

From Quaker to Upper Canadian: The Boundaries of Community Identity among Yonge Street Friends, 1801-1850¹

ROBYNNE ROGERS HEALEY

In the spring of 1801, when Timothy Rogers arrived in Upper Canada with twenty Quaker families from Vermont to begin a settlement on Yonge Street, he envisioned the unification of Upper Canadian Quakers and the establishment of a stable, thriving faith community based on the fundamental Quaker principles of peace, equality and simplicity. Immediately, his settlers were followed by a similar number of Quaker families from Pennsylvania led by Samuel Lundy. Together, these members of the Society of Friends joined forces to create a strong faith community in the backwoods of Upper Canada.² This settlement of Friends did not attract a great deal of attention. It was well-removed from other settlements and Quakers were not a troublesome bunch. The colonial government was pleased to have them along Yonge Street. They were hardworking and diligently fulfilled their settlement duties. As plain folk they kept to themselves; in fact, they purposefully set themselves apart from the general population. They were proud to be a “peculiar people.”

The Yonge Street settlement, which quickly grew to be the largest community of Friends in Upper Canada, was an extension of the eighteenth-century Quaker retreat from mainstream society. Those who settled in the Yonge Street area established a community where they could live out the tenets of their faith relatively free from the laws of the larger society with which their testimonies often disagreed.

Yet, by the 1850s, what it meant to be a Quaker in Upper Canada had changed significantly. For instance, Daniel Rogers, Timothy's grandson, was not only an active member of the Yonge Street Meeting, but also a diligent citizen of the Newmarket community, and a loyal subject of the Queen.³ This particular accommodation of identity as Quaker and active participant in Upper Canadian society would have been impossible fifty years earlier. Clearly, by the mid-nineteenth century, the boundaries of Quaker identity had changed and Yonge Street Friends had become integrated into mainstream Canadian society.

This paper examines the factors that nurtured that integration. It argues that the shift in Quaker identity that took place over two community generations⁴ was a combination of two factors: doctrinal differences which splintered the community, and the collaborative efforts of Friends and their non-Quaker neighbours, in the years after the Hicksite-Orthodox separation, to press for the legitimacy of dissent in the context of a British North American colony. It demonstrates that through conflict and accommodation Quakers became less sectarian and more accommodative. This was not confined to Quakers. The larger process of conflict and accommodation that came out of the social, political and cultural intercourse of various groups over approximately seventy years between 1780 and 1850 formed the basis of Upper Canadian identity. This identity was generally based on a Protestant consensus and an accommodative ideology of loyalty.⁵ While this identity was not universal, by 1850 it was certainly more comprehensive than it had been in 1800. It did not represent the movement of more people into a narrow band of identity as much as it exemplified the broadening of identity to encompass more Upper Canadians. This was not a simple teleological course whereby one group became more accommodating of difference. Rather, this was a movement from exclusivity to accommodation by a variety of groups.

The first evidence of factionalism within the Yonge Street community took place in 1812 with the separation of the Children of Peace, or Davidites as they were known after their leader David Willson. This created a number of fissures in the community. It physically removed a significant group from the Meetings for business and worship and heightened tensions in the community. Suddenly, issues of doctrine, which were not commonly discussed, were debated openly in the Meeting and in the homes of Friends. Friends had no written doctrine or creed; nevertheless, most generally agreed that they shared a similar understanding of the original tenets of Quakerism.

Challenges to the belief system or the integrity of the community, such as the one produced by the Children of Peace, were easily addressed by disowning the offending parties. While this schism removed a significant group of Quakers from membership, the disowned group was not large enough to cause alarm about the future of the faith community. Their distinct lack of participation in the War of 1812, even though they lived on the major military road in the colony, indicates that at the end of the first generation, Friends remained insulated from mainstream society.

Despite the troublesome Davidites, the second generation of the community began with a strong and vibrant Quaker Meeting. Yet, even though they were disowned, the Children of Peace were not removed from the community. Connections between families and neighbours remained. And the issue of doctrine and “heretical” beliefs refused to go away. Moreover, despite the fact that the Yonge Street settlement was still a frontier community at the end of the first generation, the second generation witnessed considerable changes to the landscape and settlements around them. Shanties gave way to log houses and, in the 1820s, the first brick homes began to appear in the area.⁶ Although Friends tried to remain insulated, they could not deny that they were a community within a colony that was increasingly mature.

