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Mount Toby Friends Meeting Records

1937-2018

5 vols., 11 boxes (4.25 linear feet)

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Read collection overview

Mount Toby Monthly Meeting of Friends (formerly Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly) was formed in the 1930s in Northampton, Mass., during a time of growth for Quakers in western New England. Now located in Leverett, Mass., the meeting has had two monthly meetings set off and has supported a number of small worship groups and preparative meetings in the region.

The records of Mount Toby Monthly Meetings include nearly complete minutes from its founding as an independent Monthly Meeting in 1939 to the present, with an extensive, but not complete set of newsletters. Covering nearly eighty years of Friends centered in the academic communities of the central Connecticut River Valley, the collection also includes some documentation of the Greenfield Preparative Meeting and a guest book from the Springfield Worship Group.

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Background on Mount Toby Friends Meeting

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

Photo by Alton H. Blackington

Several attempts were made to establish a Quaker meeting in the Connecticut River Valley prior to the union of New England Friends in 1944, including formation of worship groups in Amherst (1924-1925), Greenfield (1937), and Northfield (1930s). The first to prosper, however, was the independent Connecticut Valley Association of Friends founded in Springfield in 1929, and the Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly Meeting,

originally based in Northampton.

According to the History of Mount Toby Monthly Meeting up to 1964, by Helen Griffith, a small group of students who had come from Quaker backgrounds were seeking an opportunity to worship in Quaker style, and found support through a college chaplain, Burns Chalmers. In 1935, he and his wife opened up their home for Sunday evening meetings. Word spread and others joined, notably an Austrian Quaker, Walter Kotschnig, and his Welsh wife Elined Prys Kotschnig who joined the faculty at Smith College and helped gather the handful of Quakers in Northampton and Easthampton with the aim of establishing a regular meeting. They were joined by Daniel and Mary Test, now living in the area, who had been established members of the Philadelphia Quaker community and were familiar with Quaker ways. Unwilling to choose between membership in either the Gurneyite or Wilburite New England Yearly Meetings, Northampton Friends affiliated with the Fellowship Council in Feb. 1939.

Near the end of World War II, with gas rationing, meeting members who lived further away from Northampton were finding it hard to attend, so smaller, more local worship groups started to arise in Greenfield, Amherst and South Hadley. Consequently, in 1945 with the growing disparity in location, the Northampton Meeting decided to broaden its boundaries and change its name to the Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly Meeting (MCVMM) that it met bi-monthly through 1952, and then monthly starting in 1953. At that time, in the general reunion of New England Friends, the Connecticut Valley Association united with the New England Yearly Meeting to become the new Connecticut Valley Quarter, connecting monthlies from New Haven, Connecticut, northward into Vermont.

Although the initial gravity of the meeting was in Northampton, in 1954, a professor at the University of Massachusetts, Francis Holmes, and his wife Becky revived meetings in Amherst. Their efforts soon bore fruit. By 1959, Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly attempted an "experimental consolidation" in which they rented the Grange Hall in Amherst for First Day worship and for a First Day School. In the face of the success of this experiment, members of the meeting agreed to build a new meetinghouse, selecting a site on Long Plain Road in Leverett, Massachusetts just north of Amherst. When construction on the meetinghouse was completed in 1964, Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly Meeting changed name to Mount Toby Friends Meeting, after a mountain that loomed nearby. Two monthly meetings have subsequently been set off from Mount Toby: South Berkshire in 1984 and Northampton in 1994.

