



Quaker figures and books by Joseph Gurney are among the holdings in Earlham's Friends Collection.

KEEPING EARLHAM'S ATTIC



THE FRIENDS COLLECTION AND ARCHIVES

by Tom Hamm

photos by Jonathan Graham

The man coming in the door of the Friends Collection on that chilly autumn morning a few years ago looked a little winded, so I quickly invited him to sit down in my office. He thanked me and explained that he had walked from Tenth and Main, almost two miles away. He said that he had heard that Earlham sometimes bought old Quaker books. I told him that we did, so he continued that he had two that he was interested in selling. When I asked the titles, he could not recall them, but said that a friend was keeping them in the safe at his business. If I would meet him the next morning at 10:30 at Blue Gil's, a bar and grill on East Main Street, I could see them. So I said that I would.

When I arrived at Blue Gil's, however, I made a discovery. It turned out that the two books were actually being held as security for their owner's bar tab, and I would have to pay \$20 before I could examine them! Deciding that the pursuit of knowledge justified some compromise of Earlham's testimony against alcohol, I pulled out a twenty and settled down to peruse the two volumes. Fortunately, they proved worth acquiring, and they are now part of the Friends Collection.

As College Archivist and Curator of the Friends Collection since 1988, my collecting of Quaker materials has not normally taken me to such unexpected places. But much of my time is devoted to looking for Quaker books and manuscripts and Earlham-related items, whether in catalogs or on eBay and other web sites or through discussions and negotiations with individuals and organizations. It takes work to maintain Earlham as the home to one of the largest, most comprehensive collections of Quaker materials in the world.

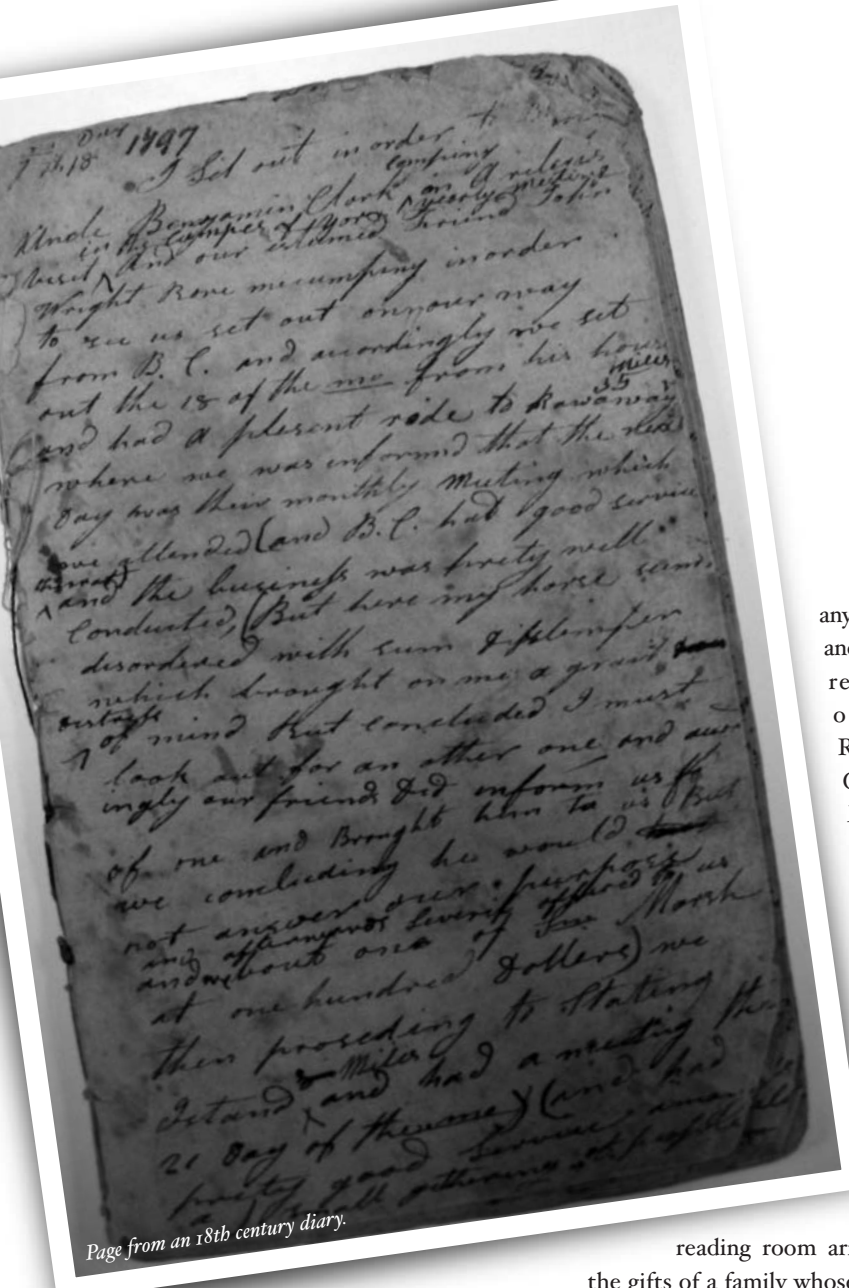
A TREASURE TROVE

The Friends Collection is as old as Earlham. When we opened as Friends Boarding School in 1847, the library included about four hundred seventeenth and eighteenth-century Quaker books donated by English Friends

to form a reference library for Quakers in the Ohio Valley. Most of them are still part of the collection. Through other gifts and acquisitions, sometimes a single letter or document, sometimes collections numbering thousands of items, the collection has grown to include roughly 13,000 books, an



Tom Hamm with a 1750 grandfather clock



Page from an 18th century diary.

equal number of pamphlets, and over 400 manuscript collections. Some of the last are as small as a single volume of a diary. The largest, such as the archives of Indiana and Western Yearly Meetings of Friends and the Friends United Meeting Archives, fill several hundred feet of shelving. The Earlham College and Earlham School of Religion Archives are also extensive, beginning with the 1832 minute book of the Boarding School Committee of Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends, formed after the yearly meeting decided that it wanted to establish an institution for “the guarded religious education of the children of Friends” near Richmond. Some of the oldest volumes still show signs of smoke, evidence of their narrow escape from the flames that destroyed Lindley Hall in October 1924. Today, our policy is to collect all published materials by and about Quakers

anywhere in the world, and manuscripts that reflect the history of Earlham, the Richmond area, and Quakers in the Middle West.