The 1820s, especially, were an important period in the economic and agricultural development of the geographic community where Yonge Street Friends were located. A marked increase in immigration brought large numbers of non-Quakers to the area and forest was quickly turned to farmland.⁷ The population changes and shifting demographics in the surrounding geographic communities heightened awareness of Upper Canadian society. It was in this environment that two major crises in the second-generation Yonge Street Friends community occurred. First, the Hicksite-Orthodox separation in 1828 fragmented the Quaker faith community and pushed Yonge Street Quakers to address their choices for dealing with mainstream society. Second, as another generation of Quakers reached adulthood, their aspiration to establish themselves as yeoman farmers was complicated by the decreased availability of non-clergy or crown reserve land in proximity to their community. Caught between their principles, and their desire to remain close to family and Friends, young Quakers increasingly found themselves at odds with the policies of the colonial administration. Frustration with the provincial government was something they shared with non-Quakers around them. More ties with non-

Quakers and further integration into mainstream society after 1828 drew a significant group of Quakers into political activity and eventually into active involvement in the Rebellion of 1837.⁸ The notable involvement of Friends in the Rebellion marks the end of the second-generation community. Quaker commitment to an event so central to the mainstream political culture of the period reveals a marked difference in the relationship of Friends with Upper Canadian society. They began to become an integrated rather than separate group of people. Within the third generation, their integration into Upper Canadian society would be complete.

The second-generation community began in 1814 with a noticeable expansion of ministerial activity at Yonge Street. This was almost certainly associated with the fermenting doctrinal disputes that began with the separation of the Children of Peace. The separation and its accompanying doctrinal challenges peaked the interest of Quakers far and wide.⁹ Doctrinal disagreements at the yearly-Meeting level also encouraged a higher incidence of charismatic visiting ministers to Yonge Street where they eagerly enlisted Friends for their “side” of the debate.¹⁰ It was not just the ministers from outside who contributed to the excitement in the travelling ministry. Yonge Street Friends themselves began to get involved in the disputes and were actively engaged in their own travels. This steady increase in local ministerial activity in the second generation indicates that the circumstances that led to the eventual split in 1827-28 were the result of simmering differences over a number of years rather than sudden doctrinal revelations.

In addition to increased ministerial activity, the Meeting itself grew in numbers. In the 1820s, Yonge Street was the largest Upper Canadian Meeting. According to the records of travelling minister Isaac Stephenson, in 1824 Yonge Street claimed a total membership of six hundred forty-three.¹¹ Stephenson also noted that the Meeting had four recognised ministers and eight elders. This strong leadership in a growing and vibrant faith community made the Yonge Street Meeting an attractive location for Quakers who immigrated to Upper Canada.

Continued growth of the Yonge Street Meeting was due, in large part, to ongoing British immigration to the North American colonies in the post-war period. The significant difference in immigration in the second-generation community was the arrival of a more pluralistic group of Quakers. While Pennsylvania Friends had far out-numbered other Quakers in the pre-1812 period, immigrants into the second-generation community

came from a variety of American Meetings, other Upper Canadian Meetings, and, most notably, from the British Meetings where Friends had already begun to feel the influence of evangelicalism.

This immigration noticeably altered the composition of the Friends community at Yonge Street. The large influx of British Friends with their commitment to orthodoxy had especially important consequences on the theological makeup of the community. Their arrival during a period of intensified ministerial affected the reception of travelling ministers and the doctrinal debates that continued to brew as Quakers faced off across theological lines that eventually led to the Hicksite-Orthodox separation in 1828.

Discord plagued the Society as Quakers came into sharp disagreement over their religious organisation as a church or sect.¹² Quakers across North America who, in the eighteenth century, had worked so vigilantly to retreat from mainstream society found, in the nineteenth century, that they could not withstand the onslaught of western settlement or the influence of the evangelical revival that burned over the northern United States and Upper Canada.¹³ This revival, begun by John Wesley, had started in the Church of England and resulted in the rise of Methodism in the mid-eighteenth century. Within this movement, the term evangelical took on specific connotations. Not only did it refer to the proselytising of believers, it came to mean acceptance of a certain set of beliefs that included belief in the infallibility of divinely-inspired Scripture, acceptance of Jesus Christ as the son of God, and his death as the atonement for the sin of humankind. Evangelicalism became a definite theological system and, for its exponents, belief in its component doctrinal parts was assumed to be essential to salvation. This was at direct odds with quietism, a more mystic approach to the relationship between God and humankind. Quietists believed in the direct spiritual inspiration of the Inner Light as the sole basis for their religion.

