



Name _____

Date _____ Class _____



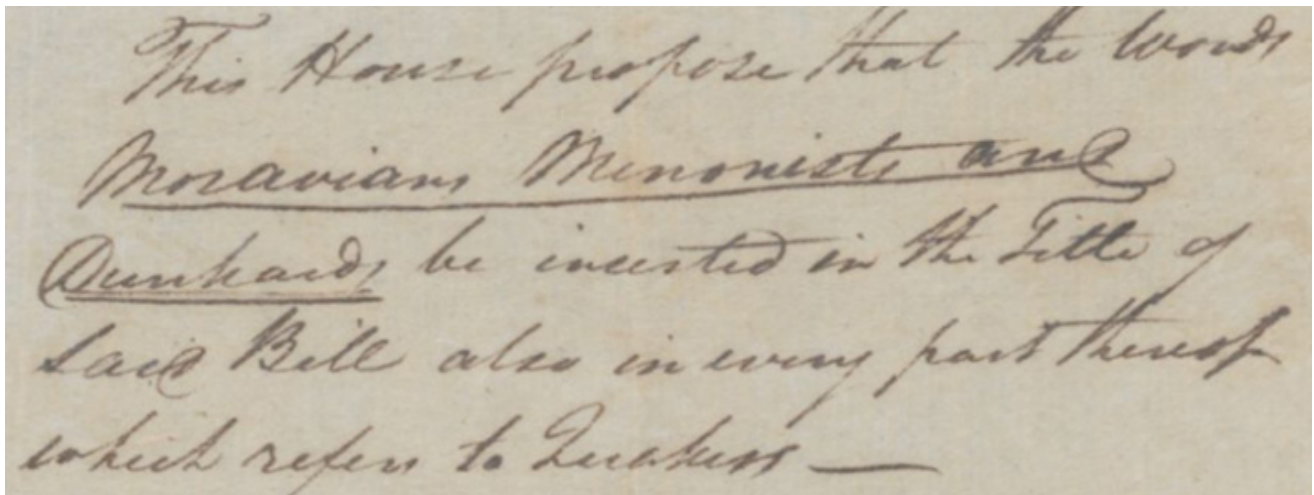
BACKGROUND: Religious Dissent



Quakers John and Rachel Allen built this house, c.1780, near Snow Camp in Alamance County. The structure is now part of Alamance Battleground State Historic Site.

Several religious groups including, Moravians, Quakers, and German Anabaptists, opposed the state's requirement to take an oath of allegiance to the new government. These groups, or sects, did not believe in war and sought peaceful solutions to conflict. The state had some tolerance for the dissenting groups and did not force their men to fight in the Revolutionary War. However, in return for their exemptions from militia service, the General Assembly imposed higher taxes.

Because the colony allowed some religious freedom, Quakers were some of the first settlers to move to North Carolina, as early as 1672. Early Quaker communities flourished in the Albemarle region, especially Pasquotank and Perquimans Counties. Later, in the mid-1700s, more Quakers migrated from Pennsylvania to the Piedmont. Moravians also settled the Piedmont at that time and formed towns in Bethania, Bethabara, and Salem. Mennonites and Dunkers, very small groups, were German Anabaptists and also settled the Piedmont in the mid-late 1700s. They shared the pacifism of Quakers and Mennonites.

A photograph of a handwritten document in cursive script. The text is written on aged, slightly yellowed paper. The handwriting is fluid and characteristic of the late 18th century. The text reads: "This House propose that the words Moravians Menonists and Dunkards be inserted in the Title of Said Bill also in every part thereof which refers to Quakers —".

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Detail of House Bill for Relief of Moravians, Menonists, and Dunkards, April 28, 1780, GASR Apr-May 1780, box 2

The Quaker community in North Carolina dissented further by actively opposing the slave trade in 1770, and members worked to emancipate the people they enslaved. The General Assembly, however, enacted laws to limit emancipation, or manumission. For example, the Quaker communities in Pasquotank and Perquimans Counties fought court battles to prevent the re-sale of enslaved persons they had previously attempted to emancipate. A British Proclamation in 1775 offered freedom to enslaved men who would join the British military. State leaders, many of whom owned plantations and enslaved people, protected the slavery system to maintain order and the cash crop economy. As a result, tension between Quakers and the state continued to grow.

Quick Fact Check

1. Name another religious dissenting group besides the Quakers.
2. Which dissenting group founded the town of Salem?
3. List one way the dissenting religious groups disagreed with the State.
4. List one way the State responded to protests.