

*A Century of Love
and Learning*



Media Friends School
1876 — 1976

“All life should be education; all education should have religious significance . . .”

Faith and Practice

A CENTURY OF LOVE AND LEARNING . . .
MEDIA FRIENDS SCHOOL – 1876-1976

Prepared by

VINCENT PINTO

MFS teacher 1974-75

Research and Basic copy

and

FREDERICK W. ECHELMEYER

Editor

(Also Design and Illustrations)

Front Cover

Photograph by David Camp.

Published by the Joint Centennial Committee of Media Friends School and Media Monthly Meeting,
Religious Society of Friends, September, 1976

CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

David C. Elkinton, Chairman

Virginia W. Heck

Dorothy Biddle James

L. Eldon Lindley, Jr.

H. Mather Lippincott, Jr.

Mark Wayne Bailey, Principal

INTRODUCTION

The history of Media Friends School for the past 100 years has been and continues to be written in the lives and achievements of its students and teachers primarily, and in those members of the various school committees and Meetings which have nurtured it through 10 decades.

What is offered in this modest volume is a digest of minutes, reports and recollections of the events which took place in the school since Anna Yarnall first faced 12 students in a room over a livery stable in 1876.

The basic research and copy for the material in the first six chapters was prepared in the summer of 1975 by Vincent Pinto, who taught at the school for the 1974-75 term.

This past Spring the Joint Centennial Committee asked the undersigned to complete and prepare the material for publication. The task was accepted with the assurance that many Friends were anxious and willing to assist where needed. This assistance has been abundant.

Special appreciation goes to the members of the Centennial Committee: Mark Wayne Bailey, David C. (and Marian D.) Elkinton, Virginia W. Heck, Dorothy Biddle James, L. Eldon Lindley, Jr., and H. Mather Lippincott, Jr.

Others who shared either reminiscences, photographs or advice were: Murry Engle, Louise Lindley Wells, Ruth Harvey Mavronikolas, Cyril Harvey, J. Robert James, Walter Kahoe, Lucie Logan Stephens, Margaret Palmer Read, Charles E. Pusey, Sr., Mary James Hetzel, the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Adams, Joan Adams Mondale, Bettie Smedley, Thelma McKnight, Veronica Barbato, and Esther Darlington Rosenberg. Dr. Theodore B. Hetzel, F. W. (Rick) Echelmeyer, Jr., and David Camp provided special photographic assistance.

Finally, I wish to express my appreciation for the editorial assistance of Sarah Cope Swan, who brought her love for Media Friends and her skills to the task of getting this volume ready for publication.

Jane James was invaluable, always available when facts or contacts had to be obtained, and Janet Baker took time from a demanding business commitment to read proof.

Readers should know that the use of maiden and married names, carried to a point not usual in published material, was done to simplify identification.

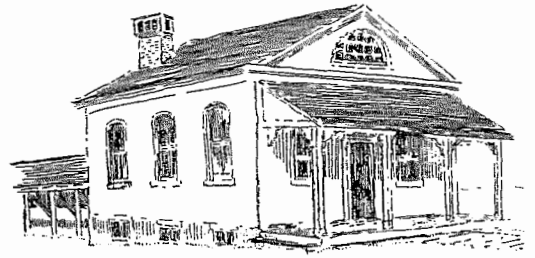
Quotations from *Faith and Practice* were taken from the book adopted in 1955 and revised in 1961 by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends.

Frederick W. Echelmeyer
August 18, 1976



TEACHER RUTH HARVEY often took her pupils to Glen Providence Park in Media, to study nature in action. This photograph was taken in 1945.

CHAPTER I



AT FIRST THERE WERE TWELVE

"It is gratifying to us also, to state that we have recently received a letter from the mother of a former pupil not a member, expressing her thanks and sincere appreciation to Friends for kindly educating her child."

From the Annual Report of the
School Committee, 1885-1886

A dozen children trod the path along Washington Street in 1876 on their way to a brand new school. They entered a freshly decorated room above a local livery stable, where they were greeted by their teacher, Anna Yarnall. The first day in the life of the Media Friends School had begun.

The need for a school among Friends in Media had been felt for some time, a school that would foster the kinds of objectives Friends had for the life and growth of their children—objectives which could not be obtained in satisfactory measure from public schools.

The business of starting a school one hundred years ago was simple: the room was rented, students came forward, a teacher took charge. Washington Street is now called Baltimore Avenue or Pike, and the building which housed the first class stood on the north side of the pike a hundred feet or more west of Orange Street. Most recently the building was occupied by the Trimm Glass Company, but fire in 1975 destroyed its interior, and subsequently the building was demolished and the space is now a parking lot.