Evangelical Methodism was one of the most influential movements on the continent. It dealt a mighty blow to Quakerism because it struck at the heart of their worldview and identity. It separated family, friends, and neighbours into unforgiving, opposing camps. For the Yonge Street Quakers, it was disastrous. We know from the journals of visiting ministers that long-standing quarrels continued to trouble the Yonge Street community. The tenor of the Yonge Street Meetings was particularly divisive.¹⁴

The Meeting minutes reveal little about the controversies that chafed at Meeting unity. Yet, the strain in the Meeting in the years leading up to the

separation is apparent by what is not recorded in the minutes. All insertions into the minutes were the result of decisions based on consensus. Divisive disagreements between feuding parties meant that consensus was accomplished with great difficulty; sometimes it was not achieved at all. Minute books, which were customarily filled with numerous items of business, changed noticeably in this period. In some cases, especially at the preparative Meeting level, there were consecutive months where the only information recorded in the Meeting was its date! Obviously there was nothing more than the date upon which Yonge Street Friends could agree. This was the case in Meetings which lasted for hours.¹⁵ The business of the Meeting became stagnant and almost impossible to conduct. Consensus could only function with a certain amount of unity; without it community governance began to falter.

By early 1827 it is apparent that the chasm between the evangelical orthodox and the quietist Quakers had become too wide to bridge. Meetings that carried on late into the day took their toll on members who had to care for farms and businesses. These Quakers still lived in very frontier-like conditions. Travel to monthly Meeting in a lumber wagon, one of the only vehicles that could tolerate road conditions, could take hours. Having to sit with fussy infants and restless children was possible for an hour but could become a great trial when that Meeting extended to six or seven hours in length. The strain spilled over into the community and wore at the ties that held Friends together. A marked increase in complaints of defaming neighbours and people calling each other “infernal liars” occurred during this period. Whether the complaint against John Cuir, charging that he “followed someone with an axe threatening to do him personal injury,”¹⁶ was related to a theological difference is not absolute, but it is highly probable, given its location in the minutes and the atmosphere of the day. It speaks of the level of emotion and frustration that doctrinal issues incited among Yonge Street Friends. It was that level of emotion that eroded consensus and tore families and long-time friends apart.

The actual separation among Yonge Street Friends occurred in the early summer of 1828, following the separation in the New York Yearly Meeting. Both the Hicksites and the Orthodox considered themselves the true Society of Friends and began disowning members who had attached themselves to the opposite group. The London Yearly Meeting, in which there was no separation, recognised the Orthodox group who shared their doctrinal stance. Coming as it did from the centre of Quakerism, the

Orthodox viewed this recognition as proof that they were indeed the real Society of Friends. The Hicksites, who eventually gathered under the Genesee Yearly Meeting, considered these actions as just another indication of the level of depravity that had crept into the Society. Dissension and strife tore through the Meetings. A great deal of energy was expended in dealing internally with the splits. Some Meetings were so badly divided that they were closed. Others lingered on but were unable to gather the excitement and momentum of the earlier years. Because of their theology, the Hicksites initially remained distinct as a group, but the Orthodox, who were numerically stronger in the Yonge Street Meeting, developed closer ties with those who shared their theological underpinnings – the Methodists.

Immediately following the actual separation, the groups descended into rather vicious quarrels over ownership of the Meeting's property. Opposing groups in each of the preparative Meetings locked each other out of the meetinghouses. Because they were the larger group, meetinghouses remained in the hands of Orthodox Quakers, although not without "great trials and perplexities" on both sides.¹⁷ The doctrinal battles that spilled over into disputes over control of property heightened the conflict between the groups. For a number of months both sides found it virtually impossible to transact business. Because each group claimed to be the real Society of Friends, they competed with the other and tried to transact their business concurrently in the same meetinghouse. This soon degenerated into nasty verbal and physical disputes. Barred from meetinghouses, heckled in Meetings, and consumed with trying to figure out which Friends belonged with which group, the business activity of both the Hicksites and the Orthodox came to a grinding halt. Moreover, at the same time that their energies were invested in dealing with the crisis, their financial resources, of the Hicksites at least, were directed into the building of new meetinghouses. This effectively drained the community of much of the vitality it had possessed as a separate and distinct group.

To add fuel to the fire on Yonge Street, the Hicksite-Orthodox schism occurred at the same time that the Children of Peace were at their zenith and were pouring all of their resources into the construction of the elaborate temple at Sharon. Where other Quaker communities were split in two at this time, the Yonge Street Quaker community was fragmented into three distinct groups: the Hicksite, Orthodox, and the Children of Peace. The Children of Peace watched the unfolding events of the second separation with great interest, in some cases offering commentary.¹⁸

The Children of Peace were not the only group watching these developments. The influx of non-Quakers to the fertile farming communities north of York in the 1820s and 1830s had resulted in increased interactions between Quakers and non-Friends. This was the logical result of pioneer work bees, neighbourly assistance, and business interactions in local shops and mills. The closure of the Quaker school on Yonge Street after the Hicksite-Orthodox separation meant that the Meeting's children attended local schools where they were exposed to non-Quakers and their ideas. There were also numerous opportunities for affiliation with non-Friends who were evidently eager to discuss the ever-present questions of doctrine.

