

## **History of Adelphi Friends Meeting**

*By Alice Crew Baker*

*This history was written by Alice Crew Baker for the Meeting's newsletter during the tenth anniversary (1966) of the establishment of Adelphi Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Adelphi, Maryland.*

It is generally recognized that the roots of Adelphi Meeting grew from Irving Street Meeting (Washington, D.C.), so it is appropriate to start our history from this point. So far as I have been able to learn, the Irving Street Meeting house was built about 1900. Our Joseph Wetherald, who married Sallie Raiford in 1915 at the Corinth Monthly Meeting in Virginia, had only the Yearly Meeting to bring them up to Washington and they and their six children attended the Irving Street Meeting.

This was a pastoral meeting with Murray Kenworthy as their first pastor. Financially they were a poor meeting and later on, Kenworthy had to leave for a better job. For several years thereafter they were a plain Friends meeting with visiting speakers, often the Clarks.

Herbert Hoover was a member, and when the meeting was attended by the President-elect in 1927, many people were eager to attend, and contributions were more than adequate to run the meeting that had struggled to hold its own. Because of the Quaker President, the Florida Avenue Meetinghouse was built for the president and all of those surrounding him, as well as the larger congregation. It was more necessary than ever now to have a pastoral meeting since the president of the United States attended. When it was asked if anyone had a new minister to suggest, Hoover said he would like to suggest Augustus Murray. So Augustus Murray was the pastor, then.

The Florida Avenue Meetinghouse was finished about 1930. If we think we had our troubles in building this little meetinghouse, think what those people were up against! Some members stayed at Irving Street, though most of them went to Florida Avenue. A few members, like Sina Stanton, belonged to both. Both Meetings held Monthly Meeting at Florida Avenue at one time. Some years later Irving Street had a chance to sell its meetinghouse and did so in 1947. They deposited the money with the Baltimore Yearly Meeting, thinking to use it in some distant meeting somewhere.

About 1953 there started in College Park a very small meeting, a mere handful, which met in a classroom at the University of Maryland. Later this group used the little brick Parish Hall of the Episcopal Church of College park. Before it had been the Parish Hall, it had been the village church, and before that it had been a barn. Elderly folk can recall that even before that it had been a tobacco shed. Under the eaves were holes in the brick wall to keep up a circulation of air. A discussion arose, "Could we afford to buy it for our Meetinghouse?" But it needed much repair, and also the Women's Club was considering buying the building. We could hardly afford the repairs and we did not want to oppose the Women's club. Just at that time the county commissioners said it was unsafe and must have the walls buttresses. It is now beautiful under the care of the women folk!

It was then 1956. Herbert Hadley, Jessie Tichenor and Edith Birgfeld had made a survey of Quaker folk in the suburban area, and had decided the center was Riggs and Adelphi Roads. One Saturday night, Mrs. Birgfeld was reading the advertisements of houses for sale in the evening paper. Looking at the small picture of a house, she cried out, "There! There is the house for our meeting!" Mr. Birgfeld thought it was foolish to get so enthusiastic about a very small picture. However, like all good husbands, he stuck by her and both make the trip to look at it. She looked at the house and the more she looked, the more it appealed to her. It even appealed to Mr. Birgfeld. A result was that she gave the attendant salesman \$500 from her own pocket for a limited option and he telegraphed the owners. The cost was \$30,000 and her offer was accepted tentatively. That week they had a called meeting and a number of people went out to see the house. After considerable discussion and long, quiet sitting together, it was decided that the members had a consensus in favor of the purchase.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting (Homewood) required an appraisal. Mr. Beers made this appraisal at a special charge, but he wanted no information ahead of time. Alone he worked on it and alone sent in his appraisal: \$30,000 exactly!

Edith Birgfeld, Bob Mitchell, Bob Carter, and Paul Koenig went over to Baltimore to see Thomas W. Y. Clark, Treasurer of Baltimore yearly Meeting and were met by Jeanne Newman. Baltimore Yearly Meeting had held the receipts of the Irving Street Meetinghouse to pay for a new meeting when the time should arise. Over and above the option, \$2,000 was left to be raised for down payment on the property under consideration. On September 17, 1956, at 2:00 P.m., the College Park Meeting and the Washington Monthly Meeting met in joint session. Roger Wetherald, Clerk of the Washington Meeting, presided and minutes of both meetings were read. Joseph Wetherald remarked that the Washington Meeting brought neither assets nor liabilities to the merger of the two meetings. Jessie Tichenor, Recording Clerk, read the final minute of the Washington meeting:

"Feeling deeply that God has brought us on our way, Washington Monthly Meeting of Friends joyfully concludes its records under that name, to launch upon the wider fellowship and larger opportunities for Christian service that are open to us, and we merge with the College Park Meeting to form the new united meeting."

Joseph Wetherald then stated that the grant of \$30,000 for the purchase of the property at 2303 Metzert Road had been made by the Baltimore Yearly Meeting. Sina Stanton, Recording Clerk of Potomac Quarterly meeting spoke a few words of encouragement to the new meeting. The new group decided to name themselves "The Adelphi Meeting of Friends". It is perhaps, more appropriately named than they had thought, for two brother millers names Schofield, in 1797 had so named their mill which is on Branch Creek about a mile away, and they used the Greek word for "brother": adelphai.

This then is a quick resume of the birth and naming of the new meeting. Jeanne Newman of Baltimore was our Secretary for that first difficult year, and a very good one. Many interesting and vital things have happened in the almost ten years since then. We have had the pleasure of several weddings and little children born. We have known the sorrow of the death of Dean Wickes who was on the building committee for this home, of Vena Hall and Sina Stanton. We have known struggles and even our Quaker attitudes have not always held up.

We had always the feeling that the new home was not quite large enough. Even the fire marshal, Mr. Woltz, told us in no uncertain terms that we would have to enlarge our quarters. We enlarged the meeting room by including in it what once was a back porch. Work was done entirely by members, and helped some but only temporarily. We soon initiated a program to raise money for a new building. George and Emily Walton were guest speakers at the opening banquet. George Walton said, "It is better to start small. You plan more carefully." The first effort was raising asparagus plants in the yard, the money from each bunch sold to go into the fund. The asparagus did not do at all well, but at least it was the first of many experiments in fundraising. By strawberry festivals, suppers, etc. we added to the fund little by little. Donations were given in the names of deceased loved ones. Some stock was given, also a car. Meetings were frequent and long in planning this meetinghouse, but we finally chose an architect and a builder, both of whom pointed out to us our mistakes in time! Paul Koenig helped considerably, giving of his knowledge of wood and other building materials, and Dean Wickes would wait until everyone else had spoken, then add a pertinent suggestion.

And so, with gleanings from us all, we present to you this house for the meeting. The old wooden benches for the meeting were the gift, through Alice Koenig and her mother, of Moorestown Meeting in New Jersey. They were custom made, and date from about 1897. There is a hand-made walnut table, too, a gift from Vena Hall's granddaughter, who wanted it used in her memory. She also left a set of sterling silver. Vena Hall always saved as much of her money as possible for the meetinghouse, "where all these little children will find God."

So, another meetinghouse is finished, where we meet one another socially, where we meet for service, where we meet to worship our god, and where, each in his own way, meets God, alone.

