

## **Shake Rattle and Roll: Quaker Early Settlers of Lynchburg**

presented with accompanying slides by Cham Light

Sphex, October 10, 2024

Disclaimer: I am not a professional historian, I have done some original research, mainly land records in Albemarle, Amherst, Bedford, Campbell Counties and the City of Lynchburg, I have relied mainly on the book by Douglas Brown entitled Lynchburg's Pioneer Quakers and Their Meeting House. Finally, many of these Friends such as the Clarks and Moormans and also the related Leftwich family are my direct ancestors, and also almost all the families were inter-related and the extended family still own parts of some of the original holdings, so I am somewhat biased in my orientation.

It needs to be noted that what are commonly called Quakers was originally actually a mocking term and their official name is the Religious Society of Friends or simply Friends

To understand the Friends in central Virginia there needs to be an understanding of their prior history. The movement arose in England in response to the excesses of the Roman Catholic and later the state sponsored Anglican Church. Any other religious denominations other than the Anglican / Established Church were outlawed and members were prohibited from a wide range of political and academic activities. As a result, especially after Oliver Cromwell's death and the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, many left England, some like the Clark and Moorman families, initially going to Barbados and then to the colonies, including Virginia.

The first meeting in Virginia was in Nansemond County, now Suffolk, in 1672 and spread out to eventually at least 15 meetings around Virginia, primarily in the eastern parts with Grayson / Galax being the furthest west and established in 1801 and then Bedford the next furthest west. Meeting usually held once a month, quarterly meetings on a regional basis with an annual meeting of all the Friends at various locations. Colonial authorities tried to suppress the Friends through a variety of ways since they were a threat to the existing order.

There was a very active meeting in Louisa County called Camp Creek that was established in 1748 and from which many of the Friends who came to Bedford / Lynchburg derived. Prominent in the Camp Creek meeting was a gentleman by the name of Christopher Clark (1680-1754, emigrant from England, grandmother was a Moorman, families friends from having served as officers during English Civil War under Cromwell, he had also been in the Meetings at New Kent and Hanover Counties) and his wife Penelope. As we shall see below they were the parents / grandparents of many of our Friends. Clark (sometimes called Captain but questionable documentation) was a very large land owner in Louisa and what became Albemarle County, owning in excess of 50,000 acres from the Green Springs area to the area around Keswick. He had built a road of approximately 20 miles, portions of which are still in existence, and called Clark's Tract Rd., which is accessed just past Grace Episcopal Church in Keswick to connect his

holdings. If John Lynch is the Father of Lynchburg then Christopher Clark can be called the Grandfather of Lynchburg since so many of his descendants were involved in the settlement of the area. The best way to understand the development of the Friends in our area is to follow chronologically their development.

**1719:** Charles Lynch, Sr. (1704-1753) emigrated as an indentured servant to Christopher Clark from Galway, Ireland to Virginia, learned the tobacco business and was also taught law by the Clarks, including his future brother in law Micajah Clark, Sr. (1718-1808) Records reflect Lynch was at many events of the Friends but there is no record he ever formally joined a Meeting.

**1733:** Sarah Clark (1716-1792), daughter of Christopher, married to Charles Lynch, Sr. He started to acquire land that year and over the next 17 years accumulated 6,500 acres in Albemarle County, home on the Rivanna River at Pen Park, E. Rio Road., Charlottesville. Lynch operated a ferry over Lynch's River in Albemarle County

**1736:** Births of Charles Lynch, Jr. (1736-1796, Colonel) and John Lynch (1740-1820), sons of Sarah Clark and Charles Lynch, Sr.

**1750:** Charles Lynch, Sr. and wife Sarah Clark Lynch acquire 1,600 acres of land along the Fluvanna / now James River. Their home, Chestnut Hill, was on the Concord Turnpike above the current city water filtration plant.

This started a wave of Friends moving from Albemarle and Louisa Counties to central Virginia over the next ten to fifteen years. The families included the Moormans, who were intermarried with the Clarks when they had emigrated from England, as well as grandchildren of Christopher Clark, such as John Clark, Bolling Clark (business manager for Jefferson at Poplar Forest as his father had been at Monticello), Edward Clark and Robert Clark. All buy large tracts of land, primarily in the area now known as Lawyers in Campbell County and south to the Staunton River at Altavista

**1753;** Major Charles Lynch, Sr. died.

**1754:** Russell Parish / Anglican church established. It consisted of what was eventually Bedford, Campbell and Franklin Counties. Augustine Leftwich (French and Indian War, Captain in Virginia Militia) was Warden. In the 1760s, as a result of the Great Awakening, Evangelical Presbyterians and Baptists were experiencing large growth.

