Accidents must be one of the themes of my presentation. The first accident was discovering the existence of Southland College. In the Haverford College Library, during the preliminary stages of research on British Friends, I stumbled upon a reference to Arkansas in a British Quaker periodical. Now, thirty years hence, I hold this Southland book in hand. No one, I think, can accuse me of moving more rapidly than the spirit allowed.

In any case, my initial fascination with the idea of a Quaker school for black students in the state where I live led me to begin gathering information from a loose collection of diverse printed sources and more productively from interviews with surviving Southland students and teachers I was able to track down. Given what at the time appeared to be a paucity of additional research material, the first article I published on Southland seemed destined to be the last.¹

Then, there was a second accident. On a family trip to Ohio, I stopped at the Earlham College Library in Richmond, Indiana to try to satisfy my curiosity about some murky events during Southland’s last sometimes troublesome years. When an obliging but clueless Earlham summer librarian was unable to find any of the documents I was seeking, she mentioned, largely I suspect to be rid of me, that someone had told her of material stored in the attic of nearby Friends Central (now Friends United) Headquarters. So, on a very warm mid-August day I climbed the stairs into a stifling, windowless attic room where, Eureka, I discovered an historian’s dream, a dust-covered treasure trove of boxes filled with the papers and records of Southland College, untouched for generations. Furthermore, Indiana Friends, perhaps a bit chagrined at having ignored Southland’s legacy for so long, agreed that it was only right for me to take the papers back to Arkansas where they now safely reside in the University of Arkansas Library.²
Those were inadvertent developments that led to my long pursuit of the story of the school that was the first institution of higher education for African Americans west of the Mississippi and that also supported the first predominately black Quaker religious meeting in North America. It was no accident that Southland survived for six always difficult and sometimes deeply troubled decades, but it was amazing and, in my view, inspiring. What I have discovered along the way is that the Southland story can also offer a platform for viewing the evolution of American Quaker ideas and practices as well as, alas, Quaker limitations, misunderstandings and failures during the sixty years of Southland’s existence.

THE FOUNDING

Let me begin by asking that you use your historical imagination to travel mentally back to the time of America’s terrible and tragic Civil War and to step into the shoes of Quaker men and women from Wayne County, Indiana. Picture yourself in April 1864, a Midwestern Yankee, standing on the desk of a side-wheeling steamboat puffing down the Mississippi River, often with Confederate rebel territory on either side. You’ve never been south of Richmond, Indiana, but you are there in hostile territory on a patriotic mission of mercy inspired by your abolitionist principles, your evangelical Christian faith and your attachment to Quakerism’s historic peace testimony. You have no conception of the place to which you are going and only the vaguest sense of what you’ll find when you get there. You are truly an agent of Quaker faith, giving example of Quaker courage and fulfilling the admonition of Indiana Yearly Meeting to be ‘lights in your community’ apart from the world, yet serving the needs of the poor and helpless within it.3

After a two-week passage from Cincinnati, you begin to see them, spread out along the right bank of the river, a frightening, horrific spectacle. Hundreds, even thousands of so-called ‘contrabands’, or freedmen, ‘wretched uncared for sad-looking creatures’, seeking the protection of the Federal troops who occupied Helena, and resentfully called the place ‘Hell-in-Arkansas’. These freed slaves were living in crowded, filthy, improvised camps with inadequate food and shelter amidst an overwhelming stench of unwashed bodies and human waste, a ‘malaria-stricken, disease-fostering hole’. ‘I hope’, one army veteran recalled, ‘I may never be called upon again to witness the horrible scenes I saw in those first days of the history of the freedmen’.4

Such were the scenes that greeted the middle-aged Indiana farm couple and two young female helpers who disembarked at Helena. They had come to follow Jesus’s command to let the little ones come unto Him and so, within hours, ‘[s]ixteen ragged, filthy, vermin-infested children’, lost and abandoned without parents or family, were brought to Alida and Calvin Clark ‘in a…wagon drawn by six mules…the advance guard of hundreds more’.5

Such was the beginning of the remarkable experiment that would become Southland College. Begun, as Alida Clark never tired of saying, in a mule stable, Southland survived for six decades in an isolated location, among a generally hostile
white population, supervised by members of a peculiar religious body, with funding that was perpetually inadequate. Southland’s survival was fortuitous from the beginning. The Clarks did not come to Arkansas with the idea of staying more than a few weeks or months, but the conjunction of extraordinary circumstances, deep-seated compassion, abiding faith and enduring love combined to keep them and their successors in a strange and alien Arkansas world for sixty years.

The first accidental step toward the founding of Southland College arose from the federal government’s decision in 1866 to return property seized during the war to its original owners. This meant that the Clarks and the dozens of orphan children they were caring for and teaching would be evicted from the premises in Helena wherein their orphanage and school were located. Where would they go? How could they carry on? What would become of the helpless children? At this crucial point, Colonel Charles Bentzoni, a Prussian emigrant who commanded the Fifty-Sixth Colored Infantry Regiment occupying Helena, became, in Alida Clark’s words, ‘God’s instrument to meet the difficulties confronting [us]’.6 Bentzoni proposed that the men of his unit donate money to purchase land and labor to erect buildings at a suitable rural location, away from the chaos and sinfulness of a wounded town. The black troopers of the Fifty-Sixth embraced this suggestion as a labor of love, raising $2000 for the purchase of thirty acres nine miles northwest of Helena and for materials to put up the necessary buildings by their voluntary labor.7 When the Clarks and their charges occupied these new premises on 22 May 1866, Alida promised the Colonel and his men that the Bible and the spelling book would be the foundation for all teaching at their accidental asylum. As Calvin Clark noted a few weeks later: ‘There is no backing out now, Friends’.8

