liberty and Grand River.

Power Junior High School in Farmington was named after Nathan Power. Powers Road is said to be named after both Arthur and son Nathan.

Descendants of Arthur and Nathan Power are Philip H. Power, publisher of Observer Newspapers, Inc., and his father, Eugene Power, a former University of Michigan regent and community leader in Ann Arbor.

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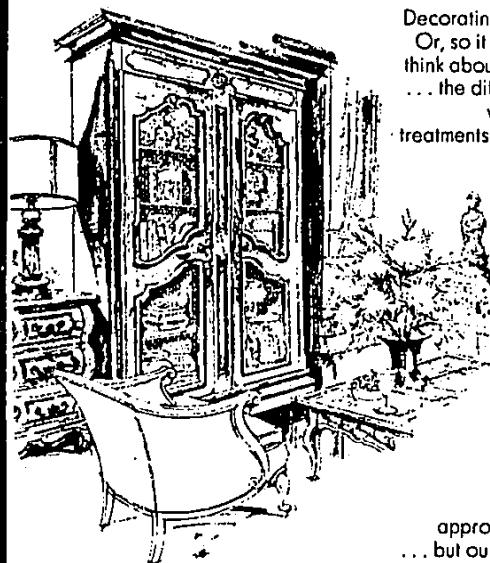


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