The journals of the visiting ministers indicate that significant numbers of non-Quakers regularly attended Friends' Meetings and commented on their content.¹⁹ Travelling ministers were a matter of great interest and they drew a crowd. Just as non-Friends attended Quaker Meetings, Friends attended the camp meetings regularly held by itinerant Methodist circuit riders. The increased interactions between Quakers and their non-Quaker neighbours in this period, however, was due to more than interest in hearing another sermon. Rather, according to the Hicksites, the Orthodox had actively undertaken to enlist the support of their non-Quaker neighbours in their doctrinal debates.²⁰ Influenced as they had been by Christian evangelicalism, the Orthodox found that they had more in common doctrinally with the Methodists than they did with their Hicksite brethren. The Orthodox did not hesitate to solicit this larger community support in the separation to gain control of their meetinghouses and property.²¹

Population growth, a more settled farming district, and a greater feeling of affinity with their Methodist and other evangelical neighbours meant that the Quakers began to be concerned with many of the same social and political issues that concerned their non-Quaker neighbours. This process had not only been the result of religious fragmentation, but it had also taken place over a number of years as Quakers found themselves caught between their faith community and the society in which they lived. Quaker testimonies on pacifism, oaths, and a paid ministry had created problems for Yonge Street Friends since their arrival in Upper Canada. As Quakers, they recognised that their principles could cause them personal hardship and they were prepared to accept the burdens associated with their faith. After all, a long tradition of Quaker martyrs had been kept alive in Quaker publications. However, the colonial legislature seemed to be continually unresponsive to the concerns of Friends. For instance, it had been firmly established by the

Canada Half-Year's Meeting in 1810 that no Quaker could lease Clergy Reserves because it was inconsistent with the religious principles of Quakers to support a paid ministry.²² In the early community when there was a surplus of land this was not source of extensive hardship. However, by the time the second generation of Quakers in Upper Canada was looking for land to farm, the Quaker and non-Quaker community had grown.

This new group of young adults had to purchase land, unlike their parents. In addition to the cost associated with the purchase price, land was difficult to attain in the townships in which the Quakers lived. For instance, by 1825, 75.8% of the patented land in the townships of East and West Gwillimbury was occupied, an increase of 56.7% from 1820.²³ The remaining land not reserved as Clergy Reserves became harder to find and those who wanted it were pushed to move further afield or had to satisfy themselves with land provided to them by their parents. Also frustrating for Quakers who lived in those townships with larger percentages of unoccupied land was the issue of land speculators who held huge amounts of unimproved land that could be purchased at only the most exorbitant prices. These land speculators, of which the government was the largest, were holding back lands until improvements in surrounding areas drove up land prices.²⁴ Where East and West Gwillimbury were filling up, the other "Quaker" townships boasted large blocks of uncultivated, undeveloped, not-for-sale land.²⁵

Moreover, the roads fronting clergy-reserve land or land held by speculators remained primitive and underdeveloped. For farmers trying to get their product to market on unimproved roads, the Clergy Reserves and the unoccupied lands were not just a literal source of frustration, they were a symbolic reminder of the inequality entrenched in colonial Upper Canadian society. For young adults who were trying to make a living as farmers, this was also a personal issue. They could either lease the Clergy Reserves, or they could go deeper into the woods to the newly-opened townships. At times, Friends compromised their principles and leased the Clergy Reserves rather than move away from family; in other cases Friends did move further west and north to take up land. In the 1830s, Meetings were established in both Tecumseth and Eramosa townships indicating that sizeable Quaker populations had moved into those areas.²⁶

As much as the Clergy Reserves became a personal issue for Quakers, they were also an issue for their non-Quaker neighbours. In the mid-1820s the Clergy Reserves had become an extremely contentious issue in the political life of the entire colony.²⁷ The wording of the 1791 Constitutional

Act set aside one-seventh of all land in the colony for “the support and maintenance of the Protestant clergy.” As far as the colonial authorities were concerned, the Protestant clergy could be none other than the Church of England, the established church in the colony.²⁸ Yet, in 1819 a group of Presbyterians from the Niagara District petitioned the government for support, arguing that the proceeds of the Clergy Reserves should not be confined to the Church of England alone. They did this on the principle that the Church of Scotland was one of the established churches in Great Britain. The response from the Colonial Office, suggesting that the Presbyterians were indeed entitled to some support, was not well-received by the likes of John Strachan and the executive council. Strachan’s fear was that conceding a share of Clergy Reserve proceeds to the Church of Scotland might lead all of the Protestant denominations to demand their share of revenue from the Reserves, something he was determined would never happen. The debate really heated up in 1825 when Strachan took pot shots at the other Protestant denominations during a funeral sermon for Bishop Mountain, the Anglican bishop of Upper Canada. Strachan was particularly scathing of the Methodists. The young Methodist minister, twenty-three year old Egerton Ryerson, responded with a compelling rebuttal that was viewed by his fellow Methodists as “the commencement of the war for religious liberty.”²⁹ What followed was an extended period of intense denominational rivalries and sectarian debate that would dominate the political life of the colony for many years.³⁰