THE SCHOOL AND THE MEETING

Encouraged by the Freedmen’s Bureau,9 a Federal agency charged with aiding emancipated blacks in the transition from slavery to free and full citizenship, Indiana Yearly Meeting supported the Southland experiment by purchasing fifty adjoining acres. Established as a home for orphans, Southland gradually became a primary school for both inmates and surrounding black children for whom there were no other educational possibilities. Its transition towards an institution for higher education reflects the evolution of American Quaker attitudes toward education beyond the elementary level. As Thomas Hamm has noted in his seminal study on *The Transformation of American Quakerism*, Friends established over fifteen academies for advanced studies between 1830 and 1880, illustrating their gradual emergence from the Quaker ‘hedge’ into the mainstream of American religious and cultural life. Indeed, Southland’s progress toward higher education was surprisingly rapid. Courses in science, natural history, bookkeeping, German and Latin as well as a Normal (teaching) program were gradually introduced and, within a decade, without, of course, an accrediting agency in sight, the presiding Indiana Friends introduced a new level of curriculum and called the place a College.10
From the beginning Southland’s clients were among the poorest of the poor, black farming families, many of them growing cotton under the vicious crop-lien system that robbed toilers of the soil of fair rewards for honest labor by locking them into debt peonage that increased from year to year, even while their crops were still in the ground. As Alida noted:

we have never seen more rags and patches, dirt filth, drinking, drunkenness, misery and crime, than are now rife amongst these people as a mass. Poor crops for three successive seasons, a credit system of labor; mortgaging all live stock and growing crops for supplies that are used up before the crops are gathered.\textsuperscript{11}

…these poor people are safe from the auction block…but they are beholden to their former masters and owners for labor… [T]herefore I endeavor to work with my hands, tongue and pen for the true freedom of these people, and their elevation from the slough of hopeless oppression, by the ladder of Education, with its sisters Religion, Morality and Justice.\textsuperscript{12}

To achieve this objective, the spelling book was indeed a key. As Elkanah Beard, another of Southland’s remarkable Quaker champions, proclaimed in the rhetorical fashion of the day:

Just so long as the great body of freedmen remain uneducated they will more and more partake in the baneful influences of the stagnant and polluted fountains which constantly pour forth steams of miasma, prejudicial to their growth in grace…and their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness…\textsuperscript{13}

Calvin Clark took charge of the buildings, grounds and financial records of the institution. And, being what one visitor called ‘the best practical farmer in Arkansas’, he supervised the farm connected to the school as well as surrounding land that the Clarks and their son-in-law, Theodore Wright, gradually acquired. Eventually, the Clarks and Wright owned 1,700 acres of land as well as other business interests. Such acquisitions are in keeping with Richard Wood’s view that frontier Friends became increasingly willing to take full advantage of economic opportunities without discarding their personal piety or devotion to social improvement.\textsuperscript{14}

From the beginning Alida was ‘the moving Spirit of the place’, directing the school, organizing religious and temperance meetings as well as soliciting the thousands of dollars needed to keep this daring experiment afloat. Described as possessing a ‘somewhat stern expression indicative of an iron will and indomitable purpose’, she was a formidable presence to be sure. But Colonel Bentzoni called Alida Clark ‘the grandest woman I have ever known’, combining ‘tenderness of heart with an unbounded desire to help the lowly and the needy’.\textsuperscript{15} She believed that ‘the work of educating, elevating and Christianizing’ freed people was an absolute necessity for the success of emancipation and for the future welfare of the American South.

For Alida, the Bible, in the context of American Quakerism’s rapidly changing spiritual and social code, was the other vital key to completing emancipation. Friends had, of course, been among the leaders in the pre-Civil War abolitionist movement. But for some ambiguous Quakers the moral imperative to free African Americans did not translate into a desire to live and worship with them. Thus, Mrs. Clark’s aspirations to convert the mass of southern black people into fully integrated Friends were
not uniformly supported by cautious Quakers in Indiana and elsewhere. She was accused by some of moving too quickly and bringing black people, unprepared for the rigors of Quaker life and faith, into Friends’ exclusive communion. Mrs. Clark, no shrinking violet, had, as always, a decisive response:

Let me say to the followers of George Fox everywhere, rouse up, and let us shake ourselves from the dust of the earth, from a love of ease and too great pursuit of riches, from luxury and pomp, and endeavor to fill up the programme that Fox…marked out for us in all its bearings, especially toward the Negro race… I want to see a great Black Yearly Meeting all over this benighted and truly heathen land. Because I love Friends in all their faith and purity of doctrine, I want others to enjoy the fulness of the religion of Jesus…regardless of color.

Many good people profess to believe that the colored people are too emotional and impressionable ever to become Friends…[but] thorough and deep work of grace is just the same in the heart, no matter the color of the skin…and I would affectionately call the serious attention of Friends everywhere to…examine ourselves and see if there is not a prejudice and jealousy (cruel as the grave) against color that is hindering our ultimate success.16

Under the force of such a rhetorical barrage, the leading lights of Indiana Yearly Meeting were forced to give ground. In 1870 Southland’s congregation was recognized as a preparative meeting for worship with over eighty black members. The original membership, which eventually grew to over 400, included Daniel Drew, who was probably American Quakerism’s first black recorded minister. At the time, the American Yearly Meetings still had no separate or formal clergy, but, as in Britain, local meetings recorded spiritually adept members with special gifts as preachers. Drew had been a soldier in the Fifty-Sixth Colored Infantry, but under the influence of the Clarks, he renounced carnal weapons and became a soldier of the Lord. Daniel Drew was Southland’s ‘main nursing father’ for two generations, one of a legion of black women and men who dedicated themselves to the survival and success of Southland College and Southland’s Quaker Meeting.17