Recognition of the new school by Chester Monthly Meeting followed soon when a delegation made a visit and submitted a report, a model of simplicity, which read: "The school held at this place was visited at this time, & found in good condition."

Media was the newest of a number of tiny one-room Friends schools which operated within the purview of the Monthly Meeting, and which received encouragement even though they were operated privately.

The school continued to prosper and in a few years support for it became firmly rooted. In 1881 Friends of the Media Meeting on Third Street examined the school's progress closely, then, officially, decided to take on its care financially, and thus guarantee it a permanent future. It was to be a school "for the accommodation of Friends' children and others who were willing to comply with our rules . . ."

Springfield Preparative, Chester Monthly and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings donated small sums of money. Enrollment hovered around 20, and to accommodate pupils and teacher, a house on the north side of Fourth Street directly behind the Meeting House was rented for \$75. Harriet Smedley was employed for \$280 for the year. Tuition was \$21.

There were six rules for Friends schools authorized by Chester Monthly Meeting which the Media Preparative Meeting adopted for its own: (1) attendance at mid-week Meeting for teachers and pupils; (2) memorization of a portion of the Bible each week; (3) the teacher was to read a portion of the Bible each day; (4) the months and days, because they were named after false gods, should, instead, be called by their numerical order, and (5) "As the practice of using the word 'you' to a single person originated from the servility and pride of man in the Roman Commonwealth, and is not according to plain Scripture language: the Scholars who are members will be expected to use the words 'thou' or 'thee' when addressing one person only."

The last or sixth rule had to do with tuition allowances in the event of long absences.

Public notice of the school appeared in Media Borough newspapers as a social item: "Friends Select School in this Borough for Boys and Girls will be opened for the Fall Term on Second Day, Ninth Month, 5th Proximo, under the care of Harriet J. Smedley as Teacher."

School opened that year in the rented house with 14 scholars on the roll, nine of whom were Friends' children. Books were provided each student for a cost of 10, 25 or 40 cents, depending upon grade level. A Visiting Committee composed of four or five of the Meeting's School Committee made regular inspections of the classroom and were in charge of day-to-day details of operation.

Anne Palmer (Thorp), who succeeded Harriet Smedley for one year, returned 63 years later when her daughter Ruth Thorp Harvey was Principal, and reminisced at a meeting of the Parent-Teachers Association about her experiences as a young teacher. She described how the older boys in the school, then on Fourth Street, were sent over the hill to the north to fetch water from the spring.

When, in 1881, the Meeting decided to sponsor the school, it was decided that a permanent home should be erected. Early in 1882 a building fund was established and pledges were received from interested Friends of Media and surrounding Meetings. By the summer of 1885 sufficient money was at hand.

The Meeting gave the School Committee permission to erect a building suitable for approximately 30 students on the east side of its property and in line with the Meeting House. A one-story brick building was started.

It was completed by a contractor from Philadelphia for the grand total of \$2,268. The present east half of the Meeting House had been built in 1875, a year before the little school was started. In 1885 the west half of the Meeting House was completed, partly to accommodate the large and growing attendance at Quarterly Meeting. Thus the cost of the new school house was an added financial burden for the burgeoning Meeting.

By now enrollment had increased to 25 under the care of Teacher Susan S. Forsythe, and when the new school house was occupied by the first class in the Fall of 1886, it accommodated the children comfortably.

Once the important business of launching the school had been accomplished, there followed a period of quiet stability. In these early days the school consisted of a single, ungraded class, although each stu-

dent worked at his or her level of ability. When parents and teacher felt a particular student was prepared sufficiently, the child was usually transferred to another school for advanced instruction.

The teachers of some of these early graduates were Anne Palmer (Thorp), Mary S. Allen, Carrie E. Haviland and Edith Cheyney. It was under their careful guidance the school put down its first roots. In 1897 a second teacher, on a part-time basis, was added to the staff in the person of Bessie Yarnall (Barton), who gave instruction in drawing and German.

Thirteen students were on the roll of Teacher Rachel C. Wickersham when the Nineteenth Century ended. The continuing success and prosperity of the school was due in no small measure to the loving care provided by the School Committee and its careful attention to the needs of the teacher and her students.

Reading the records of the Committee's meetings during these years, one gets the impression that the school was seen as a continuing form of worship and a useful and unobtrusive way of serving the community of Media.

