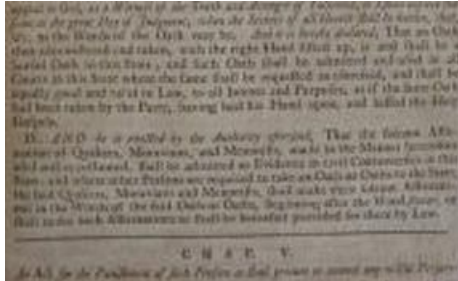


Mennonites ^[1]

Mennonites

by Stephen Moyer, 2006; Revised by SLNC Government and Heritage Library, July 2023



A 1777 law gave Mennonites, Moravians, and Quakers the right to state 'solemn Affirmations' when 'other Persons are required to take an Oath or Oaths to the State.' " Available courtesy the State Library of North Carolina.

^[2]Mennonites are a Protestant group whose origins can be traced to Zürich, Switzerland, during the Reformation ^[3]. Their name is taken from Menno Simons, one of their early leaders. Mennonites suffered religious persecution from both Roman Catholic and Protestant church authorities in Europe, and, as a result, many immigrated to North America starting in the 1600s. At the end of the twentieth century there were approximately 100,000 Mennonites in the United States, with the greatest numbers being in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. The Mennonite population in North Carolina has always been small.

The early history of Mennonites in North Carolina has never been comprehensively studied, but evidence suggests that scattered groups were present in the state by the late eighteenth century. Their presence can be inferred from the Records of the Moravians in North Carolina ^[4], which contain numerous references to Mennonites and other Anabaptist groups (which advocate adult, not infant, baptism). Often these references are in relation to legislation in the colonial Assembly concerning church groups and military service. It appears that the early Mennonites never established a congregation and lost contact with other North American Mennonite groups by the early 1800s.

If present at all, Mennonites in North Carolina in the early years of the nineteenth century were disorganized and few in number. The Moravian records mention that in 1843 a Mennonite preacher was in the state, although it is not clear whether he was from North Carolina or merely passing through. During the Civil War ^[5], a Virginia Mennonite met a soldier from North Carolina who reported the existence of a Mennonite church near his home. Nevertheless, when J. S. Coffman of Elkhart, Ind., tried to visit the North Carolina Mennonites in the early 1880s, he could not find a group recognizable as Mennonites.

Congregations of the church began to be formed in North Carolina in 1899 with the arrival of missionaries from the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference. Along with their churches, the Mennonites built schools and orphanages. Most North Carolina Mennonite congregations became part of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America in 1960 and later joined the Virginia Conference of the Mennonite Church U.S.A. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there were Mennonite congregations in Asheville ^[6], Chapel Hill, Durham ^[7], Greensboro ^[8], Charlotte, Hickory, Raleigh ^[9], and Rocky Mount. Additional congregations of Mennonite Churches in NC are associated with the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. These churches are in the mountains and foothills of the state. The congregation in Boone is largely African-American and many cultural traditions have been integrated into the worship services.

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A 1777 law gave Mennonites, Moravians, and Quakers the right to state 'solemn Affirmations' when 'other Persons are required to take an Oath or Oaths to the State.' " Available courtesy the State Library of North Carolina. Available online from North Carolina History Project: <http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/commentary/161/entry> [2] (accessed May 14, 2012).

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