Military fines were equally as troublesome for Friends. In 1806 they had requested and received recognition of the Quaker testimony on pacifism from Lieutenant Governor Gore. This did little to help them in the years around the War of 1812; their refusal to pay fines in lieu of service had cost them dearly, both financially and in jail terms. Although the situation calmed down for a number of years after the war, it did not go away. In 1830 it was reported in the monthly Meeting that a bill was pending before the Assembly “to repeal an Act formerly passed, requiring members of our religious society with those of certain other religious societies (who are exempt by law from military requisitions) to pay a specified sum yearly on that account.” If that was not enough to upset Friends, another act was before the Assembly “requiring the members of said societies to work on the publick [sic] highways over and above their common statue labour to the amount of such demand as may be required of them of account of said exemptions.”³¹ The response of Friends was outright refusal to comply. Notification was sent to

the lieutenant governor, but the problems continued. In early 1835 the Meeting was again addressing the issue of statutes passed in the Assembly requiring Quakers to pay a fine in lieu of service.³² Increasingly, then, Yonge Street Friends found that the dictates of their faith were putting them at odds with the colonial administration. Decisions to live a particular way of life were becoming decidedly political. And Quakers grew more irritated by what they saw as an unresponsive and immoral government.

Vexation with the colonial government became widespread. By the 1830s, Newmarket and surrounding area, which were a part of the Home district, had become a hotbed of political dissent. Not only was this William Lyon Mackenzie's riding, but it was also the most active petitioning district in the colony.³³ Quakers and non-Quakers alike saw the unresponsiveness of the colonial government as confirmation of its corruption. Lack of improvements in roads, schools, and religious facilities were a festering sore. Political debates surrounding the Alien Question in the 1820s had pushed the issue of the legitimacy of dissent to the centre of political debate and had forced colonial leaders to articulate their idea of loyalty.³⁴ The issues contested in the debate over the Alien Question were of direct importance to Quakers in Upper Canada. The fact that, as "Americans," the majority of the Quaker community could become dispossessed and disenfranchised created an antagonistic environment. The debate that led up to the final approval of the Naturalisation Act illuminated the divergent attitudes of the Tories and Reformers.³⁵ And in the 1828 election more Reformers than Tories were elected to the Assembly. Pressure in the Quaker community was high. Religiously, the faith community was fragmented in 1828. Politically, tensions continued to brew.

In the 1830s political pressures in the Home District were fuelled by political rallies which featured William Lyon Mackenzie, one of the district's representatives in the Legislative Assembly. Throughout the 1830s, Mackenzie was repeatedly expelled from his seat in the Legislative Assembly for allegedly slandering its Tory members.³⁶ David Willson, leader of the Children of Peace, had become closely aligned with Mackenzie. In 1834 Willson was the main speaker at the first Reform convention.³⁷ He also regularly marched down Yonge Street with his silver band and choir of young women, denouncing the evils of the Family Compact. Samuel Lount, a Quaker blacksmith from Holland Landing, was also instrumental in Mackenzie's support. He, too, was frustrated for being ousted from his seat in the Assembly by the creative manoeuvring of Lieutenant-Governor Sir

Francis Bond Head. By 1837 there appeared to be community consensus that colonial justice could only be achieved one way—by resorting to violence to end the stranglehold of the Family Compact.

It was a Quaker, Samuel Lount, who rallied the young men of York County and led them down Yonge Street towards Montgomery's Tavern in December 1837. His troops were a rather disordered group of young men: Quakers, members of the Children of Peace, Selkirk Scots who had come to Upper Canada from their ill-fated experience in the Red River settlement, and various other settlers. Few had any military training. Those who did came largely from the Children of Peace at Sharon where, ironically, members trained regularly with firearms. Considering their previous insulation from mainstream society, the number of Quakers involved in the Rebellion is striking. Although Quakers formed only 4.2% of the population in rebel areas, they accounted for 40% of the known rebels and supporters.³⁸

Because of their involvement in the Rebellion, a large number of Quakers and members of the Children of Peace were arrested and jailed. Many absconded across the border into the United States. Ironically, this is how Timothy Rogers' son, Asa, left Upper Canada. Asa Rogers Jr. did not take up arms in the Rebellion; he did assist the "rebels" by providing them with food, shelter, and the use of horses. As a result of his activity, he was arrested three times. Each time Quakers were successful in getting him released. After the third release, they warned him that any further arrests might result in his banishment to Van Dieman's Land. Not wanting to experience that fate, he and his family took what they could carry and fled through the night to Michigan.³⁹