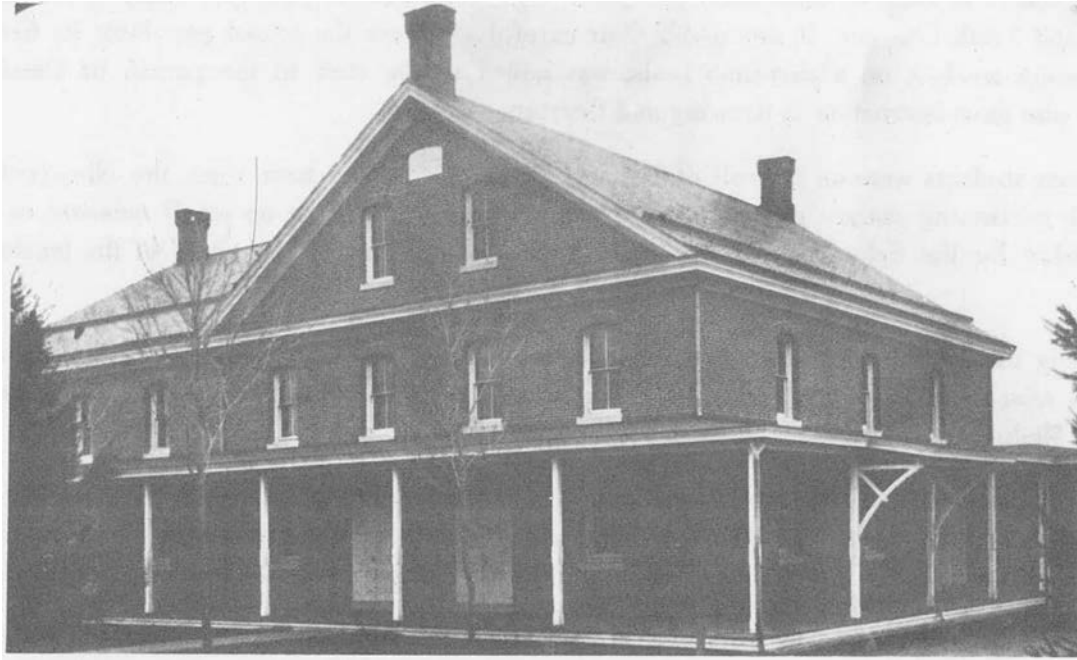
And the doors of the school were open not only to those residing in Media. In 1904 Russian immigrants from a sect known as the Doukhobors came to Canada in large numbers. The Doukhobors were pacifists persecuted by the Czar because of their refusal to bear arms in the Imperial Service.

Friends of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting assisted the Doukhobors in getting settled in their new prairie home in Saskatchewan. To help them with the education of their children, Joseph Elkinton, a Media Friend, returned from one of his visits to Canada, bringing with him five Doukhobor children and one couple to live with Media families while their children attended Media Friends School for the year 1904-05. They were made welcome even though the added burden upon the teacher made it necessary to discontinue some special instruction the regular students received in handicrafts.

In 1905 an assistant teacher was hired to meet the needs of an enrollment of 22, and, for the first time a division by grade level was recognized officially. There was a Primary Group consisting of two years of study and a Secondary Group providing three years of study. Tuition for these groups or levels ranged between \$25 and \$45 a year. The school day was a little shorter than at present.

Many graduates of Media Friends School continued their studies at either Westtown or Friends Select School in Philadelphia. Indeed, Media Friends was a "feeder" educational institution for the two schools in those days. In 1905, the enrollment plunged suddenly to 14, and although that year the classroom work was more elementary than usual, Teacher Alice Brantingham carried on, even managing to institute a limited gymnastics program on a total school budget of \$600.

Even under these circumstances, Media Friends School recognized that there were other schools in greater need, and the institution lent a helping hand by sending surplus textbooks to schools in West Virginia and North Carolina.



THE MEETING HOUSE of Media Friends as it looked in 1889. The main building was erected in 1875, and the west end was added in 1885 to accommodate the large and still growing Quarterly Meeting.



MEDIA FRIENDS SCHOOL'S first permanent home, completed in 1886. This was the school's third location since it was founded. First, the room over Pierson's Livery Stable on Baltimore Pike west of Orange Street, and, second, the rented house on the north side of Fourth Street directly behind the Meeting House. This photograph also was taken in 1889.

CHAPTER II

KINDERGARTEN BEGINS



“Do your children receive the loving care of the Meeting and are they brought under such influences as tend to develop their religious life?”

Faith and Practice

The innovation of the kindergarten was being introduced to American education in the early part of the Twentieth Century, and the School Committee noted, in 1908, that such training “has grown in favor with many parents. The time seems to have come to start one in connection with our school, and having the services of a very competent teacher at our command, it was after careful consideration of the matter, concluded to make a beginning.”

