

Richmond Friends Meeting Timeline

- **1655**- Elizabeth Harris was the first Quaker to arrive in Virginia. At that time the land which would become Richmond was occupied by the Powhatan Confederacy and the Monacan Tribe.
- **1756**-The Virginia Assembly passed an act for drafting single men into the militia. Cornelius Harris, John Archelaus and John Staney of Cedar Creek Meeting were among seven Quakers who refused to bear arms. George Washington, a young militia colonel at the time was asked to try to convince them to fight. After confining them with only bread and water and threatening to beat them, Washington wrote in frustration, "I could by no means bring the Quakers to any terms. They chose rather to be whipped to death than to bear arms." They were eventually spared and sent home.
- **1784**- Virginia Yearly Meeting made owning enslaved peoples grounds for disownment. Prominent Quaker families owned enslaved people. Richmond area Quakers established the Virginia Abolition Society in 1790.
- **1788**-George Winston was threatened with being read out of Meeting if he did not free his enslaved people. He manumitted his slaves and apprenticed many in his successful contracting business. Winston built the Friends Meeting house on 19th and Cary and worked on the Virginia Penitentiary and the Virginia Capitol Building. .
- Richmond Friends Meeting, **organized in 1795** as an Indulged Meeting under White Oak Swamp Meeting and soon built its first Meeting House at 19th and Cary Street in Shockoe Bottom. This was the second oldest "church" in Richmond. In 1841, White Oaks Swamp Meeting was laid down. Richmond Friends Meeting met under Cedar Creek Meeting until Cedar Creek was laid down in 1875. During the Civil War, Richmond Friends Meeting house was used as a Confederate Hospital for enslaved people of color. By this time, the building was deteriorating and Quakers worshiped in individual homes.
- **1820-40**-The environment was very hostile to Virginia Quakers for their support of the abolition of slavery. During this period, many Quakers moved west to free states.
- During the Civil War, RFM established the Friends Asylum for Colored Orphans, now called the Friends Association for Children. After slave emancipation, RFM member Sarah Smiley and other Quaker women helped start a school for over 1,000 free black adults and children in Richmond.
- **In the mid 1800's - 1940**, the Crenshaw/Ricks family provided stable leadership for RFM. Arnold, Hoge and Katherine Ricks continued in that role in the mid 1900's..

- Emmet Frazier, a recorded minister, faculty at Virginia Union and Chaplain at Spring Street State Penitentiary was another strong Quaker leader. With his death in 1962, Richmond Friends Meeting gradually moved from being an Orthodox Meeting where the Bible and Christ were central to becoming increasingly more Hicksite where the Inner Light was emphasized.
- RFM purchased the 4500 Kensington Avenue property in **1957** from the Colonial Place Christian Church, an affiliate of the Disciples of Christ. The original building was built in 1913. The educational annex was added in 1931. The building was renovated in 2005. RFM worshiped at the nearby Seventh Day Adventist building until the work was completed.
- RFM has provided office and meeting space to hundreds of community groups. Religious groups that have used the 4500 Kensington Avenue property for their programs include the Congregation Or Ami, the Metropolitan Community Church, an unaffiliated Roman Catholic group and Muslims.
- **In the 1960s**, RFM provided office and meeting space to the Richmond Area Association for Retarded Children. In 1967, RFM provided office space and volunteer support to the statewide anti war Vietnam Summer Project. In 1971, RFM provided office space to the statewide Virginia Council for Human Relations until the Richmond Zoning Board opposition and a neighborhood petition of 1,200 signatures forced the interracial organization to relocate.
- **Since 1957**, RFM has provided financial assistance and social support to Russian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Central American and Iraqi refugees, who have relocated to the Richmond area.
- The 4500 Kensington Avenue property has been the site of countless weddings and memorial ceremonies, not only of Friends but also from the community at large.
- Both the Williamsburg Monthly Meeting and the Midlothian Monthly Meeting began as preparative meetings under the Care of Richmond Friends Meeting.
- **2003-** Under Clerk Jean Jones-Anderson, RFM united in moving our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business to 11:00-12:30 on the third First Day of each month, for a trial period. (The 9:30 meeting for Worship remained unchanged.) The result was transformational and has become permanent. We have roughly tripled our attendance at MWB. Our deliberations and decisions benefit from a larger number of perspectives.
- **Since 1978** RFM has been a gay-friendly meeting, gradually growing through an intentional process to offer equity and inclusion for persons of all sexual orientations and preferences. After 2 years of threshing, the meeting in 1989 reached unity about offering

a same-sex celebration of commitment. By 1995 meeting was clear to hold marriage for all couples of all sexual orientations. In 2015, RFM reached unity that members bonded to legally register marriages would not register heterosexual marriage until it became legal to do the same for same-sex couples. RFM is blessed with the presence of many diverse and loving couples.