During their work of over twenty years at Southland, the Clarks lived lonely, isolated lives, periodically relieved by visiting Friends and, for a time, by a missionary couple from Kansas, Lydia and Amasa Chace, who settled at Southland.18 Alida later wrote that only three Southern women had ever given her ‘a friendly shake of the hand, or an invitation to their homes’.19 Still, Calvin and Alida stayed on year by year, facing a revolving series of difficulties, from the hostility of white neighbors, to threats from the Ku Klux Klan and from ubiquitous whiskey dealers, to floods and storms as well as ‘Baptist meetings [led] by men who are filthy, lying, drinking, adulterers’ dragging their followers ‘back to barbarism’.20 And always there was the scramble for funds to keep the School alive. Southland survived because the Clarks and their allies, black and white, would not allow it to die.

Beyond all of the inspiring leadership and selfless sacrifice by the black and white Friends devoted to the school, even so isolated a place as Southland could not escape the divisive disputes that troubled the late nineteenth-century American Quaker community. While non-Quakers generally perceive the Society of Friends as a body of believers woven out of whole cloth, Quakerism, as we know, was, and still is,
comprised of diverse and often divided elements—evangelical Gurneyites, Conservative Friends, liberal Hicksites, tradition-bound Wilburites. In the late nineteenth century these divisions were newly forged and vehement quarrels between and among factions often left gaping, hurtful wounds within the wider community of Friends.

In the aftermath of the Hicksite and Wilburite Separations, American Quakerism, under the influence of the charismatic English minister Joseph John Gurney, underwent a reformation that shifted the Society away from many traditional Quaker ideas and practices and closer to mainstream evangelical Protestantism. J.J. Gurney disdained peculiarities of speech and dress, although he adhered to the efficacy of silent worship. Theologically his focus was on the centrality of the Atonement rather than the Inner Light and he emphasized the primacy of Bible over the writings of early Friends as the correct guide to a soul-saving Christian life. By 1860 Orthodox Gurneyites comprised the majority of American Quakers and like their Methodist neighbors, they placed great store in aggressive proselytizing and in addressing social concerns, especially anti-slavery and temperance. This Quaker 'renewal', as Thomas Hamm calls it, was fully reflected in the mission that brought the Clarks to Southland and kept them there. Alida’s powerful ministry was centered on the inerrancy of the Bible in concert, as we have seen, with a passionate concern to raise up the lives and fortunes of former slaves. She also waged ‘unabated warfare against King Alcohol’, anywhere and in any form.

By the 1870s some American Quakers were staging ‘general meetings’ that sometimes became emotional revivals of the sort practiced by evangelical sects. Later in that decade, nearly every Quaker meeting for worship had incorporated previously unQuakerly practices such as regular readings from Scripture, prepared sermons on biblical themes and hymn singing. Religious practices in Southland Monthly Meeting reflected this evolving sense of correct Quaker worship, although Mrs. Clark was careful to emphasize the correct deportment of Southland’s black Friends.

The most divisive issue among late nineteenth-century Orthodox Quakers involved the emergence of a group of powerful and extremely influential evangelical ministers preaching a brand of radical holiness. Headed by fire and brimstone preachers like David Updegraff, Esther Frame, David Hall and Dougan Clark, this movement incorporated the idea of individual believers undergoing a ‘second experience’ rebirth or conversion, an event which generally occurred during a revival meeting centering on the preaching of an inspired holiness minister. In the course of this highly emotional event, the self-confessed sinner, broken by the realization of past inequities, embraced an unequivocal belief in Christ’s atoning sacrifice and thereby gained ‘perfection’ and salvation through this single highly charged experience. As Thomas Hamm notes: ‘nothing more was needed, nothing less sufficed’.

Thus, for a time, Orthodox Quakerism in America was swept up in a spiritual storm created by charismatic ministers who were wholly committed to radical holiness theology and practice. Rejecting two hundred years of Quaker religious peculiarity, they carried Friends into and even beyond the mainstream of American evangelical Protestantism. Baffled and alarmed by such revolutionary innovations, Barnabas C. Hobbs, the moderately evangelical Clerk of Western Yearly Meeting,
told a friend in London: ‘You cannot understand it here…without seeing it. Our meetings were shaken as by a vast whirlwind’.27

There was, however, a considerable body of American Quakers, even some who had enthusiastically welcomed the evangelical renewal, who came to abhor the holiness movement as ‘facile and deceptive’. Older, more conservative Friends protested that revivals giving rise to such mercurial salvation experiences bordered on Ranterism, the radical seventeenth-century antinomian movement denounced by George Fox.28 Traditionally, Friends adhered to the view that recognition of one’s sins (justification) did not remove the spiritual damage imposed by sin and that the process of sanctification (perfection), that is, freeing oneself from the consequences of sin, was a life-long struggle. Clashes between moderate Gurneyite and holiness Friends were at times reminiscent of the Hicksite–Orthodox struggles half a century earlier. Elkanah Beard’s ‘Diaries’ during this period provide revealing examples of disputes which arose within and between meetings. Early in 1878 Beard, leaning to holiness practices, visited a troubled congregation at Jericho, Kansas where ‘nearly all the old friends’, distressed by the growing influence of holiness ideas and practices, had seceded and organized a separate Monthly Meeting. Beard found this anti-evangelical faction to be ‘chronic grumblers’ who were ‘sowing the seeds of discord’, adding that ‘from the contour of their visages I conclude they think it meritorious to be of a sad countenance’.29