While this meant that enrollment could be restored to its former level, it also meant a rather costly addition had to be built at the rear of the school house. A room was added, nevertheless, with the basement available as a play area for the children during stormy weather.

The first kindergarten classes had already been added in the Fall of 1907 for five children in the charge of Anna Kite, who was assisted by Anna Venable. They used the cloakroom of the Meeting House until the new room was available a few months later.

Regular classes in drawing were restored as the school began to grow again, and in 1909 the staff consisted of two full-time teachers and two part-time assistants. It is doubtful that the Overseers in those days ever imagined that the students would come to occupy every corner of the school, the Meeting House and the grounds. If they had, they might smile at their 1909 decision to exclude gym classes from the Meeting House porch.

The decision to begin a kindergarten proved to be premature, for in 1909 the school found itself with a teacher and only one pupil. Despite the time, effort and money spent on the innovation, the class had to be closed, and it did not resume until 1915.

The school’s attendance at mid-week Meeting for Worship was a school practice from the beginning. The children sat with their teacher on the women’s side of the meeting. This seating arrangement became unsatisfactory, so in order to give the teacher more control over the wigglers, they were switched to the men’s side of the Meeting in 1909.

We can presume the stern faces of the gentlemen on the facing benches had the desired effect. Until the 1957 renovation of the Meeting House, there were raised “ministers’ galleries” or benches at the north end of the Meeting room, so that to those sitting in the rest of the benches, these became known as

“facing benches.” The “hollow square” arrangement of benches, however, such as is in use today, is preferred by many Meetings as being more democratic and perhaps helps to encourage speaking from any section of the Meeting for Worship.

Those early teachers were no doubt “Janes-of-all-trades”, being responsible not only for “the Three R’s” but also for the innumerable little “fix-it” chores of a one-room school. Teacher also took on the duty of preparing a hot lunch every day when the Committee decided to provide this service to the students at its own expense.

Actually, it was Teacher Ethel T. Raiford herself who suggested the idea.

She was gratified to report later that the clean-up crew performed its job without complaint even though it curtailed its recess time. Modern times had arrived, however, and her responsibilities were eased somewhat when hot water and a telephone were made available for the first time in 1911.

Scholarships were awarded for the first time at Media Friends in 1912 when, through the generosity of the Wyatt Wistar Brown Fund, two boys were able to attend. It was in this year also that Addison Hutton Biddle, a child whose happy disposition and earnest manner endeared him to both teacher and pupils, died during the school term. A scholarship fund in his name was given to the school by his parents, James G. and Mary Hutton Biddle.

As far as can be determined, there was no scholarship money available for girls at this time. The Committee recognized this deficiency and there was a proposal to raise \$2,000, the interest from which would be set aside as tuition for girls. A special committee was appointed to study the matter, but no action was taken, probably because of the financial difficulty involved.

The problem of keeping the school afloat financially was always a major concern, and this became all the more critical inasmuch as there were now a number of good private schools in the area.

The Annual Report for 1911 requested Friends to think on this problem.

“If we as a Meeting,” it stated, “believe that our little school has a place and is worth keeping up, we must recognize the facts that confront us and try to meet them squarely. In these days of high educational standards, people will not send their children to an inferior school if a better one is within reach, and if we wish to make our influence felt in what we consider the most important directions, we must consider the reasonable requirements of those who have children to educate.”

There is no doubt that Media Friends and Friends schools in general were moving to meet these needs. The following year Media Friends played host to the annual meeting of the Friends Educational Association, which brought 300 persons active in the field of education to the school to discuss current problems, and to hear Teacher Ethel Whitson’s report which summarized the year’s school work.

It was at this time also that the School Committee revived the practice of paying regular visits to the school house in order to keep in closer touch with its day-to-day needs.

Finances continued to be shaky and a reduction in enrollment made it necessary for one of the two teachers to leave. Finally, in 1914 the burden of the school became too great for Media Preparative Meet-

ing to carry alone, and Chester Monthly Meeting (of which Media was then a part) agreed to take it up through its educational committee.

Even so there continued to be discussion about whether the “time had come for laying down the school,” after almost two generations of steady and rewarding operation.

The school continued, nevertheless, and soon its future became brighter. The kindergarten, closed for five years, reopened in 1915 with eight pre-school children under the care of Lucie Logan (Stephens), a teacher who had been trained at the Kindergarten School of Columbia University and already had three years’ experience.

She had a three-part plan for the year’s study. “The basic thought for the first is the interaction between man, nature and God. In the second period the interdependence of man is dwelt upon as they study and observe the various trades. Thirdly, with the Spring the study of nature predominates.”

