

This history of Adelphi Friends Meeting was published in installments in the newsletter during 1996.

FORTY YEARS AGO . . .

--Bob Mitchell

. . . Adelphi Friends Meeting was born. As historian and one of the founders, let me, in monthly installments in the Newsletter, share an account of the activities that led to that blessed event. In the spring of 1955, a concerted effort was made to bring together residents of this area with Quaker interests who would welcome having a local meeting to attend. These included members of Washington Monthly Meeting of Friends who had found the upkeep of their Meeting property and employment of a pastor that they had supported since 1905 beyond their means but had retained their identity as an organized meeting, notable among these were Joseph and Sallie Wetherald and their six children. A small Quaker worship group promoted **by Bob and Ruth Wetherald Broadbent met regularly in Greenbelt. A few** University of Maryland Quaker students under the guidance of Elizabeth Haviland (a Wetherald cousin) met regularly in the Dean's Lounge. Some attenders of Florida Avenue Meeting preferred not to have to travel so far.

In this effort Florida Avenue Meeting contributed the services of its Executive Secretary, Herb Hadley. Those involved were called Northeast Suburban Friends Group. After several informal and congenial gatherings, a couple of times at Adelphi Mill, St. Andrew's Episcopal Parish Hall in College Park was found as an acceptable meeting place, the first Meeting for Worship and Sunday School being held their September 11, 1955. This Meeting progenitor of Adelphi Friends Meeting, called College Park Meeting of Friends, became quite viable, helped especially by the efforts of an employed Executive Director, Jeanne Newman, of Homewood Meeting of Baltimore.

In May 1956, at Potomac Quarterly Meeting, Jeanne presented our plans for establishment and asked that we be accepted. At the same Meeting, Jessie Tichenor, Clerk of Washington Monthly Meeting requested mergence with College Park. Both requests were granted and the clerks of both Baltimore Yearly Meetings, Homewood and Stony Run, were directed to facilitate the action. The assets or detriments of functioning under the two differing Faiths and Practices remained to be seen. It was a unique situation.

Within only eight months of occupancy of the Parish Hall in College Park, the young Quaker group was discovering the inadequacy of the facilities. At the June 1956 business meeting, considerable time was spent on ways of alleviating this problem. Moveable partitions to separate groups in different activities would help. Asking to rent the adjoining kitchen would also help. However, the treasury had a balance of only \$76.73 and rent was due for the balance of the year. Under these dire circumstances approval was given to a suggestion by Ed Snyder of the Finance Committee to negotiate with the church about accepting the labor of our members on property improvements as rent in lieu of cash. There was some \$500 in the building fund but that was untouchable for any use other than acquiring property of our own.

With a promise from Potomac Quarterly Meeting to recognize monthly meeting status for us, a request from Bob and Ina Hicks to be accepted as Charter Members prompted a move to encourage others who felt so inclined to let their wishes be known. Bob and Ina are still members of Adelphi Meeting and maintain much interest in it. However, residing in the most distant part of Maryland they are unable to participate in our activities. Their interest at that time sparked a move to establish a committee to deal with memberships.

There was considerable optimism about the future of our new Meeting, and the general feeling at the end of this meeting for business seemed to be, "Let's all look around for a more satisfactory place that we can call "our own."

Business of the College Park Friends Meeting in 7th Month 1956, like that of the previous month, referred mostly to the inadequacy of St. Andrews Parish Hall; but this time, concerted action was taken for alleviating the situation. Greatly welcomed was a report from the church that alterations by our own hands would be acceptable as rent in lieu of cash, so Paul Koenig was promptly asked to gather a group together to do the necessary work with Labor Day as a completion target date. Fortunately, talent for this task was readily

available. Paul, himself a forester and woodworker, Bob Hicks, a manual training teacher at Landover, William and Roger Wetherald, clerks at building supply outlets, and several members willing to lend helping hands could make up a good crew.

The House Committee reported having met with the Finance Committee and jointly recommended that the Meeting appoint a committee to over-see the alterations to the Hall, the progress being made on it and also to inquire among local realtors about properties that might be useful to us.

Promptly, the clerk named Edith Birgfeld, Jean Evans (now Eaton), Bob Hicks, Bill Laughlin (Johnny's dad), and Ed Snyder to such a committee with the Clerk, Treasurer and Secretary as ex-officio members. The Committees also reported happily that from the sale of Washington Monthly Meeting's Irving Street Meetinghouse in 1948, Baltimore Yearly Meeting was holding funds that might be made available for the purchase of such property.

By letter, Barry Carr, a University of Maryland student, expressed appreciation for the Meeting's interest in his conscientious objection to compulsory R.O.T.C. training there. The Meeting felt that it should prepare a statement "which would state our stand and emphasize our protest against this matter." -- an early peace action mission.

The determined efforts of the July business meeting produced astounding results in August. At the rise of meeting for worship on the 5th, Edith Birgfeld (Tom Eckert's mother), holding a newspaper clipping high in her hand, claimed that it showed our new meetinghouse. So sure was she of this that she had already paid the realtor an option of \$500. The spirit of "Let's have a look at that Adelphi place" prompted practically everyone present to go see. We found the now-called "White House" with its spacious grounds quite adequate "as is" for First-day School, Meetings for Worship and other functions, as well as for expansion. The option that "Mrs. B." as she was familiarly called, had made would expire on the 11th. So, with haste, all of the details about financing, zoning restrictions, a property assessment by B.Y.M. to determine if the price were right, and whatever, were investigated by the deadline. Clerk Bob Broadbent then scheduled a called business meeting for that date, August 11, at 2303 Metzert Road.