Mount Toby has cared for a number of small worship groups and preparative meetings, including:

Worship groups

Amherst (1944-1958, 1968-1969)
Ashfield (1987-1988)
Berkshire (1971-1983)

Great Barrington (1955-1961: continued as Gould Farm Preparatory)
Greenfield (1944-1963, 1983-1984): also Sherwood Worship Group
Northampton (1945-1958, 1972, 1977-1983)
South Amherst/Hampshire (1971)
South Hadley (1944-1945, 1962-1965, 1983-1986)
Springfield (1944-1971) met sporadically
Woolman Hill (1975, 1986-present)

Preparative meetings

Amherst (1958-1962, 1970-1976)

Gould Farm (1962-1967, continued as Great Barrington Worship Group)

Greenfield (1968-1982, 1991-1993)
Northampton (1958-1961, 1991-1994)
South Hadley (1955-1961, 1966-1976)

Scope of collection

The records of Mount Toby Monthly Meetings include nearly complete minutes from its founding as an independent Monthly Meeting in 1939 to the present, with an extensive, but not complete set of newsletters. Covering nearly eighty years of Friends centered in the academic communities of the central Connecticut River Valley, the collection also includes some documentation of the Greenfield Preparative Meeting and a guest book from the Springfield Worship Group.

Inventory

Minutes
1937-2018
Northampton Monthly: Minutes (contains only 1938-Oct, Dec; 1939-Feb, Apr, May, Oct, Dec; 1940-Jan, Feb, Mar, May, Jun, Oct, Nov, Dec; 1941-Jan
1938-1941

Box 12: 1
Northampton Monthly: Minutes (lacking Jul, Aug, Sep, Nov)
1941

Box 12: 2
Northampton Monthly: Minutes (lacking Jul, Aug, Sep)
1942

Box 12: 3
Northampton Monthly: Minutes (lacking Jan)
1943

Box 12: 4
Northampton Monthly: State of the Meeting Report
1943

Box 12: 5
Northampton Monthly: Minutes (lacking Sep, Dec)
1944

Box 12: 6
Northampton Monthly: Treasurer Reports
1944

Box 12: 7
Northampton Monthly: Minutes (contains only Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug)
1945

Box 12: 8
Northampton Monthly: Membership lists (handwritten)
1939-1944
Bound vol.
Box 12
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1937-1940

Box 10: 2
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1941-1944

Box 10: 3
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1944 Jan.-Nov.

Box 10: 4
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes (photocopies)
1937-1944

Box 10: 5-7
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1944 Feb.-1945

Box 11: 1
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes (lacking Jan. 1946)
1946

Box 11: 2
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1947 Feb.-1948

Box 11: 3
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1949-1952

Box 11: 4
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1953-1955 Nov.

Box 11: 5
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1956

Box 11: 6
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1957-1959

Box 11: 7
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes
1960-1963
Bound vol.
09:B3
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly (1964) and Mount Toby Monthly (1964-1965): Minutes
1964-1965
Bound vol.
09:B3
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Minutes

1964 Jan.-Oct.
Bound vol.
09:B3
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1966-1967
Bound vol.
09:B3
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1967
Box 1: 1
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1968
Box 1: 2
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1969
Box 1: 3
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes (lacking Feb. 1970)
1970
Box 1: 4
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1971
Box 1: 5
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1972
Box 1: 6
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes (lacking Oct. 1973)
1973
Box 1: 7
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1974
Box 1: 8
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes (lacking May 1975)
1975
Box 1: 9
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1976
Box 1: 10
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1977 Jan.-June
Box 2: 1
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1978
Box 2: 2
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1979
Box 2: 3
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes (lacking Dec. 1980)
1980
Box 2: 4
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1981
Box 2: 5
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1983
Box 2: 6
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes (lacking Oct. 1984)
1984
Box 2: 7
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1985
Box 2: 8
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1986
Box 2: 9
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1987
Box 2: 10
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes

1988
Box 2: 11
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1988 July-1989 June
Box 4: 1
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1989 July-1990 June
Box 4: 2
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1990 July-1990 June
Box 4: 3
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1991 July-1992 June
Box 4: 4
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1992 July-Dec.
Box 4: 5
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1993
Box 4: 6
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1994 Jan.-July
Box 4: 7
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1994 Sept.-Dec.
Box 4: 8
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1995-1996
Box 5: 1
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
1997
Box 5: 2
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes (lacking Aug. 2000)
1998-2000 Nov.
Box 5: 3
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes (two meetings in September 2001)
2001
Box 5: 4
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
2002
Box 5: 5
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
2003
Box 5: 6
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
2004
Box 5: 7
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
2005 Jan.-July
Box 5: 8
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
2006 Oct.-2008 Feb.
Box 5: 9
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
2008 Mar.-2010 July
Box 5: 10
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
2010 Sept.-2012 July
Box 6: 1
Mount Toby Monthly: Minutes
2017 Sept-2018 May
Box 5
Correspondence and reports
1939-2011
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Members
1939-1944
Bound vol.
Box 10: 1