Politics and faith collided on Yonge Street in 1837. The defence testimony of one participant, Joseph Brammer, indicates the issues that pressed a group of pacifists to take up arms: "Your Lordship, I am an Englishman, I have a heart as true and loyal to the Queen and to Britain as any British subject in the country but if you mean disloyal to the Family Compact and the men who are robbing this county, I am guilty."⁴⁰ Most of those who were arrested languished in York jails where they carved "Rebellion boxes," small hand-carved wooden boxes, often inlaid with political messages. The inscriptions on one of these boxes is revealing of the reasons behind Quaker involvement in the Rebellion: "O when will tyrants cease to reign, the priests no longer preach for gain, and kings and emperors [sic] quit the throne and let the church of God alone."⁴¹ This inscription indicates that the issue of the Clergy Reserves was key in the rebellious

activities of this group. Some Quakers suffered a worse punishment than jail. Samuel Lount, along with Peter Matthews, was hanged 12 April 1838 for his participation in leading the insurrection.⁴²

While the Rebellion strengthened the determination of Tories to defend their exclusive idea of Upper Canadian identity, it also demonstrated the courage of the rebels' convictions in resisting perceived oppression.⁴³ It is here that one begins to see most clearly the evolution of the Yonge Street Quakers' identity. Their identity as a people separated and withdrawn from the world had changed enough that they were able to identify with their neighbours who shared similar concerns even though they may not have been Quakers. Friends had become part of the mainstream community. When a young Queen Victoria dispatched Lord Durham to inspect the state of the colonies in North America, Durham travelled through Upper and Lower Canada availing himself of public opinion. While in Newmarket, he stayed with Benjamin Pearson, a prominent Yonge Street Quaker.⁴⁴ The doctrinal strife that fragmented the faith community combined with the collaboration of Quakers and non-Quaker neighbours to insist on their right to disagree with the policies of the colonial administration caused a noticeable shift in the boundaries of Quaker identity and the integration of Friends into mainstream Upper Canadian society.

In 1837, as the Yonge Street community entered its third generation, Quaker identity had changed, but it had not disappeared. It had become less sectarian. Yet, Friends still adhered to their testimonies. Hicksite and Orthodox Friends involved in the Rebellion were disowned by their Meetings. Key members of the Children of Peace and active Reformers, like Samuel Hughes and Ebenezer Doan, were also deeply troubled by the military involvement of some of their members in the Rebellion. When David Willson refused to discipline the offending parties, arguing that their imprisonment had been sufficient punishment, Hughes and Doan left the sect and returned to membership in the Society of Friends. Both men joined the Hicksites.⁴⁵ By the time that these events were occurring, however, evangelical revivalism had taken its toll. The disowned were no longer bereft of a voice in the geographic community. This was no longer the frontier. As disowned Friends joined other denominational groups, especially the Methodists, denominational barriers broke down even more. Further integration of Quaker children into the local common schools where non-Quaker lessons were taught also decreased the barriers that separated Friends from the world. Significantly important, however, was the desire of

most Friends not to be “set apart” anymore. Most Quakers, both Orthodox and Hicksite, were looking for a faith that would allow them to participate in the affairs of the world.⁴⁶ Increasingly, young Friends who maintained membership in the Society were more nominal in their adherence to the letter of the Discipline. The movement towards non-sectarianism would be fully realised within a generation from the time of the Hicksite/Orthodox split. As census figures for 1851 demonstrate, 7,000 claimed to be Quakers, yet Meeting records only record a membership of 1,000. For many Friends, their faith identity was no longer defined by membership alone.

By mid-century the Yonge Street Quakers were no longer a separate, insulated group who happened to live in Upper Canada. Yonge Street Friends became Upper Canadians who happened to be Quakers. Faith was still a primary aspect of their identity, as it was for other Upper Canadians of the time. But that faith was no longer exclusive. Quakers continued to embrace their unique testimonies, but they did so from the perspective of a group that had become intricately related to the larger society in which they lived. God’s peculiar people were peculiar no more.

Endnotes

1. This paper is based on work done for my doctoral thesis, “Keeping the Faith: Quaker Community and Women in the Yonge Street Meeting, Upper Canada” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Alberta, 2001). I would like to acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship.
2. The Yonge Street Friends are those Quakers who belonged to the Yonge Street Monthly Meeting. This Meeting included preparative Meetings in the townships of King (Yonge Street), East Gwillimbury (Queen Street), Whitchurch, Uxbridge, and Pickering.
3. On 24 May Rogers commented on the local celebration of the Queen’s birthday, which had included public lectures and fireworks. He proudly ended his day’s entry by commenting that “Newmarket made quite a display of *Loyalty*” [Emphasis in original] (*Diary of Daniel H. Rogers* [Tecumseth and West Gwillimbury Historical Society], 26).
4. The history of Yonge Street Friends can be divided into three distinct generations of community, which differ from a generational division of people in that they are distinct and clearly defined. The first generation began in 1801 with the arrival of Friends on Yonge Street and ended in 1814 with the separation of the

Children of Peace and the conclusion of the War of 1812. The second generation began in 1814 and ended with the Rebellion in 1837.

