

The Having of Negroes Is Become a Burden: The Quaker Struggle to Free Slaves in Revolutionary North Carolina. By Michael J. Crawford. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010. 224 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8130-3470-6. \$69.95.

The Having of Negroes Is Become a Burden: The Quaker Struggle to Free Slaves in Revolutionary North Carolina, by Michael J. Crawford, provides a selection of documents illustrating the conflict between manumission and state law. The book covers a twenty-five year period (1772–1797) using thirty-six documents from the Society of Friends, private collections, published county and state records, and Congressional records. A third of the records are transcribed from the North Carolina Friends' Yearly Meeting minutes housed at Guilford College in Greensboro. Nearly a fourth of the selections are taken from the papers of George Walton, a merchant ship captain from Perquimans County, who converted to Quakerism.

After a chronology of principal events and an introduction, the volume is divided into four parts. An editor's note appears at the beginning of each document or group of documents and a different font is used for the actual transcriptions.

Part I "An Individual: George Walton Confronts Slavery," which consists of three documents, recounts Walton's dreams and his interpretations of them. The section also includes letters and journal entries concerning Walton's stand against slavery and his efforts to convince other Quakers to free their slaves. A map appears in this section showing Quaker meetinghouses, but it is very hard to read because of the overlay of words onto a contemporary map. Journal excerpts discuss why Walton declined to serve as a night patroller, a system set up to prevent slave rebellion.

North Carolina Quakers' growing hostility to slavery brought them into conflict with state and local authorities who were worried about the destabilizing effects that the Revolution had on the "peculiar institution." The 1775 Yearly Meeting determined that slaveholding was "inconsistent with righteousness" (54) and the following year prohibited Friends from buying and selling slaves. Meanwhile, to prevent slaves from rising up to join the Loyalists, the General

Assembly condemned the freeing of slaves and made it illegal to do so. As a result, all freed slaves could be seized and re-sold. The Yearly Meeting contested the law in the court at Edenton to no avail but successfully appealed the decision to the superior court in 1778. The next year, however, the legislature upheld the county court's ruling that "the conduct of the said Quakers in setting their slaves free when our open and declared enemies were endeavoring to bring about an Insurrection of the Slaves, was highly criminal and reprehensible" (67).

Part II, "The Community: The Society of Friends in North Carolina Chooses Manumission," includes nine documents. In 1767 Thomas Nicholson, another devout Quaker from Perquimans County, wrote an open letter to the Friends encouraging them to free their slaves gradually. By 1775 he was urging the immediate emancipation of slaves by the Quakers. His reasoning was based on scripture, which he cited extensively in his journal.

The Yearly Meeting developed a policy against slave trading (1773) which eventually expanded to include a policy against slave ownership (1775). Thomas Newby, one of the wealthiest men in Perquimans County, for example, freed ten of his slaves in 1776. The following year he petitioned the Hertford court to free another slave, but his request was denied. A formal process for freeing slaves was set up by the Yearly Meetings, as shown in extracts from that body's minutes. The Yearly Meeting also sent a memorial to the Meeting for Sufferings in Philadelphia regarding the plight of freedmen who were re-enslaved. It listed their names.

Part III, "The State: North Carolina Thwarts Quaker Manumission," includes eleven documents, primarily legal instruments, concerning North Carolina's restriction of Quaker manumission. Fueled by the fear of slave conspiracies, the legislature passed "An Act to Prevent Domestic Insurrections" in 1777. The Yearly Meeting believed that slaves freed prior to the new law were not subject to seizure and resale. A trial took place in which the law was upheld and the ruling went against the freed slaves. The volume includes two accounts of sale listing the names of the freed slaves, their former owners, and the new owners.

Throughout the period, Quakers endured a hostile legislative climate. Opponents of manumission, nevertheless, were not wholly successful. As mentioned previously, the superior court reversed the decision of Edenton District in 1778, but the legislature effectively rebuked that decision the following year with "An Act for Apprehending and selling certain Slaves set free contrary to Law."

While "passions on the issues were at a high pitch," (128) several Friends prepared a petition explaining their actions to the legislature, but it was never presented. Another petition was presented in 1788 to no avail. "An Act to Amend an Act Entitled An Act to Prevent Domestic Insurrections' " strengthened enforcement of the law. Yet another bill was proposed in the General Assembly in 1797 that was aimed at "sundry people under pretence of religious motives, [who] send their slaves to the northern and eastern states" (138). It never became law.

The final division in the book, Part IV, "The Nation: African-American Freedom and the Manumission Debate in Congress," focuses on the struggle of Quakers "to get the national government to act against slavery" (142). In 1797, two petitions were presented to that body, one by former slaves and one by the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting. The former received little attention because it was voted, 50 to 33, that the petition should not even be received for debate. Likewise, although the Pennsylvania memorial was debated strongly in the House of Representatives, it, too, was rejected.

The Epilogue is broken into several subheadings. The first two are "The Yearly Meeting Becomes a Slaveholder," and "Emigration." Three biographies of North Carolina Friends, covering 1776 through 1897, "illustrate the depth and continuity of the North Carolina Quaker tradition of antislavery action" (187). "A Burden Unshed" brings the story full circle, harkening back to George Walton's original dream. "North Carolina Friends . . . like Walton, recognized the dignity of all people and, having the courage of their convictions, strove to make their dreams reality" (192).

The endnotes are extensive, as is the bibliography. It was a bit surprising to this reviewer, however, that more of the original documents housed in the State Archives were not cited, primarily court records, tax lists, and General Assembly Session Records. Secondary sources or Internet resources were used instead. The indexing of the book was excellent. There were a few minor inconsistencies in how certain entries were subdivided. Some had a long string of page numbers listed while others with the same number of page references were divided into subentries. The subentries for "Bible" were inconsistent in that some of the chapters were run-in while most were indented.

Overall, the volume accomplished its goal to show how the consequence of the Quakers' "antislavery activities radiated out from a few individuals to the region, the state, and eventually, the nation" (dust jacket).

Donna E. Kelly
North Carolina Office of Archives and History