Conditions for the purchase of this property were described there as follows:

- 1) An initial payment of \$2,000, including the \$500 option, was payable by August 21 and payment of the total \$30,000 within sixty days,
- 2) Washington Monthly Meeting would, by August 25, request Baltimore Yearly Meeting to relinquish \$30,000 of the funds derived from the sale of the Irving Street Meetinghouse to be applied to the purchase of this property, and 3)
- 3) Occupancy may be had at the end of sixty days.

When approval was given to accept the sales contract, the following six persons were appointed to sign it and to serve as interim trustees: Joseph Wetherald, Edith Birgfeld, Bob Carter, Paul Koenig, Roger Wetherald, and Bob Mitchell.

The regular business meeting for Eighth Month occurred on the following day and Friends were reminded that an official name for the new meeting must be given in order to be incorporated and to acquire property. Also charter membership, a plan of establishment, the naming of committees to function under the new meeting, and other organizational matters must be considered for presentation at next month's meeting, besides a history of the College Park Meeting being prepared.

September is the month for celebrating Adelphi's birth. On Sunday the 9th, 1956, College Park Monthly Meeting and Washington Monthly Meeting met together at St. Andrew's Parish Hall in College Park for the occasion of the official establishment of College Park Monthly Meeting. Clerk Robert Broadbent welcomed visitors from Quarterly Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting and elsewhere. After presentations of the minutes of the previous meetings of both meetings, Clerk Jessie Tichenor read the concluding minute of those for her meeting. "The Washington Monthly Meeting expresses its happiness in joining College Park Meeting and in being a part of this growing group." Joseph Wetherald, treasurer of both Meetings, reported for Washington Monthly Meeting that all receipts and savings had been distributed and

their accounts closed. He reported, for College Park, a balance on hand of \$476.

The most significant business was confirmation of birth by virtue of a response by Quarterly Meeting to our application for establishment. In this regard, Joan Oehser read a communication asking for the appointed committee consisting of Joan Oehser, Sina Stanton, Anne Houghton, Mary E. Pidgeon, Daniel Houghton, Harriet Sutton, and Benjamin Branch to meet with the two Meetings on Sunday, September 9, 1956, for the official establishment and merger of the two Meetings. Since certain matters such as incorporation and a selected name needed prompt attention, a meeting was called for Saturday, September 15 at the home of Paul and Alice Koenig around 5:00 o'clock with picnic supper preceding. Many of the important matters were cared for and the name of Adelphi Friends Meeting was eagerly accepted. With the connotation of brotherhood it would appropriately reflect the nature of the community we were interested in developing just as William Penn selected Philadelphia for his.

At this meeting, too, Jeanne Newman announced that she would be unable to serve as our Secretary beyond October 31st. She presented a long list of her activities and approaches so that members of the new committees would be helped to assume responsibilities that were hers.
So, we're off!

On October 14, Adelphi Monthly Meeting convened for business for the last time at St. Andrews Parish Hall in College Park after the usual fellowship dinner. Our new Meeting welcomed the following people as charter members:

Paul and Alice Koenig and children Gretchen and Susan, by transfer from Moorestown (New Jersey) Meeting,

Robert Mitchell, by transfer from Friends Meeting of Washington (Florida Avenue),

Edward and Bonnie Snyder and children Edith and William, by transfer from Wilton (Connecticut) Meeting, and

Brownie and Jeanne Newman and children Kathy and Ann, by a sojourning minute from Homewood Meeting (Baltimore).

As a trustee, Paul Koenig presented the bylaws drawn up for the purpose of incorporation. They were patterned after those of Florida Avenue Meeting, kindly provided for our use. Very few changes to our already established structure were needed to conform to the new bylaws. The College Park Meeting Trustees were accepted as Trustees for Adelphi as were the standing committees. In addition Jocelyn Jones was added to the Ministry and Council Committee, Florence Wetherald and Robert Mitchell were asked to serve on the Advisory Board of International Student House in Washington, and Jean Evans (now Eaton) was appointed to the Homewood Yearly Meeting Christian Education Committee. The Nominating Committee recommended that each committee arrange to stagger the terms of office of its own members to assure a continuity of experienced members. The Peace Committee announced a role for the Meeting to play in the annual United Nations Day festivities in College Park on October 21.

Virginia Laughlin was arranging for a reception for some of the celebrants at our St. Andrews home where a film was to be shown and tea served. Ina Hicks and other women offered to help. That day would be an important one to the Meeting as well since we were expecting to have the first Sunday School classes and Meeting for Worship in our own Meetinghouse on the 21st.

(To be continued...)

Unfortunately, Bob Mitchel died before the next installments were published. I believe I have his notes, if not a rough draft of that manuscript. There are also other histories written by Alice Crew Baker and Sally Wetherald, but these are not digitized yet!