**1757:** John Lynch, age 17, starts ferry service on the James River. The Langley Fountain is located at the site of the ferry on the Lynchburg side of river.

**1757:** South River Meeting, established 1757 (arose from Goose Creek meeting in Bedford), originally met at the home of Sarah Clark Lynch. She gave two acres in 17?? for a church building. The present building, now known as Quaker Presbyterian was completed in 1798. It was preceded by perhaps two wooden structures. The Meeting was eventually laid down in 1847,

met monthly. The Meeting grew to include approximately 140 different families who were active in the development of our community and in other areas where they moved. I tried to calculate the percentage of the central Virginia area population who were Friends and could not with any certainty, but it had to be fairly large. In 1790 the total population of Bedford was 10,531, with 26.2 % enslaved and Campbell 7,685 with 32.4 % enslaved. In 1840 Lynchburg's population was 6,395. I looked for estimates of Friends population and did not find any though there are undoubtedly some figures that have been estimated.

However, the Friends had two very big challenges: 1. they were not supposed to own enslaved people (many such as the Moorman family (founded White's Methodist on English Tavern Rd.) were "disowned" by the Meeting and became Methodists to retain enslaved people) when the tobacco economy was built on enslaved people and 2. could not serve in the military when central Virginia was still a frontier and military service was expected. They were also not supposed to drink alcohol.

**1764:** Susanna Chiles and Micajah Moorman (born 1735, son of Rachel Clark, daughter of Christopher Clark, and husband Thomas Moorman, first cousin of John Lynch, died 1806, also see 1786 below) sold 450 acres in Amherst to Edward Lynch (brother of John Lynch) next to Ferry Landing; also that year Charles Lynch, Jr. was disowned by the Meeting for swearing "a solemn oath" when he became a member of the House of Burgesses (? later reinstated). These large landowners, many of whom were well educated, were expected to hold political office, so it was a challenge for them to stay with the Meeting.

**1766:** Sarah Clark Lynch married Major John Ward (no children) and soon after in 1766 Sarah Clark Lynch was "disowned" by South River for "marrying out of the Meeting," though she was re-instated in 1771. She died in 1792

**1776:** John Lynch was disowned for conduct "not been altogether agreeable to the rules of our meeting." Later, at his request, he was received "into full unity."

**Oct. 1786:** Lynchburg and its 45 acres was established as a trust by the General Assembly. Trustees were *John Clark* (1745-1819, grandson of Christopher Clark, first cousin of John Lynch), Adam Clement, *Charles Lynch, Jr.* (1736-1796, older brother of John Lynch), John Calloway, *Achilles Douglas*, *William Martin*, Jesse Burton, *Joseph Stratton*, *Micajah Moorman*, and *Charles Brooks*, all Gentlemen. The first meeting of the City was held on May 8, 1787 at Micajah Moorman's home on Candler Mountain, where Liberty University Library is now located. There were ten trustees; all seven italicized were members of South River Meeting.

**1805:** Lynchburg was fully incorporated as a city

**1812:** A toll bridge company headed by John Lynch opened a toll bridge that replaced the ferry.

As time passed and the community developed, slavery became a more divisive issue among the Friends so that between 1801 and 1840, eighty six families left South River for the Northwestern Territory, including Ohio and other abolitionist northern states while others moved to Tennessee, Kentucky and other slave states in search of fresh land.

**1847:** South River Meeting was “laid down.” In 1857 it was said “Quakerism exists in Lynchburg in name only.” In 1899 South River Meeting land was sold to Floyd Street Presbyterian Church. Dr. John Jay Terrell (family moved from Rock Castle farm to Missouri where they became Methodists. He returned to Lynchburg to live with an aunt and re-embraced Quakerism. He went to Emory and Henry College where he was roommates with J.E.B. Stuart,; went to Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia and then returned to Lynchburg where he was when the Civil War started) of Pest House fame, 1829-1922, was said to be the “last Quaker of Lynchburg.”

If time read some of the Records of Disownments at South River and names of some of the many distinguished descendants.