5. For works on the Protestant consensus see Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1790-1854* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991); John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spries: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: A History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); and William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989). Two works which address the development of an accommodative, pluralistic political ideology are: Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987); and David Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada, 1784-1850* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).
6. Brian Coffey, "From Shanty to House: Log Construction in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," *Material Culture* 16, No. 2 (1984): 61-75.
7. Peter A. Russell, "Forest into Farmland: Upper Canadian Clearing Rates, 1822-1839," in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada: New Perspectives*, eds. J.K. Johnson and Bruce G. Wilson (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991), 131-149. See also, T.W. Achenson, "The Nature and Structure of York Commerce in the 1820s," in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada*, ed., J.K. Johnson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 171-193; Douglas McCalla, "The Internal Economy of Upper Canada: New Evidence on Agricultural Marketing Before 1850," in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada: New Perspectives*, 237-260; and Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 45-91.
8. In addition to formal political activity, petitioning became very popular in Upper Canada in the years leading up to the Rebellion of 1837. The Home District, where the Yonge Street Quakers were located, was especially active in sending oppositionist petitions to the government. Carol Wilton has shown that, of the oppositionist signatures on petitions in 1831-32, 45.68% came from the Home District, over four times that of any other district in Upper Canada (Carol Wilton, *Popular Politics and Political Culture in Upper Canada, 1800-1850* [Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000], 239). There was also formal political activity. Samuel Lount, a Quaker from Holland Landing and a leader in the Rebellion, was a member of the House of Assembly in the 1830s, before he took up arms and led a ramshackle group of dissidents down Yonge Street in an effort to overturn the colonial government.

9. David Willson incorporated music into his Meetings and enlisted the services of retired military officer, Richard Coates, to build the colony's first barrel organ and to conduct a silver band. This activity along with their unusual temple at Sharon drew visitors, both Quaker and non-Quaker.
10. The minutes of the Yonge Street Meetings indicate that between 1815 and the separation in 1828 thirty-seven Friends were recorded as visiting ministers.
11. This is recorded members only. There would also have been adherents or members who had been disowned who would still have been attending Meeting for worship (Isaac Stephenson to wife, Letter dated 1824, Isaac Stephenson Letters, D-2-10, Reel 54, MS 303, Provincial Archives of Ontario [hereafter PAO]).
12. Sect forms of organisation include a rejection of formality, internal specialisation, and the mores of the "world." This is usually coupled by a strict behavioural code. Church forms of organisation include more formality, internal specialisation, a code based more on belief than behaviour, and acceptance of the social mores of the world (Robert W. Doherty, *The Hicksite Separation: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Schism in Early Nineteenth Century America* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1967], 3-15).
13. Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982).
14. "Copies of Letters of Elizabeth Robson," 1824-28, in "Quaker Women's Diaries: The Diaries of Elizabeth Robson, 1813-1843," No. 134, 29-12-1824, Reel 6, World Microfilms Publications. Robson's diaries indicate that in 1824, four years before the actual separation, the interactions in the Meeting were already very strained.
15. For instance, when Thoman Shillatoo visited the Yonge Street Monthly Meeting in early 1827, he recorded a Meeting that lasted over seven hours (*Journal of Thomas Shillatoo*, 2 vols. [London: n.p., 1839], 209).
16. "Yonge Street Preparative Meeting of Ministers and Elders, 1828-1835," 16-04-1829, B-2-78, Reel 26, MS 303, PAO.
17. "Yonge Street Preparative Meeting of Ministers and Elders, 1828-1835," 15-01-1829, B-2-78, Reel 26, MS 303, PAO.
18. Samuel Hughes, *A Vision Concerning the Desolation of Zion: The Fall of Religion Among the Quakers, set forth in a similtude or vision of the mind. Particularly dedicated to the captives, or scattered tribes of that body, now commonly called Orthodox and Hicksites* (Toronto: J.H. Lawrence, 1835), 3-4.

