

Friends Church (Quaker)

Allie Campbell and Ethan McHolland

Yearbook

Mr. Shannon

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Randolph County has had many different historical events and locations throughout the years the city has existed. In May of 1873 Friends Church, located in Winchester, Indiana, began meeting at the City Hall until the construction of their church building was finished. The location of the church, which only lasted for a few years, was at the corner of Washington and South East Street in 1874. Weeks later, Quakers in the area grew so much that the New Garden Quarterly Meeting and churches combined to become Winchester Quarterly Meeting of Friends. Later, in 1897 the original meetinghouse was torn down and replaced with the current building in 1898. The new building would seat up to 1,500 individuals. <sup>1</sup> The Friends Church of Winchester would go on to exist for the next 80 years, and continue the legacy that they set-up.

Elkanah and Irena Johnson Beard were the first pastors of the Quaker church. In May of 1898, they gave up the plot of land they owned next to the meeting ground to become a parsonage. The building has remained a parsonage until this day. During this time, the membership in Winchester Quarterly Meeting of Friends was the largest in the world, with almost 4,000 members among 30 plus meetings in Randolph and Delaware Counties.

In 1912, the church had grown and became so popular that it was necessary for it to become a monthly meeting. Eventually there was a split in the Indiana Yearly Meeting in 2013, which caused the Winchester Friends to become an independent Quaker Meeting. While becoming independent, the church still supported Friends United Meeting in Richmond, Indiana. Over time, the church had installed an organ, which was the first organ in a Quaker meeting in the world. The organ was installed to aid in worship through music.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Winchester Friends Church – Welcome Friends,” n.d.  
<https://www.winchesterfriendschurch.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> News Gazette, ed. “Winchester Friends Church First Meeting in City Hall.” Press release, June 28, 1988.

The church also had the first bell in a Quaker church. The bell was installed in 1875 in the first meetinghouse and was moved into the new one after it had burned. In 1925, the platform under the pipe organ burnt, and the meeting met in the City Hall once again until repairs could be made to the pipe organ. The Quaker church has burnt down twice, each time allowing for the church to expand and add more to the building. With this, many more members became present over time and the church's name began to grow all around.

In 2010 the State of Indiana installed a Historical Marker in front of the meetinghouse which was used to recognize Quaker contributions in social reform to the county and the world through temperance, woman suffrage and education for American Indians and African Americans. Then in 2016, the meetinghouse installed 32 solar panels on the roof to help reduce energy consumption and to encourage green energy usage.

