

# THE GUILFORD COLLEGE COMMUNITY HISTORY

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the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program.

The land that Guilford College now rests on was originally a meeting place between a number of different native peoples – Cheraw (Saura) to the west, the Occaneechi and Sappony (and later Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation) to the east. The Catawba to the south appear to have used this region for travel, but not settlement. All spoke Siouan languages, therefore the region sustained a variety of indigenous communities speaking a shared language.

There is some thought that because it does not appear any tribe was settled here that perhaps this is why Quakers chose this place for their new home in the 1750s. As well intentioned as Friends are, it's unlikely that this was at the forefront of their minds or even had a real sense of how the land was being used. It continues to be important during College events to acknowledge the many people and communities who have lived and thrived on this land for generations and generations.

When Quakers settled here they named it "New Garden," both a biblical reference to the Garden of Eden and a reference to New Garden, PA where many moved here from. The name sets out a vision and hope for a new community. John Woolman, the Quaker missionary who visited the settlers shortly thereafter, called them "planters of truth in the province."

During the American Revolution this peaceful scene was disturbed by the Battle of New Garden and the larger Battle of Guilford Courthouse, four miles to the north.

Quakers cared for the wounded of both sides and buried the dead in New Garden Meeting's cemetery. Today one can see a marker to the unknown British soldiers interred there as well as visit the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park.

By the 1830s large numbers of Quakers in the South moved to free states in the North, owing to their opposition to slavery and desire for new settlement opportunities. Several Quaker families in the New Garden community were among the founders of the southern branch of the Underground Railroad, while the Guilford College Woods preserves parts of the old forest that harbored fugitives fleeing their enslavement.

To assure a continuing commitment to educate the youth of the Religious Society of Friends, the remnant Quaker community decided to establish a boarding school on a coeducational basis; it was chartered in 1834 and opened in 1837 as New Garden Boarding School. The school did not close during the Civil War, as its young men did not march off to fight, and teachers and administrators of the school refused induction into the Confederate army. Following the war, Northern Friends aided the few Quakers remaining in the South to rebuild their community, strengthening the boarding school and preparing it to become a college, building a system of Quaker schools and schools for recently emancipated Africans and improving the economy through innovative agricultural practices.

This led to the development of Guilford College, the fourth-oldest degree-granting institution in North Carolina. The College remained largely isolated until the 1920s, when the old trail to Greensboro became The Friendly Road. The street name still symbolizes the long-standing friendship between "town and gown." Today the campus is an area of greenery, quiet and scholarship within Greensboro's city limits. Guilford's campus is recognized by the United States Department of the Interior as a National Historic District and the campus woods are listed as a site on