Questions about the meaning and efficacy of the American Quaker holiness movement were at the center of serious controversy during the 1870s and 1880s. This contention was eventually addressed, in part, by the Richmond Declaration of Faith, a scripturally based creedal statement promulgated by a conference of Orthodox Yearly Meetings in 1887.30 But the struggle was not resolved. Indeed, the meaning and purpose of the nineteenth-century holiness movement remains at the center of serious differences between contemporary Friends Thomas Hamm and Carole D. Spencer, author of a compelling recent volume, Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism. Their exchange has been respectfully civil but few holds are barred.31 Carole Spencer defines holiness (perfection) as ‘a spiritual quality in which human life is ordered and lived out as to be consciously centered in God…’ and argues that holiness is Quakerism’s most vital and distinguishing doctrine of faith, more central to Quaker theology than the Inner Light, immediate revelation or silent worship. She believes that the nineteenth-century holiness movement ‘captivated and energized a new generation of Quakers by providing an outlet for vibrant, activist, reforming spirituality’. Hamm has a somewhat different view, noting that the holiness movement was a radical, even revolutionary, aberration which, among other things, helped to create a sort of elite corps of ministers who claimed that second experience conversion made them answerable only to God. The result, Hamm asserts, was ‘exalted ministerial standing and…prerogatives’ within a religious community which had historically maintained ‘a faithful testimony against a hireling ministry’.32 Given this paradoxical development, it was no great surprise that in 1878 Indiana Yearly Meeting discarded its long-standing rejection of a paid and professional clergy and adapted a pastoral system. There were strong practical arguments to
support such a change, but in that same year, Ohio Yearly Meeting, under the commanding influence of radical holiness minister David B. Updegraff, ‘repudiated the so-called doctrine of the inner light…as dangerous, unsound and unscriptural’.33

At the height of their power and influence holiness ministers like Updegraff and Dougan Clark asserted that their belief in the doctrine of instantaneous sanctification should be embraced by all who were truly Friends. One of those who most strongly dissented from the idea of single experience sanctification and instant perfection was Joel Bean, an evangelical minister and one-time Clerk of Iowa Yearly Meeting. After Updegraff was invited to preach at the West Branch Meeting of which Bean was a member, his aggressive holiness ministry split West Branch Friends into irreconcilable factions. In response, Bean published a strong critique of the deleterious effects of the holiness movement in the conservative British Friend.34 During the ensuing controversy, leaders of the Orthodox Iowa Yearly Meeting supported Updegraff. Stung by this repudiation, Joel Bean and his wife Hannah sought refuge in San Jose, California where continued harassment by holiness Friends resulted in their eventually being deposed from the ministry. Hamm believes that Bean’s rejection of radical holiness views was the chief cause of his ill-treatment at the hands of the leadership of Iowa Yearly Meeting.35 In contrast, Spencer does not believe that Bean was the moderate evangelical Friend depicted by Hamm. Rather, she says, he was ‘the voice of a Quaker modernist’ who opted for ‘a ground breaking shift from the historical roots of early Friends’, holding views that reflected the ‘natural outcome of Gurneyite ecumenism’.36 In Spencer’s opinion the Iowa holiness movement was ‘counter-cultural mystical pietism’ as contrasted with Bean’s ‘elitism’. As an example of his elitist views, Spencer cites Bean’s visit to Southland College in the company of the weighty British Friend, Isaac Sharp. Commenting on the Southland Meeting for Worship, Bean noted that local Friends were correctly led out from emotional ‘excitements’ by their black minister. Holiness Friends, Spencer concludes, would have had a greater appreciation and understanding of emotional black worship.37

So, even an idiosyncratic, secluded meeting like Southland could become at least peripherally involved with this contentious struggle among Friends. Events would show that, however remote, Southland could no more remain isolated from the trials besetting American Friends than it could avoid the social and political backwash of anti-Reconstruction activities in Phillips County or the state of Arkansas. However, when holiness Friends began to insist that literal adherence to Scripture required Friends to modify their historical rejection of outward sacraments or ‘ordinances’ such as water baptism and the reception of the Lord’s supper, Alida Clark’s response was decisive: ‘We are tired of foolishness and ordinances… We want Jesus’.38

CARRYING ON

While the Clarks presided at Southland the radical holiness movement’s renunciation of most Quaker traditions was kept at arm’s length, but holiness influence remained strong among evangelical Friends. After the Clarks, burnt out from two decades of toil and strife, retired in 1886 to their ‘Hillside Home’ near the school, a succession
of superintendent couples followed with decidedly mixed results, religiously and educationally.

For Southland, new leadership meant a new direction in philosophy of education for African Americans in the South. Whereas heretofore Southland had emphasized academic studies, there was, for a time, a shift toward more vocational or ‘industrial’ training. Such a shift reflected the prevailing view of both northern philanthropists and southern whites. Given the praise heaped upon Booker T. Washington’s model for black industrial training at Tuskegee Institute, it is, perhaps, not surprising that Southland leaders determined to follow what seemed to be a broad consensus and national trend among prominent educators. In any case, the widespread adaption of vocational training for black students ‘set in motion the ideological struggle between industrial philanthropists and black intelligentsia to determine the social purpose of training Afro-American leaders and teachers’.39 Black and white critics of the vocational training model called it ‘a miserable fad’ implying that all southern blacks really needed to learn was how to work in order to advance the economic and social interests of the white power structure.40 One historian believes that so-called ‘industrial schooling’ served as ‘a smokescreen behind which its white supporters could provide…political cover for support among white southerners for minimal black schooling’.41 Southland’s own efforts to introduce courses in cooking, laundry, carpentry, and so on, proved to be decidedly hit and miss, although the concept was never entirely abandoned.

