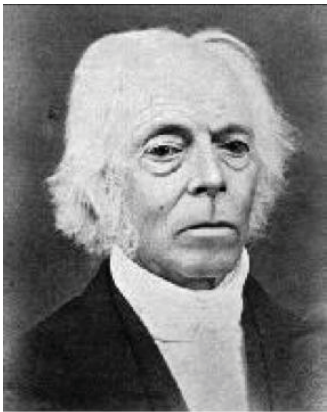


Richard Coates

Artist & Musician

Although many of the Quakers who joined the Children of Peace were skilled craftsmen, the Quaker "testimony" on plainness discouraged them from embracing the arts; ornamentation or adornment of any kind was considered little but a sign of pride. Thus, when Willson was commanded to "ornament the Church with all the glory of Israel" in a vision, the sect had to turn to an outsider, Richard Coates, for guidance.



Although an Anglican, Coates exerted tremendous influence on those cultural elements by which the Children of Peace came to be known by the wider world. It was he who built their organs, who formed and initially led their band, who painted "the symbolic decorations of the interior of the Temple at Sharon," and who painted the banners which they carried in front of their processions.

The details of Coates life are sketchy. He was born 30 November 1778 in Thornton Dale, Yorkshire, England, the son of Richard Coates and Dorothy Reynolds. He married Isabella Smith on 5 Nov. 1805 and they had at least 3 children. Isabella was the niece of Sir Joshua Reynolds, president of the Royal Academy and an eminent portrait painter. Nothing is known of Coates' education or where he refined his musical or artistic skills. He was said to have played in a British Army band during the Peninsular War, and to have been a bandmaster at the Battle of Waterloo.

Like many officers decommissioned after the Napoleonic wars, he immigrated to Upper Canada. He arrived at Quebec on 13 May 1817, where he stayed 15 months before settling in York. Coates had a large house on Duke Street in Toronto, unusual for the organ of "some pretensions" he had built inside, as well as "an elegantly finished little pleasure yacht of about nine tons' burden" constructed in the yard. He also made a four foot telescope which is now at the Temple. Shortly after his arrival

in York, he was commissioned by the Children of Peace to build the first of their organs, said, in fact, to be the first built in Ontario. It was at this time that he also gave the Children of Peace lessons in the rudiments of music, teaching members how to play the instruments of a brass band.

When Coates petitioned for land in 1824, he described himself as a painter (both house and portrait). Evidence of his skills survives: 2 of the 4 banners he painted for the Children of Peace now hang in the Sharon Temple. It was probably also he who painted the only known portrait of David Willson. Coates was also said to have painted the pictures of the rising and setting sun with the word "Armageddon" which stood over the east and west doors of the Temple. These last paintings have not survived.

In 1831 Coates moved to Trafalgar Township east of Oakville where he acquired land and established a water-powered sawmill and threshing mill. This move did not, however, end his association with the Children of Peace, as he is known to have built a further two organs for the sect. Of the seven organs Coates built during his lifetime, three were for the Children of Peace. After 1860, the economic depression forced Coates to leave the Oakville area and settle on his farm near the village of Rodney. It was there that he died on 29 January 1868 in Aldborough Township, Ont.