### **Buildings**

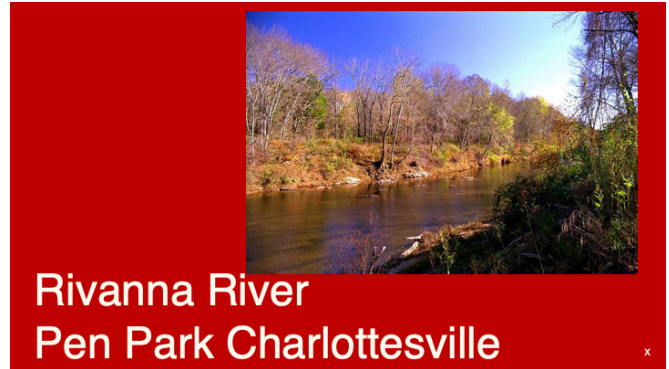
1. Cemetery
2. Charles Lynch Sr., Chestnut Hill
3. John Lynch’s original house
4. John Lynch’s country home, torn down
5. Walnut Hill / Samuel Moorman / National Register

Born in 1704, Lynch was originally a native of Galway, Ireland.<sup>[1]</sup> It was said that when he was around 15 years old, he took offense at certain mistreatment he received from a schoolmaster and subsequently resolved to leave his country, boarding a ship at the docks that he thought was bound for a European destination. Upon realizing the ship was destined for North America, he repented his decision and, leaping into the sea, attempted to swim for land as his vessel left its moorings; however, he was rescued by the ship's sailors and placed in the hold for the remainder of the voyage.

Upon arriving in Virginia, Lynch was entered by the ship's captain into an indentured servitude contract with a successful Quaker named Christopher Clark who lived in [Louisa County](#). Lynch was said to have looked back on his time with Clark fondly, calling it a "second birth." During this period, Lynch worked as an apprentice for Clark's son, who was a local lawyer. Lynch would also marry Clark's daughter, Sarah, in Lee County in 1733. After being released from his indenture early, Lynch and his wife would depart his former master’s farm with livestock,

equipment, and conveyances, They migrated throughout the state, acquiring tracts of land in several counties including Bedford, Caroline, Goochland, Louisa, and Orange.<sup>[2]</sup>

Lynch obtained his first piece of land within the [territory of present-day Albemarle County](#) in 1733. Throughout the next seventeen years, Lynch would go on to acquire deeds for a total of 6,500 acres, dispersed in sections along the [Hardware River](#), [Rivanna River](#), [Moore's Creek](#), and [Mechums River](#). He built his home along the Rivanna River on the site of today's [Pen Park](#) and established there Lynch's Ferry (or Ford), which is heavily mentioned in the early records of the Albemarle County Court. During this time, Lynch served as one of the original magistrates of the county (having previously served as a magistrate of [Goochland County](#) as well), as Sheriff in 1749, and as a representative of the county in the House of Burgesses.



In 1750, Lynch acquired 1,600 acres of land along the [James River](#) opposite the site of modern [Lynchburg](#) and made it his primary residence. He died there in 1753.

### **Family and descendants**

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Lynch's wife, Sarah, was the daughter of Christopher and Penelope Clark. She joined the Society of Friends around the time of her move to Lynch's land along the James River, permitting the establishment of a Quaker Meeting House known as "South River" on her property on Lynch's Creek in [1754](#).

Lynch and Sarah had four children named Charles, John, Christopher, and Sarah Lynch. John would go on to found the city of Lynchburg in [1786](#). Charles would serve as the clerk of the South River Meeting House until the period immediately prior to the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, when his patriotic inclinations led him to serve as a colonel in the Revolutionary army (his promptness in suppressing the activities of outlaws and violent Loyalists during this time later gave rise to the phrase "Lynch Law"). Sarah Lynch would marry twice throughout her life, to Micajah Terrell and John Ward of Bedford, respectively.

### **Legacy**

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Lynch's River and Lynch's Creek (a tributary of the [Rockfish River](#)) in Albemarle County both serve as memorials to Lynch's former presence in the community.<sup>[3]</sup>