The longest-lasting (1891–97) of Southland’s directing couples in the immediate post-Clark period were Indiana Friends William and Sabina Russell. During the course of the Russells’ tenure their hard work and sincerity were not always matched with equivalent success. At one point, President Russell, inspired by attendance at a holiness type religious gathering in Little Rock, launched an aggressive revival campaign within the Southland community which at times threatened to run to extremes. Russell’s accounts of this revival in the Quaker press described gatherings around the ‘mourners’ bench’, passionate testimonies and miraculous conversions. In the midst of this crusade, Russell related the story of a nine year old student, son of a white father, who in the spirit of an emotionally charged meeting, asked God if he would be saved should he die that night. Upon receiving what he perceived to be a distinctly negative reply, the child became so seriously distressed that Mrs. Russell could scarcely ease his mind.42 This ‘terror of damnation’ syndrome was, of course, a central aspect of the sort of holiness preaching advocated by David Updegraff and others, and one wonders if its emotional fire might more readily consume rather than warm the souls of troubled or immature believers.

Beyond the sometimes disturbing influence of national controversies, Quaker and otherwise, the post-Clark generation proved to be a difficult time for Southland. The school and meeting underwent a sort of roller coaster ride of religious and educational difficulties, with local problems and personality clashes accompanied by half a dozen changes in leadership. The nadir was reached in 1902 when the school’s enrollment was barely one hundred, the smallest in over thirty years. But at this bleak moment in Southland’s evolution, a renewal, indeed, a renaissance occurred under
the leadership of Harry and Anna Wolford, an Ohio Quaker couple who brought the school to its highest enrollments and, for a time at least, its most financially successful years. I think of Harry Wolford as a laconic white knight, a man of few words but strong actions riding to Southland’s rescue. He showed not only a remarkable ability to balance the books but also the capacity to inspire the confidence of leaders of Indiana Yearly Meeting as well as teachers, students, the local black community and even local white people. His vision was of a school that would welcome students whenever they were able to attend. Hard-put parents were accommodated by reduced tuition payments and elaborate work–study schemes. From 1903 to 1921, with a year’s hiatus, the Wolfords lifted Southland’s enrollment to over 400 students. At the same time, they managed to avoid troubles with potentially violent whites during a period of virulent racial tensions in Phillips County. Shortly after the end of the First World War these tensions exploded in violence following the attempts of African American farmers to organize a growers’ union. In the course of the horrific Elaine Riots or Elaine Massacre, as some feel the incident should be more properly called, at least twenty-five blacks were killed in clashes with local law enforcement officers, white vigilantes and a contingent of U.S. Army troops.\textsuperscript{43}

Despite the rising tide of racial intolerance and economic upheaval surrounding the war years, the Wolford Era must be termed Southland’s salad days. The accounts of young Indiana Friends who came to teach at the school are by any measure uniformly positive.\textsuperscript{44} Mildred White, who spent a year teaching at Southland immediately after her graduation from Earlham in 1918, has left an especially charming, nostalgic memoir.\textsuperscript{45} White’s recollections of Southland seem almost idyllic. She had nothing but praise for Harry Wolford’s leadership and Anna Wolford’s personal kindness when Mildred became seriously ill with the dreaded Spanish flu. She also recalled her students and fellow teachers with respect and affection. The integrated Southland faculty (all female during Mildred White’s tenure) lived, worked and played together on terms of friendship and equality—a rarity in the South or nearly anywhere else in America at the time. She remembered sitting down with black colleagues to eat ‘good southern food together in a cheerful dinning room’. White was especially fond of the kind and gentle ways of two black teachers, Marylee Moore and Blanche Hudson, Southland graduates who advised inexperienced ‘white teachers and shielded us from mistakes whenever they could’. She was also touched by the way that local black Friends when moved by a speaker’s message during religious meetings would ‘all pat their feet on the floor gently making a soft rumbling noise’ rather than shouting out ‘Amen’.

In good weather there were evening ‘socials’ with popcorn for boarding students who were ‘merry and easy to entertain… They always wound up singing’.

\begin{quote}
We all sang hymns with the Negro teachers taking the main lead… What a volume of harmony would ring…as the music teacher played the organ. All the children...loved music. In a school body of 350, there was not one monotone… On week nights after supper boarders would sit out on the steps of their dormitories and sing spirituals and old plantation songs. They had some sweet solo voices. Sometimes they sang antiphonally across the campus.
\end{quote}
Despite a daunting workload, nearly total isolation and a serious illness, what stands out is Mildred White’s pride at having helped to fill a genuine need.

With all the limited resources and constant pinching of funds we met there, we could still see what a great thing for the south Southland Institute was… Many of our students had never done anything but chop cotton and hoe corn… Yet they learned many refinements there and most of all they got a steady, consistent character training.46

Despite Quaker pride that Southland was training more and more young black people as teachers, nurses or future farmers, there were underlying problems that began to emerge in the post-war period when responsibility for the school, re-christened as Southland Institute, shifted from Indiana Yearly Meeting to a national Quaker Home Missions Board under the Friends Five Years Meeting.