Mount Toby Monthly: List of books in Quaker research library
ca.ca.1980
Flat o.s.
10:G4
Mount Toby Monthly: Meeting directories
1962-1996
Box 9: 1
Mount Toby Monthly: Obituary notices
1955-1988
Box 9: 2
Mount Toby Monthly: State of the Society reports
1982
Loose
Box 8: 5
Mount Toby Monthly: Young Adult Friends minutes
2011
Box 9: 3
Newsletters and publications
1945-2010
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Newsletters
1945-1946
Box 7: 1
Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly: Newsletters
1955, 1960-1963
Box 8: 4
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1967-1969
Box 7: 2
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1970-1974
Box 7: 3
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1975-1978
Box 7: 4
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1979-1981
Box 7: 5
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1982-1985
Box 7: 6
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1986-1987
Box 7: 7
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1988-1989
Box 7: 8
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1990-1994
Box 7: 9
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1995-1998
Box 8: 1
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters
1999-2005
Box 8: 2
Mount Toby Monthly: Newsletters (lacking Oct.-Dec. 2006)
2006-2010
Box 8: 3
Greenfield Preparative Meeting
1950/2005
11:B6

The first meeting for Quaker worship in Greenfield took place in 1934 at a time when small meetings were springing up across the Connecticut River Valley. Greenfield gained momentum in 1939, when Mary Robbins Champney offered her studio at Sherwood on the west side of Greenfield for their use, later bequeathing the property to them. The Sherwood Friends Center became a regular meeting place for the fledgling Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly Meeting, but was taken by the state and demolished in the late 1950s when I-91 was built.

The surviving records of the Greenfield Preparative Meeting have been sorted strictly by date and are highly varied in nature. Among the contents are some reminiscences of the early meeting by an unidentified early member, scattered receipts and bills, some minutes of business meetings, a photograph of benefactor Mary Robbins Champney and two photos of the Sherwood Friends Center.

Greenfield Monthly: Miscellaneous records
1950-1959
Box 1: 1

Includes material on the bequest of Mary Robbins Champney and founding of Sherwood Friends Center.

Greenfield Monthly: Miscellaneous records
1961-1968
Box 1: 2

Greenfield Monthly: Miscellaneous records
1975-1989
Box 1: 3

Greenfield Monthly: Miscellaneous records (includes some minutes)
1990-1999
Box 1: 4

Greenfield Monthly: Miscellaneous records: includes some minutes, photographs of Mary Robbins Champney and two images of the Sherwood Friends Center
2000-2005
Box 1: 1

Greenfield Monthly: Treasurer's accounts
1951-1982
Box 1: 1

Springfield Worship Group
1950-2005

Greenfield Monthly: Guest book
1964-1971
Bound vol.
09:D5

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](#).

Bibliography

See Hellen Griffith, [History of Mount Toby Monthly Meeting up to 1964](#)

Current contact for the meeting

[Mount Toby Friends website](#) (accessed Nov. 2018).

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, October 2018.

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English

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Search terms

Subjects

- Greenfield (Mass.)--Religious life and customs
- Griffith, Helen
- Kotschnig, Elenid
- Kotschnig, Walter M. (Walter Maria), 1901-1985
- Leverett (Mass.)--Religious life and customs
- Middle Connecticut Valley Meeting of Friends
- New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
- Northampton (Mass.)--Religious life and customs
- Quakers--Massachusetts
- Society of Friends--Massachusetts
- Springfield (Mass.)--Religious life and customs

Contributors

- Mount Toby Monthly Meeting of Friends [main entry]

Genres and formats

- Minutes (Records)
- Newsletters
- Photographs

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