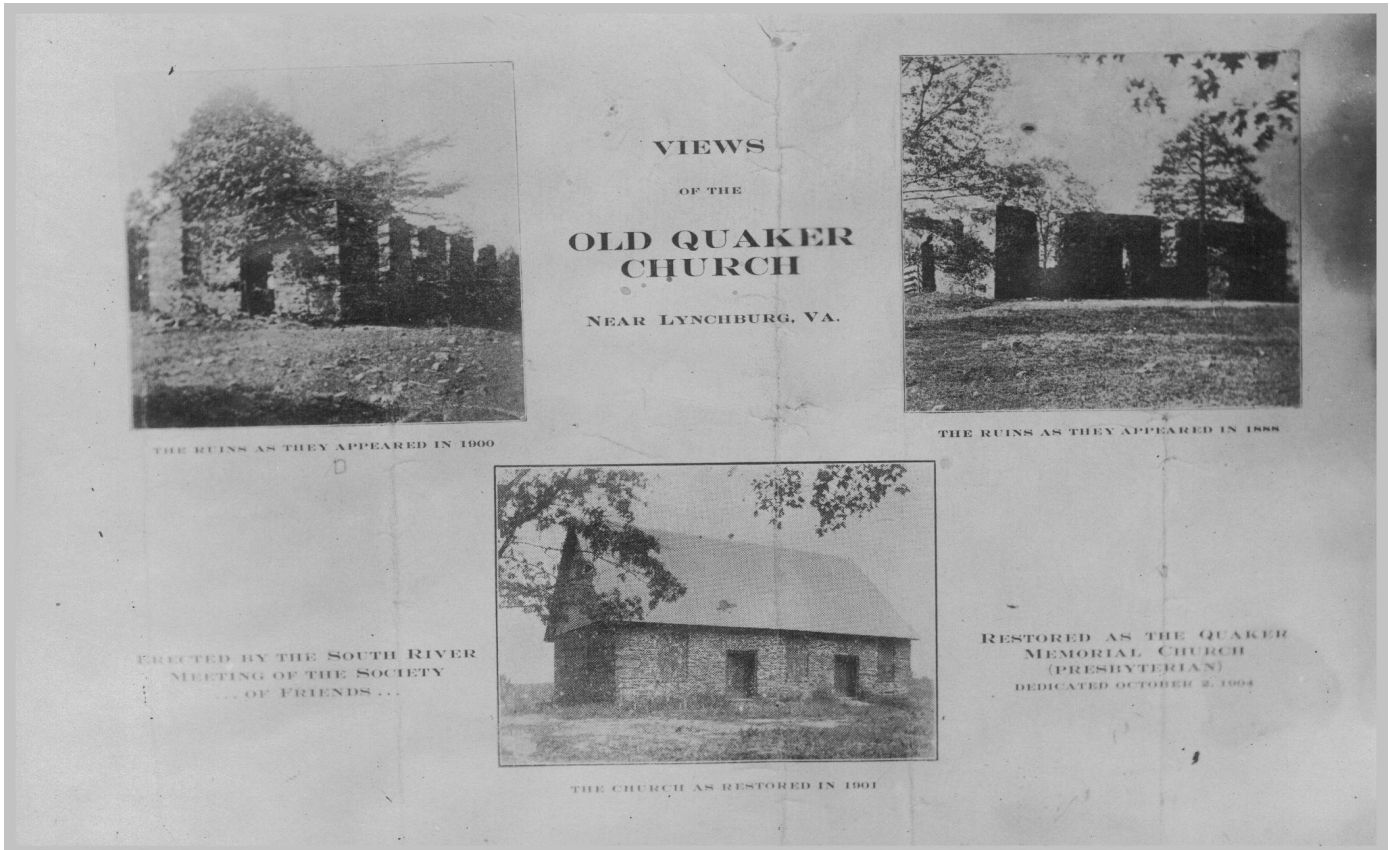
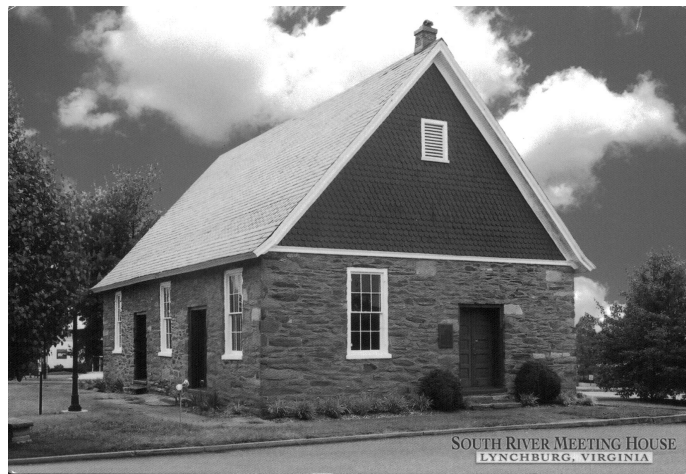
The phrase "lynching" was likely coined in memory of the harsh actions undertaken against Loyalist prisoners by Lynch's son, Charles, during the Revolutionary War (the term did not carry racial connotations in its original form).