The end of Harry Wolford’s tenure as Director occurred in 1922 after the Home Missions Board’s appointment of F. Raymond Jenkins as Southland principal. Jenkins was a go-getting twenty-five year old Earlham graduate, who had taught a year at Hampton Institute. For all his lack of experience, Raymond had a surfeit of confidence and a hard-headed determination to put things right. Immediately upon his arrival, Jenkins clashed with Wolford, criticizing, among other things, the condition of school buildings, the lack of proper teaching materials and the maintenance of the school farm by Wolford’s protégé, John W. Moses, the black director of agriculture who claimed to have degrees from Oxford, Cornell and Tuskegee. The growing animosity between Jenkins and Wolford brought a committee of weighty Friends hot-footing from Indiana with the result that first Moses (who proved to be a charming con-man)47 and then Wolford were let go. For lack of other possibilities, young Jenkins was appointed interim head of the school.

During his term as director, Raymond Jenkins was determined to transform Southland from the local school it had become into a black educational institution of national prominence like Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes, drawing a national rather than strictly local or regional student body. In attempting to achieve such an objective, Jenkins faced the opposition of local people who wished to retain the sort of school Harry Wolford had conducted. Despite his sincere intention to make Southland a better school with higher standards, Jenkins also might be criticized by black leaders like W.E.B. DuBois who believed that institutions like Tuskegee and Hampton were complicit in the scheme of preparing black students for subservient roles rather than advancement to equality.48

Some Friends at least seem to have believed that industrial rather than academic training was a proper function of black education in the South. For example, a 1920 article in the Friends Missionary Advocate commented that ‘Negroes like all backward races seem to belong to the soil’.49 Alas, the idea that African Americans were indeed a backward and unequal race was reflected in the sad instance of complaints by some Richmond, Indiana Quakers about a black female Friend from Southland attending their Meeting for Worship.50 Finally, there was the nearly inexplicable fact that over twenty percent of male Quakers in Wayne County Indiana joined the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1920s.51
With the earnest, and naive, enthusiasm of youth, Jenkins soon clashed with local school patrons, many of whom were devoted to Harry Wolford. Indeed, Wolford, who remained in the Helena area, became Jenkins’ _bête noire_. The new principal accused the former Director of behaving like ‘the lord of the manor’, while operating a lending scheme that made many local people beholden to him. In Jenkins’ eyes, Wolford was the source of most of the subsequent difficulties that troubled his administration. In truth, Wolford did work to undermine Raymond Jenkins’ authority. But there were other problems. Beyond the constant shortage of funds, Jenkins’ was challenged by dissident faculty members about his apparently too liberal educational and religious views. There were also serious discipline problems with some students. Finally, and most unfortunately, Southland suffered an epidemic of ‘immoral behavior’, including the expose of an illicit year-long relationship between a teacher and a seventeen year old female student.

Beyond school scandals and difficulties with local blacks who wished for Harry Wolford’s reinstatement as Southland’s Director, Jenkins became involved in another of the theological cum ideological divisions troubling the American Quaker community. In the Spring of 1924 Harry Patton, a disaffected Southland staff member, resigned after verbally assaulting Jenkins as ‘weak and a poor manager’. When Jenkins refused Patton’s demand for travel money to return to Indiana, he attacked the principal’s ‘personal religious life’. Upon returning to Indiana and meeting with members of the Southland Committee, Patton caused ‘considerable trouble’ by delivering a tirade against Jenkins’ leadership and beliefs. As a crowning blow, Patton circulated a letter from Leigh Barrett, another dissident faculty member who refused to attend Southland Meetings for Worship, advising Kansas Friends to withhold support for Southland because Jenkins and other members of the staff were ‘not orthodox’. Apparently for some Southland volunteers, their version of orthodoxy took priority over harmony in the cause of education.

Whether or not Jenkins was Orthodox, no one could have worked harder to achieve his objectives, and his earnest efforts were generally supported by the national Quaker Home Missions Board. But his reach, and that of his superiors, was far beyond their grasp. Ironically, as Southland’s financial situation grew more and more desperate, plans for the school’s restoration and elevation grew more and more grandiose. For a brief period, it looked as if the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation would rescue the school with a large matching grant, but that plan collapsed when Southland’s accumulated debt negated the Board’s possible support. Beyond the fact that much of the local community did not share Raymond Jenkins’ inspired vision for the future of ‘their school’, members of Society of Friends, at the national level, would not or could not supply the sort of financial resources necessary to make Southland what Jenkins and his supporters believed it could and should be. In the circumstances, it proved impossible to carry on.

During the school’s final year of operation, while Raymond Jenkins was on leave in Indiana desperately trying to raise the funds to implement his grand scheme, an incident occurred which reflected the nature of the difficulties Friends faced in attempting to secure educational advancement as well as racial justice and equality in an alien environment of virulent racism that depicted race-mixing as a fearful threat.
to proper society. What occurred was, indeed, a grim reminder that financial difficulties and physical deterioration were not all that militated against a reasonable education for young blacks in the Arkansas Delta.

On Christmas afternoon in 1924, Joseph Moses, Southland’s black governor of boys (no relation to the departed John W. Moses), was driving a group of boarding students to a free movie in Helena when he collided with a car driven by a young white woman. No one was injured and the damages were not extensive. However, two women in the other automobile began verbally assaulting Moses, then physically threatening him with a tire iron. Finally, one of the women snatched the keys from the school’s vehicle and drove away into town. When Moses followed on foot and attempted to retrieve the keys, the county sheriff moved the school’s vehicle to the county courthouse. The bewildered Moses then sought out acting principal Willard Reynolds, in Helena with another group of students. When they went together to speak to the sheriff, he ordered his deputy to ‘lock the nigger up’. Reynolds attempted to intervene but was told that he should be in court the following Tuesday (five days later) until which time Moses would presumably remain incarcerated even though no charges had been filed against him and no investigation had been conducted to establish fault for the accident. Reynolds was only able to secure his colleague’s release when Southland’s banker agreed to guarantee the court appearance of a school representative. After Moses’ release, Reynolds was advised by sympathetic local whites not to contest the case as ‘the evidence would probably go against Moses’ since he was a black man and his adversary was a white woman. The idea of racially assumed guilt was troublesome enough for an Iowa Quaker, but, as Reynolds related to Raymond Jenkins, what truly shocked him was the conduct of one thoroughly respectable woman in the other car whom he described as a type of rabid nigger hater such as I scarcely suppose existed. She seemed to resent the ‘nigger’s impudence’ much more than the damage to the car. She told us that she ought to have killed him and would if she had had a gun. ‘I would not think any more of killing a nigger than a dog’, she said.

