

**Memorial – William Allen
Minister of Yonge St Meeting
1898**

Archives: Box 24

This memorial is held by the Canadian Quaker Archives and Library in Newmarket, Ontario in Box 24.

This Memorial gives an account of the life of William Allen, a former slave and an esteemed minister of Yonge St Meeting. For further reading see these articles in the Canadian Quaker History Journal.

1. *William Allen: Friends Minister and Evangelist*, Jane Zavitz Bond, [No. 64, p. 51, 1999](#)
2. *William Allen's Memorandum Book, 1887-1891*, Jane Zavitz Bond, [No. 64, p. 54, 1999](#)
3. *Memoirs of William Allen*, Fred L. Ryon, [No. 65, p. 37, 1999](#)

The transcription was coordinated by Jane Zavitz Bond, archivist for Canada Yearly Meeting, and fully transcribed by Sheila Havard with minor formatting changes for posting by Randy Saylor. The text was transcribed as written. Transcriber notes are in square brackets. The memoir has not been proof read.

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[Note: : This transcript has not been proof-read. Spelling is that of the original in so far as legible.]

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William Allen Quaker minister that Walter Armitage held evangelist meetings with in Ontario when he was young

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A MEMORIAL
CONCERNING
WILLIAM ALLEN
AN ESTEEMED
Minister of Yonge St. Monthly Meeting of Friends

A MEMORIAL
CONCERNING
WILLIAM ALLEN, AN ESTEEMED MINISTER OF
YONGE ST. MONTHLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS.

In the death of our dear friend and brother William Allen, a valued minister, who deceased the 21st of 5th month, 1898, at the residence of Wm. Colquhoun, Gowrie, Ontario, this Meeting would record the deep sense of its loss, and the loving memory of his life and service.

The subject of this sketch was born a slave in East Tennessee, (according to his own reckoning) on the 5th of 4th month, 1821. He suffered many hardships and punishments at times during the years of his slavery; the severest punishment he received, he said, was upon hearing of the death of his mother, when he went into a corner of the field in which he was working and kneeling among some bushes to pray, was discovered by the cruel overseer, and received such an injury to his back that he felt it at times during life.

When about twenty-two years of age his master died, leaving by will all his slaves free, but the heirs kept them in ignorance of their right to freedom for four years, when the Friends of New Hope Monthly Meeting providentially heard that such a will had been made, secured their liberty, and hired Doctor Jesse Ellis and son David to take them to Howard County, Indiana.

In the year 1856 he attended a Friends' school in West Grove, Hamilton County, Indiana. This was William's first school, he made very creditable progress for a beginner, could spell easy words and read in the first Reader when the school closed.

At this time he was a very exemplary young man, moral, honest and industrious. He was a natural orator and would often make speeches in the school and literary societies. After he got so he could read his Testament he always carried one in his pocket, and at every opportunity was reading it, so that in after life very few could quote Scripture more freely or correctly than he.

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William lived in the homes of Friends for quite a number of years, and was helped very much in his education, and especially in the use of language, by them. His first Church connection was with the Methodists, acting as an Evangelist or Preacher for some time in that Church, but later, feeling it to be the Master's will, he united with the Friends, was received into membership by Carmel Monthly Meeting, Indiana, 4th of 6th month, 1873. And was recorded a Minister 7th of 3rd month, 1874.

He spent a large part of his time in evangelistic services. We find that at different times he visited, with the concurrence of his friends, various Meetings in Indiana, Ohio, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Vermont, New York and Canada. His first visit to Canada was in 1875, and in 1st month, 1878, he was certified from Oak Ridges Monthly Meeting, Indiana, to Mariposa Monthly Meeting, where many through his labors were brought to the Saviour; and after some years he was certified to Ohio, and then in 1895 he was again a member of Canada Yearly Meeting, being certified by Milan Monthly Meeting, Ohio, to Yonge Street Monthly Meeting, Ontario. He remained a member of that Meeting until his death.

It was hard for William Allen at first to give up to a call to the ministry, feeling that the lack of education made it impossible for him to stand before an intelligent audience and speak to them. Some very severe Providences became his, before he was willing to say “Thy will be done,” and then *after* entering upon the work he was several times tempted to stop. It may not be out of place to give one or two of these *peculiar* lessons here.