### **Houses and cemeteries:**

1. **John Lynch house**, located at 619 First St. in Garland Hill, built in 1781, it is the oldest house in Lynchburg still at the original location

2. **Castle Hill**, country home

3. Quaker Memorial Presbyterian Church building and cemetery – The main church building is a 20th century construction. The **Meeting House** on the grounds was largely reconstructed from the surviving ruins. The graveyard is the supposed burial location of Sarah Lynch and John Lynch but since the Quakers did not believe in headstones and just used head and footstones to delineate the grave, identification of the grave sites is speculative.



4. **Walnut Hill**, built by Samuel Moorman, is still owned by his direct descendent, Helga Leftwich. The house and graveyard are on the National Register.

5. **Clark Cemetery** on Lawyers Rd. Photo plus photo of archeological dig.



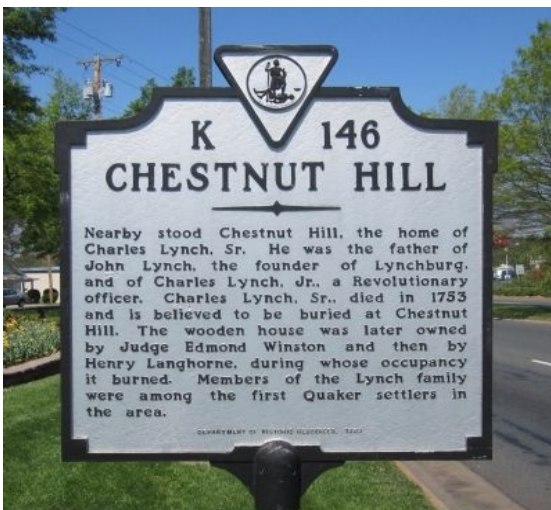
Walnut Hill

## Mark Moore and John Clark Cemetery Lawyers Road

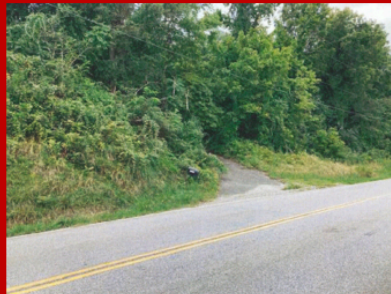


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6. **Chestnut Hill**, home of Charles Lynch Sr., on the hill above Concord Turnpike. overlooking the Waste Treatment Plant. Charles Lynch Sr. only had it three years (?) before his death.



## Entrance to Chestnut Hill 2205 Concord Turnpike



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*House currently on the site of Chestnut Hill. The original house, no longer standing, was the home of Charles and Sarah Clark Lynch.*

7. **Old City Cemetery** is technically not a Quaker cemetery but it is on land given by John Lynch.

8. **Clark's Tract Road**

9. **Pen Park**, Charlottesville

10. **Avoca**, location of Charles Lynch Jr.'s home, but it was not Avoca.

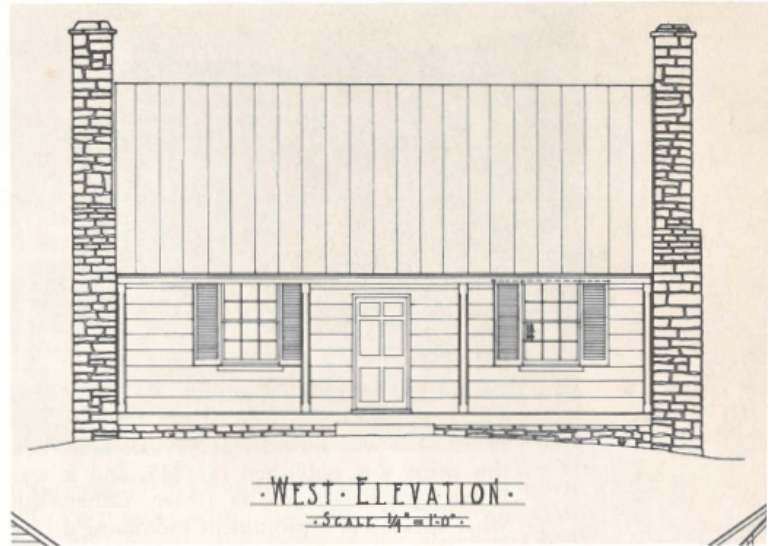


11. **Moorman Cemetery** on Candler's Mountain where Zachariah Moorman's home was (original meeting of the formation of Lynchburg) where Zachariah and Thomas Moorman were buried. Liberty University bulldozed it to make way for the Library.



*The site of the Moorman Cemetery is marked by a plaque on the grounds of the Liberty University library.*

11. **Christopher Johnson Cottage** is considered the oldest Quaker dwelling in the area. See next page.



Questions / discussion