19. "Phoebe Roberts' Diary," *Ontario History*, 42, No. 1 (October 1950): 23; *Memoir of Priscilla Cadwallader*, 2nd edition (Philadelphia: T. Ellwood Zell and Co., 1864), 40; and *Journal of Thomas Shillatoo*, 209.
20. *The Friend, or Advocate of Truth for the Year 1829, Volume II* (Philadelphia: MTC Gould, 1829), 25-28.
21. *The Friend, or Advocate of Truth*, 25-28.
22. "Yonge Street Monthly Meeting, 1806-1818," 18-10-1910, B-2-83, Reel 27, MS 303, PAO.
23. Compare this with the other "Quaker" townships in the same period. 30.3% of patented land was occupied in Pickering, an increase of 19.3% from 1820. In Whitchurch and Uxbridge 41.8% of the patented land was occupied, up 10.7% from five years earlier. King township had only 20.5% of its patented land occupied, a percentage increase of 23.3% from 1820 (Leo A. Johnson, "Land Policy, Population Growth and Social Structure in the Home District, 1793-1851," in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada*, ed. J.K. Johnson, 44).
24. Gerald M. Craig, *Upper Canada: The Formative Years, 1784-1841* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 131.
25. The problem of obtaining land was not confined to the townships in which the Quakers were located. This was a province-wide problem by the 1820s and led to a higher frequency of illegal settlement or "squatting" on unoccupied land (see Craig, *Upper Canada*, 141; and S.J. R. Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers: Ontario Society and Politics, 1791-1896* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990], 81-82).
26. "Yonge Street Preparative Meeting of Ministers and Elders, 1828-1835," 15-12-1831 and 12-12-1833, B-2-78, Reel 26, MS 303, PAO.
27. For a general discussion of the political tensions created by the Clergy Reserves in this period see Craig, *Upper Canada*, 171-179.
28. This was especially the case after 1812, when the growth of rival Protestant denominations in the colony became a cause for concern to the Anglicans. After the War of 1812 John Strachan put in a concerted effort to strengthen the church's institutional foundations by taking measures to turn the Clergy Reserves in a landed endowment and by attempting to create a university controlled by the Anglican church (Curtis Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791-1854* [Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991], 61-74).
29. Quoted in Craig, *Upper Canada*, 174.

30. The secularisation of the Clergy Reserves was not achieved until 1854. Throughout this period, Upper Canadians continued to challenge the primacy of the Church of England and the Anglican-controlled King's College which were the recipients of the proceeds from the Clergy Reserves. In the 1830s a number of petitions were presented to the government calling for the secularisation of the Clergy Reserves (Wilton, *Popular Politics*, 46, 51-2, 172; see also Fahey, *In His Name*, 89-188; and Goldwin S. French, "Egerton Ryerson and the Methodist Model for Upper Canada," in *Historical Essays on Upper Canada: New Perspectives*, eds. Johnson and Wilson, 537-553).
31. "Yonge Street Preparative Meeting of Ministers and Elders, 1828-1835, 18-02-1830," B-2-78, Reel 26, MS 303, PAO.
32. "Yonge Street Preparative Meeting of Ministers and Elders, 1828-1835, 12-02-1835," B-2-78, Reel 26, MS 303, PAO.
33. See Wilton, *Popular Politics and Political Culture in Upper Canada*, 239.
34. David Mills, *The Idea of Loyalty in Upper Canada*, 34-51. See also, Craig, *Upper Canada*, 114-123.
35. Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada*, 184.
36. Colin Read, *The Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada* (The Canadian Historical Association Historical Booklet, no. 48, 1988), 9.
37. *Genealogies of the Builders of the Sharon Temple*, 3rd revised and enlarged edition. Sharon Temple Study Series No. 1, 53.
38. Dr. Tom Socknat, talk given to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Friends Historical Association 1984, *The Tillsonburg News* (9 November 1984): 9; reprinted in *Canadian Quaker History Newsletter* 36 (December 1984).
39. "Asa Rogers: The Story of moving his family from Canada to the United States in 1838; his efforts to regain property left in Canada," Unpublished paper, Rogers file, Canada Yearly Meeting Archives (CYMA).
40. Quoted in *Genealogies of the Builders of the Sharon Temple*, 1.
41. Armitage Family File, CYMA. The top of the box is inscribed, "A present to Merib Armitage from Jesse Cleaver while confined in Toronto Gaol under Charge of H. Treason, June 20th 1838." The ends were inlaid with "UC" and "LC."
42. Quakers were also involved in the western uprising, as the conflict led by Dr. Charles Duncombe near London is known. In London, Joshua Gillam Doan, a birthright Quaker, was hanged for his involvement in the western uprising.

43. Read, *The Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada*, 24.
44. Robert Terence Carter, *Newmarket: The Heart of York Region* (Newmarket: Dundurn Press Ltd., 1994), 35.
45. *Genealogies of the Builders of the Sharon Temple*, 22, 39.
46. It is usually conceded by Quaker historians that the Orthodox certainly wanted a religion which would “sanction and recognize their activities in the world” (Robert W. Doherty, *The Hicksite Separation: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Schism in Early Nineteenth-Century America* [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1967], 31).