William Allen, like others, desired to possess his share of this world’s treasure, but God willed otherwise; in a spirit of rebellion he rented ground and sowed a field of wheat, when harvest time came, to all appearance there was a fine crop, but upon examination it was found that the crop was a total failure, while just over the fence, the wheat was fine. This did not deter him from his purpose, but God who is *rich* in love, yet when He speaks desires obedience, did not leave him. One evening while at the tea table, he was smitten under the power of God, carried out of the body so as to catch a glimpse of eternal darkness, and also of blessed light; at this point a messenger appeared to him, and William yielded to the Divine call, and came to, after a prostrated condition for twenty-four hours, *then* practically began William Allen’s work for the Master.

He was a man of sterling character, noble in spirit, meek, but firm in his conviction for the truth, or whatever he believed to be right.

He had great faith as well as great power in prayer, so that he was enabled to overcome obstacles that would otherwise hinder the work. At one time in Ohio, he went with some ministers and other Friends to hold a Meeting in a school house, there were quite a number of Spiritualists came to the Meeting, who endeavoured to hedge up the way by seating themselves in a circle in front of the desk, thinking in that way to influence William and the others so they could do nothing, and thus control the Meeting by their presence.

William felt some of their influence he said, but the Lord gave him such liberty in prayer and speaking, that himself and others were wonderfully blessed. Some time after this they went again to the same neighbourhood to an old Grange hall, to hold another meeting, but it was being repaired, so one of the principal Spiritualists invited them to his house to a room with seats in, in which they held their meetings or seances.

The Friends rather hesitated to go to such a place, but William said *he* would like to go for he believed the Lord would give them a great victory: so they went and had a glorious meeting. The man who invited them to his house said, they could never do anything in that room afterwards, and had to move their gatherings from that place.

Another incident showing his strong faith in the Lord’s protecting power happened in Indiana, near the close of the war; William had sent an appointment for a meeting to be held in a school house where Knights of the Golden Circle held their lodge; they swore no negro should preach in that house, they would egg him: he went at the time, with another colored man with him, a good singer, the people at the home where they called told them of the threat that was made, and asked what he would do. He answered, “I *will go*, if I can honor God more, by receiving a coat of eggs or the clubs of a mob, Amen.” He went, they were there with their clubs and eggs, he walked among them and spoke to them, but they did not touch him, he went into the house and the brother commenced singing, sung them all into the house, and then, William kneeled and prayed *for* them, told the Lord what they had come for, saying, “Now, Lord,

thou did'st close the lions' mouths for Daniel, so Thou can'st paralyze the arm that attempts to harm Thy servants"; they felt the power of the Lord come over the meeting. William held meetings there for two weeks, and took every one of that mob by the hand and took them into the Church; he organized a meeting of seventy members in that house. Other instances might be given, but these will suffice to show his allegiance to the Lord, and the power of God working through him to subdue all that would rise up to frustrate. or overcome the Lord's work.

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William Allen had great love and sympathy with, and for children and young people, so that even little children were attracted to him, and the young people seemed to become very much attached to him. He took a great many young men and boys out with him in the work and service of the Master, patiently working with them, encouraging, cheering, lifting up and helping out, the weary and disheartened ones. Over twenty of these have been recorded ministers among the Friends and are out now in the work for the Master; some in far off lands bearing the banner of the cross. The Methodist church had also her part of his associates in the ministerial field.

He was always anxious to be about his Master's business, and his words of warning to the sinner, of help and cheer for the Christian, and his exhortation to diligence and zeal in the Master's service, have made us realize that *our* lives are better because of our acquaintance with him.

At the last Meeting he attended he spoke from John 15:1, 2, with great earnestness, cheering the faltering pilgrim, and inspiring the youthful follower.

He went to Gowrie, 3rd of 3rd month, 1898, to spend a month, and was taken sick, suffering very severely for some weeks, yet in it all he was praising God for his many blessings. A few days before his death he made all arrangements concerning his temporal affairs, his funeral, etc.; after that, in his extreme weakness, he was often heard to pray, that he might be taken home, but if not, that he be granted patience.

He told those who were with him, at different times, that he saw visions of angels, and little children singing, that the music was grand, and thought it strange they could not see or hear them; his mind was clear to the last. No murmur escaped his lips during the eleven weeks of his illness, but near the last he said, Oh Lord, I am so tired, so tired! Praise the Lord! were his last words. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints." "He being dead yet speaketh."

We know of *many* who were born into the Kingdom through his instrumentality, and we are satisfied that many will rise up in the last day and bless God for the life-work of William Allen. May *his* example be an impetus to us all.

His funeral service was a very impressive one, conducted by William I. Moore, who preached from Revelation 14:13.