Reynolds concluded his troubled and troubling letter with an addendum referring to a less profound but equally persistent difficulty. ‘[M]ost of the teachers’, he noted, ‘are far behind in their salaries’ and that some of Southland’s creditors were becoming unpleasantly insistent.57

The decision to close Southland in 1925 was a tragic and inexplicable event for the school’s patrons. ‘We never did understand what happened in Indiana’, one former student told me. When Raymond Jenkins announced the sad news to the student body and community: ‘There was hardly a dry eye. Mr. Freeland spoke at the end and broke down… Everyone here is heart broken… Everything is black and they see no light. It is terrible’.58 Quaker historian Elbert Russell poignantly spoke of Southland as ‘The Lost Negro Meeting in Arkansas’.59 No one felt that loss more deeply than Duncan Freeland, a faithful Friend for over thirty-five years.

Some Friends made a final attempt to somehow keep Southland, like a patient on life support, alive. Until some decision was made about the property, a Quaker couple agreed to look after the buildings and run the farm. An ex-Southland teacher,
Lester Perisho, was appointed to keep up religious services for local Friends and to tutor a few students. Not surprisingly, this last grasp also failed. The farm did not pay and Perisho, while disappointed in the attitude of some of his students, gained some insight into what had gone wrong.

I don’t wonder that the people held to Wolford so…he was giving them the kind of school they wanted and still want. Of course some really see the need for a different sort, but nearly all appreciated the opportunity to be in school…

Perisho did not consider a Wolford type school as a kindness to the people, but he understood why some local people wished to have a school for its own sake. As echoes of the troubles and strife that had haunted Southland’s last days faded, he attempted to put the sad situation into perspective:

We are pretty much alone down here…there is a certain restfulness about it, for we are free from annoying controversy and high-pitched argument… One is led to think that, though controversy is perhaps justifiable at times, it robs us of the prayerful unselfish interest we would do well to have in each other.

Alas, prayerful unselfish interest may, at times, be less apparent than controversy even among Quakers. Still, at Southland not a few gentle Friends had show such interest in working to keep an improbable dream alive and, one hopes, to permit future generations to see in their story a true, if distant, ‘Light in the Lord’.

Southland deserves to be remembered not for its final failure but for the long selfless service the school performed for a body of truly needy human beings and for the generous spirit that impelled that service. Southland pioneer Lydia Chace spoke for each of these ‘messengers of the Lord in Arkansas’:

It seems to us so vastly important to our stability as a nation that the ignorant should be taught and the degraded uplifted and enlightened, and we surely…owe a debt to this long downtrodden people that will not be paid in our times.

Perhaps that debt has yet to be paid, but the dedicated band of American Quakers who sustained the school for three generations should not be held accountable.

NOTES

2. The Southland College Papers (SP) (28 boxes). MC 577. Special Collections Department, Mullins Library, University of Arkansas.
5. *Christian Worker* (hereafter CW), quoted in Ruthanna Simms to Raymond Jenkins, 3 June 1924, box 6, SP. Mary Ann Macy and Susan L. Horney were the Clarks’ first assistants at Helena.
6. Freedmen’s Record I, December 1865, pp. 4, 7 and March 1866, p. 9. Carl Moneyhon noted
that ‘the Union Army was a major force determining the structure of post-bellum life’. Impact of
Civil War, p. 142.

University of North Carolina Press, 2005, pp. 62-63. The 56th Regiment was formed in St. Louis
and Arkansas in August 1863, its members were part of the more than 5,000 black troops raised in
Arkansas. American Friend (hereafter AF) I/1 (January 1867), p. 28; Lovett, B.L., ‘African
Americans, Civil War and Aftermath in Arkansas’, AHQ 56/3 (1995), p. 35; and Moneyhon,
Impact of Civil War, p. 138. For an account of the 56th Regiment’s stalwart conduct under fire, see
Brian K. Robertson, “Will They Fight? Ask the Enemy”: United States Colored Troops at Big
Creek, Arkansas, July 26, 1864’, AHQ 66/3 (2007), pp. 320-32. Indiana Quakers, who seemed
compulsively interested in the monetary value of everything, estimated that the 56th Colored
Regiment had donated a total of $4,166.75 to Yearly Meeting, Minutes Indiana Yearly Meeting
(MIYM), 1866, pp. 40-41. Before the 56th Regiment was mustered out of service, ‘it was fearfully

8. ‘History of Southland College’, pp. 14-16, Earlham College Quaker Collection (ECQC);
Calvin Clark to FR (July 1866), p. 6.

9. The agency’s official name was ‘The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands’.

10. Minutes, MB, 31 July 1876; MIYM, 1876, p. 34. The authenticity of this designation is
perhaps open to question. In 1874 volunteer Friends noted the ‘aim was not to push rapidly
through many studies but thoroughness in training mind and body for future usefulness’. Amasa
and Lydia Chase to CW 4/16 (15 August 1874), pp. 250-51. Also see The Friend (London), 1

12. FR 21/25 (15 February 1868), pp. 397-98.
13. Beard, E., FR 19/14 (2 December 1865), pp. 218-19. Also see MIYM, 1865, p. 47 and
MIYM, 1866, p. 36.