Over the years, the collection has also acquired a number of objects that reflect the history of the college or Quaker life in Indiana and Ohio. The newest additions to the

reading room arrived this summer, the gifts of a family whose ties with Earlham go back to its founding. A year after Friends Boarding School opened in June 1847, two of the students were brothers from nearby Raysville, Indiana, Mordecai Morris and Francis Toms White. They spent several terms in the school before striking off into the wholesale grocery business in Cincinnati. While they were in the boarding school, both met and fell in love with Hannah Amelia Coffin, the daughter of Elijah Coffin, the clerk of Indiana Yearly Meeting and one of the chief promoters of the school. Hannah eventually chose Mordecai Morris White, the elder brother, for her husband, and they married in 1858. Brokenhearted, Francis Toms White never married, although he remained on the best of terms with his sister-in-law. He left for New York City and a successful career as a stockbroker. Mordecai Morris White stayed in Cincinnati and became one of the

city’s leading bankers, retiring as president of the Fourth National Bank. The Whites were Earlham’s most important early benefactors. Mordecai and Francis donated the college’s first quarter million dollars of endowment, and both Mordecai and Hannah served as members of the board of trustees in the 1870s and 1880s. After her husband’s death, Hannah endowed scholarships that still exist in memory of her parents.

Much of the White brothers’ wealth was based on a substantial legacy from their grandfather Mordecai Morris in North Carolina. Although a Quaker for most of his life, grandfather Morris had lost his membership in the 1830s when he purchased a slave to prevent him from being sold away from the rest of his family. One of the first things the White brothers did on coming of age was to make arrangements for their grandfather’s slaves to come to Indiana and be set free, despite an offer from a slave trader of \$10,000 in gold. In 1865, after the end of the Civil War, Francis T. White went to North Carolina to see what was left of the estate. He found his grandfather’s house deserted and looted. All that was left was a grandfather clock that had belonged originally to his great-grandfather, also Mordecai Morris. It was already an antique, having been made about 1750 in Liverpool, England. He struck a bargain with a neighbor—the neighbor could take what window glass was left unbroken in the Morris house if he would crate the clock and have it shipped to the White family home in Raysville, Indiana. It remained there until about 1890, when it went to Mordecai Morris White’s home in Cincinnati. It remained there over a century, descending to Mordecai’s daughter Helen Eustis and then to her son, Francis White Eustis. In the summer

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of 2007, Mrs. Eustis, after consulting with her family, decided that the Mordecai Morris clock should be somewhere it could be preserved, and, given the family connections, thought of Earlham. So her son Frank contacted the college, and arrangements were quickly made for the clock to become one of our Quaker artifacts. Accompanying it were portraits of Mordecai, Hannah, and Francis White, as well as a detailed letter written by Francis in 1890 about the history of the clock.

GIFTS ARE WELCOME

Alumni are our single best source of material. A good example is Lois Harned Jordan, class of 1951. When she moved from her family farm near New Castle to Friends Fellowship Community this summer, it meant sorting through several generations of family letters, diaries, and photographs, reflecting Quaker life in New Jersey, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana for over three hundred years. Much of this material is now in the Friends Collection. It ranges from a diary kept by Lydia Tatum, a New Jersey Quaker woman moving west to Ohio in 1830, to Earlham photographs from the 1890s, to the extensive letters of Lois’s aunt Mildred White, class of 1918, written from Ramallah, Palestine over thirty years, to a unique manuscript constitution of a group of New Jersey Quakers formed in the 1760s to preserve friendly relations with Native Americans.

One question we face is whether the growing popularity of eBay and the *Antiques Road Show* will mean that items that might previously have come to us as donations will now have to be purchased in the future. In my mind, it is a tradeoff, assuming that the

Friends Collection continues to have resources for purchasing materials. On the one hand, in the future we may have to buy things that might have otherwise come to us free. On the other hand, online auctions and book and manuscript dealers mean that we are aware of things that we probably would never have known about otherwise. In the past few years, our eBay purchases have included a 1655 pamphlet by English Friend Richard Farnworth, written to prove that Quakers were not witches and wizards, or an almost unique 1790 pamphlet by Pennsylvania Mennonite preacher Francis Herr, a blast designed to show that Quakers were not really Christians, to dozens of obscure novels with Quaker themes or characters. One of my favorite collecting areas has been advertising that used Quakers as a trademark. Quaker Oats are familiar, but how many of us have had the pleasure of seeing the “The Quaker Chamber Pot,” manufactured in Milwaukee, that is now part of the Friends Collection?

We also house the college and ESR archives, which means that we collect not only official college materials but also items such as student diaries, letters, and photographs that reflect life on the campus since 1847. We are increasingly

aware of how sparse our holdings for the past half century are, compared to some earlier periods—there are even gaps in our holdings of the Earlham Post in the 1970s and 1980s. Gifts are welcome.

Tom Hamm is college archivist, curator of the Friends Collection and professor of history.



The beloved Quaker Chamber Pot.