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Providence Monthly Meeting (Society of Friends) Records

1728-2024
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The Providence monthly meeting began in 1705 as a preparative meeting under the care of the East Greenwich Monthly. Set off in 1718, Providence Preparative became Smithfield Monthly Meeting by 1731, when the town of Smithfield was formed from Providence. At its inception in 1718, it joined the Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting, and has continued with this quarterly meeting--in various forms--ever since. Almost 50 years later, in 1783, this meeting split into four groups, one of which continued as the Providence Monthly. The Wilburite Separation of 1844-1845 affected Providence significantly, but the meeting has remained viable to the present day.

A large and particularly rich collection for a Quaker monthly meeting in New England, the Providence Friends Meeting records include a substantial series of minutes of meetings, vital records, records of Ministry and Counsel, the Women's Foreign Society, and the run of business with respect to epistles, cautions, admissions and denials, and transfers.

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Background on Providence Monthly Meeting (Society of Friends)



Abbie Loring in Cape Cod Quaker attire, ca.1930.

Photo by Alton H. Blackington

The Providence, Rhode Island monthly meeting began in 1705 as a preparative meeting under the care of the East Greenwich, Rhode Island monthly meeting. Set off in 1718, Providence Preparative became Smithfield Monthly Meeting by 1731, when the town of Smithfield was formed from Providence. At its inception in 1718, it joined the Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting, and has continued with this quarterly meeting--in various forms--ever since. Almost 50 years later, in 1783, this meeting split into four groups, one of which continued as the Providence monthly meeting for another 60 years and more.

In 1845, this meeting split into a separate Wilburite meeting and a Gurneyite meeting. The Wilburite meeting eventually took in some of the members of the Swansea monthly meeting when it was laid down in 1863 as well as some of the members of the Rhode Island monthly meeting when it was laid down in 1864. The Wilburite Providence meeting joined a newly-separate Wilburite Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting. During its lifespan, it oversaw several different constituent groups including: 1) the Fall River (MA) preparative meeting (1863-1872) that then became a worship group (1872-1876); 2) the Greenwich (RI) preparative meeting (1856-1863) that then became a worship group (1863-1864) that in turn became the Warwick (RI) worship group (1864-1881); 3) the Newport worship group (1864-1872); 4) the North Providence worship group (1844-1874) that in turn became the Pawtucket worship group (1874-1881). However, by 1881, the Wilburite Providence meeting was laid down, and some of its members joined the South Kingston monthly meeting as the Pawtucket worship group.

The Gurneyite meeting, however, continued meeting from 1845 on. During that time, it oversaw a number of different preparative meetings and worship groups, including: 1) the Scituate worship group (1783-1845, and again from 1859-1863); 2) the Smithfield preparative meeting (1783-1877) and then worship group (1877-1894); 3) the Wionkhege worship group (1783-1799); 4) the Cumberland worship group (1809-1888); 5) the Saylesville preparative meeting (1894-present). In 1945, this Providence meeting became the basis of the newly-emerging unified Providence monthly meeting that was formed from the unification of the existing Gurneyite group with three other groups. The first of these three groups was the 10-year-old Wilburite Providence Friends Fellowship monthly meeting. The second of these two groups was a part of the 100-year-old Wilburite Nantucket (Mass.) monthly meeting that had in more recent years split into a Nantucket-based worship group and a Warwick (RI)-based monthly meeting. It was this Warwick-based group that joined with Providence in 1945. The last of these three groups was the remaining membership of the Greenwich (RI) monthly meeting that was laid down in 1945. From 1944-1951, the newly-unified Providence monthly meeting held joint membership with ongoing Gurneyite-oriented Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting and with the Wilburite-oriented Narragansett Quarterly meeting. In 1971, the Rhode Island and Smithfield quarterly meetings merged to become the Rhode Island-Smithfield Quarterly Meeting to which Providence now belonged.

Historically, Providence has overseen several worship groups and preparative meetings: Martha's Vineyard from 1946-1953; an occasional meeting in Jamestown, R.I. (1951-1970) that joined as the Conanicut worship group (1971-present); and a group in Newport (1989-1992). Worship groups in Newport have been ongoing for many years, but the worship group that was under the care of Providence was during the years shown.

Providence Monthly constituent meetings

- Conanicut Worship Group (1971-)
- Cumberland Worship Group (1809-1888)
- Martha's Vineyard Worship Group (1946-1953)
- Newport Worship Group (1989-1992)
- Saylesville Preparative (1894-)
- Scituate Worship Group (1783-1845, 1859-1863)
- Smithfield Preparative (1783-1877)
- Smithfield Worship Group (1877-1894): became Saylesville Preparative
- Wionkhege Worship Group, Smithfield, R.I. (1783-1799)

Scope of collection

A large and particularly rich collection for a Quaker monthly meeting in New England, the Providence Friends Meeting records include a substantial series of minutes of meetings, vital records, records of Ministry and Counsel, the Women's Foreign Society, and the run of business with respect to epistles, cautions, admissions and denials, and transfers. Providence has an unusually large and complete record of its finances and newsletters, with strong holdings for its constituent meetings.

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digital files

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends Records, March 2016.

Related Material

This collection is part of the [New England Yearly Meeting Records](#).

Current contact for the meeting

[Providence Friends Meeting website](#)

Processing Information

Processed by Nora D. Charles, Mar. 2020, and Susan E. Creighton, September 2019.

Language:

English

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Search terms

Subjects

- New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
- Providence (R.I.)--Religious life and customs
- Quakers--Rhode Island
- Society of Friends--Rhode Island

Contributors

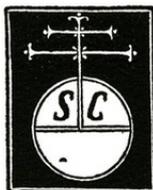
- Providence Monthly Meeting (Society of Friends) [main entry]

Genres and formats

- Financial records
- Minutes (Administrative records)
- Newsletters
- Vital records (Document genre)

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