1964), p. 31; Wood, R.E., ‘Evangelical Quakers Acculturation in the Upper Mississippi Valley’,
Quaker History (hereafter QH), 76/2 (1987), pp. 128-29, 140.

15. ‘History of Southland College’, pp. 44-46, ECQC.


17. FR 22/40 (29 May 1869), p. 636; FR 22/51 (14 August 1869), pp. 810-11; FR 24/10 (28
October 1870), p. 155; MIYM, 1870, p. 9; FR 24/10 (29 October 1870), p. 155; FR 24/12 (12
November 1870), p. 48. Also see A History of Southland College: The Society of Friends and Black

18. Amasa and Lydia Chace are included in the ‘Dictionary of Quaker Biography’, Haverford
College Quaker Collection. Also see Quaker Heritage Press, s.v. The Autobiography of Lydia Meader


21. For an enlightening discussion of the Quaker Renewal of the mid-nineteenth century, see
Thomas D. Hamm’s seminal study, The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends,
1800–1907, Bloomington, IN, 1988, pp. 36-73.


23. Elkhanah Beard’s ‘Diaries’ illustrate changing attitudes toward singing among Orthodox
Friends. In March 1868 Beard ‘cried unto the Lord to save me from singing’. Ten years later (25
January 1878), he remarked approvingly: ‘We have some singing in nearly all of our meetings’.
Beard ‘Diaries’, ECQC, Richmond.

24. See, for example, FR 25/31 (23 March 1872), p. 493; FR 30/41 (26 May 1877), p. 651; and
26. The popularity and influence of this new brand of Quaker ministers was reflected in one of Alida Clark’s pleas for traveling preachers when she specifically asked why individuals like David Updegraff, Dougan Clark and Donald Hall were not coming to Southland. See A. Clark to CW 5/7 (15 April 1875), pp. 107-108.
29. Beard, ‘Diaries’, 17 January 1878, ECQC. Beard also noted of the Jericho dissenters: ‘I suppose the Lord loves them but from the Scripture or a common sense standpoint[,] I cannot see how He admires them’.
32. See Hamm, T., and Spencer, C., ‘An Exchange on Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism, by Carole Spencer’, *Quaker Theology* 16 (Fall–Winter 2009), pp. 55-72. Also see the negative review of Spencer’s book by Chuck Fager in the same issue, pp. 73-83. As late as August 1874 Southland Monthly Meeting had confirmed its ‘testimony against Priests and Ministers wages’. See Minutes, Southland Monthly Meeting, 19 August 1874, 19, Box 12, SP.
35. For an account of what Hamm believes to be the deliberate and unjust persecution of the Beans, see *Transformation*, pp. 117-18, 139-43; ‘Joel Bean and the Revival in Iowa’, *QH 76/1* (Spring 1987), pp. 33-49, and ‘Holiness: 2.5 Cheers’, *Quaker Theology* 16 (Fall–Winter 2009), pp. 57-58.
42. W.J. Russell to Joseph Dickinson, 7 February 1895, Correspondence, Mission Board, Indiana Yearly Meeting, SP. At around the same time, there was a strikingly similar incident described by a young English Quaker girl who was terrified by the religious instructions of strongly evangelical relatives. See Kennedy, T.C., *British Quakerism, 1860–1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 99-100.
43. There is a growing historical literature on the events in Elaine during September and October of 1919. A recent study by Grif Stockley, *Blood in their Eyes: The Elaine Race Massacres of 1919* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2001) maintains that the death toll among African
Americans was ‘in the hundreds’, mostly killed in cold blood by federal troops. Stockley’s view on the complicity of the military in a massacre and the number of black deaths has been contested by other scholars, especially Jeannie Whayne, ‘Low Villains and Wickedness in High Places: Race and Class in the Elaine Riots’, *AHQ* 58/3 (Autumn 1999), pp. 285-313. No serious writer, however, denies the brutal horror or flagrant injustice of the events and their aftermath.

44. For example, the letters of Herschel Folger, who was Southland Principle under Wolford, in the ECQC. Also see Kennedy, *Southland College*, pp. 157-61.


50. Interview with Russell and Tressie Ratliff, Richmond, IN, 19 June 1981.


53. See Kennedy, *Southland College*, pp. 213-14, 325 n. 9. The teacher accused of involvement with his student, Joseph Charles Penn, later became assistant superintendent of public instruction for the state of Illinois.

54. See F. Raymond Jenkins (FRJ) to Ruthanna Simms (RS), 18 March 1924, box 5, SP; RS to FRJ, 20 March 1924, box 5, SP; RS to L. Hollingsworth Wood, 3 April 1924, box 5, SP.

55. For example, Raymond Jenkins, supported by his influential father Atwood Jenkins, proposed to move Southland to a ‘near ideal’ hundred acre site that was for sale. See Kennedy, *Southland College*, pp. 243-44.

56. For the travails of fundraising efforts by Jenkins and the Home Mission Board, see Kennedy, *Southland College*, pp. 219-51.

57. L. Willard Reynolds to F. Raymond Jenkins, 31 December 1924, Box 6, SP.


60. Attached to a letter of Ruthanna Simms to the Southland Circle, 12 December 1925, L. Hollingsworth Wood Papers, Haverford College Quaker Collection.


62. Lydia M. Chace to Friends, 12 March 1878, reprinted in *CW* 8 (3 April 1878), p. 158.