Special teachers paid regular visits to the school, usually provided for by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. One taught drawing, another “voice culture.” The object of the latter was to train children in reading aloud, which was thought to be an art much neglected. Spelling, on the other hand, was not neglected, and a teacher’s report for 1916 made special mention of “little Dorothy Blair” who had 21 perfect spelling lessons.

Enrollment soon increased; in fact, so much so that open-air classes were held on the porch of the Meeting House. And with the larger school came an increase in creative, happy activity: the kindergarten built a complete model doll house from a packing crate, and open-air excursions with lunch cooked out in the woods were frequent. A project in poultry raising turned out very well and aroused the protective, nature-loving instincts of the children.

At this time the teaching staff included Elizabeth Whitacre, Anne W. Elkinton (James), Lucie Logan (Stephens) and J. Ruth Kellum. All of these classes were held in the school building when it had only two rooms, both of which were taxed to capacity. Some classes, therefore, were held in the rear of the Meeting House during 1917.



ONE OF THE EARLIEST OF CLASS PICTURES, taken in 1898, includes the following, starting on the back row, left to right: Edgar Walters, Alfred South, Herbert Barker, Evelyn Webster, Teacher Edith Cheney, Rest Cope, J. Passmore Elkinton, James G. Vail, Teacher Bessie Yarnall and Walter Palmer. Front row: Lewis Palmer, (standing), Walter Vail, England Webster, Willard Barker, Anne Walton (Pennell), Deborah S. Allen, Lillian Schofield (Blaine), Mary Cope Elkinton, Edith A. Hoopes, Howard W. Elkinton.



AN ADDITION to house the kindergarten was built on the rear of Media Friends School in 1907, complete with its own side entrance. This photograph is an enlargement of a small one provided by the late Sarah Little Yarnall.

CHAPTER III

WORLD WAR I INVOLVES THE SCHOOL



“We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole world.”

*From the “Declaration” presented
to Charles II in 1660 by the “Harmless
and Innocent People of God, called Quakers.”*

The little school known as Media Friends tucked under the trees in a quiet part of Media was not immune to the storms of the world. The war raging in Europe, although thousands of miles away on another continent, still touched the lives of the school’s students, teachers and parents.

During the Christmas season of 1917 the children prepared bundles of food and clothing for the children of the refugees. Shortages of fuel made themselves felt. There were times during the winter of 1917-18 when only a few days’ supply of coal was on hand for the furnace. Sometimes wood had to be substituted for the scarce coal. When it got too cold in the school house, classes were moved next door to the Meeting.

By now there were six grades being taught, and though each class was small, prospects for future growth looked good. The School Committee was confident enough to proceed with another addition to the school building—the second enlargement—which was completed in 1919. This added two rooms to the front of the structure and brought it to about twice the size of the original building.

The Friends in care of the school felt well satisfied and took time to note in their minutes that “We feel that the school is a living expression of a Quaker ideal of simplicity and high thinking which is an unobtrusive but potent influence for good in our community.”

At the close of World War I an era was coming to an end in the country, and so too was an era coming to a close at Media Friends. The memories of a quiet, one-room, ungraded school of pre-war years was certain to fade. The future was to bring a steady growth in size, a constant battle with the limitations of space, and a diversification and enrichment of the educational program.

The school coped the best it could with the wear and tear of many new feet: floors had to be sanded and varnished again, blackboards resurfaced, new playground equipment had to replace the old. It was a never-ending process . . . just when the leaking roof was repaired the furnace needed attention.

The school community was now composed of 60 pupils in seven grades, and Principal Elizabeth Whitacre had a staff of six full-time and part-time teachers. Dramatic presentations were now a regular part

of the school year. The "Hiawatha" production in May of 1920 was unique in that it was the culmination of an entire year's concentration on Indian life by all the students—kindergarten through the seventh grade.

There was another Friends School in Media which was called "Friends Select", under the care of Providence Preparative Meeting, which was founded by Hicksite Friends in 1885. (Providence changed its name to "Providence Monthly Meeting" in 1934, and Media to "Media Monthly Meeting" in 1950.)

"Friends Select" was located at Baltimore Avenue and Gayley Street in a building now occupied by the Beth Israel Synagogue. There was some talk in 1920 of merging the two schools, but nothing came of the discussions immediately.

Two years later the Committees of both schools met in joint session at Media Friends to explore the possibility more closely. No plan of action evolved then either, but it was agreed that the teachers of the two schools would be encouraged to share lecturers, entertainments and other activities.

What the two Committees saw as the major problems or obstacles were religious instruction, attendance at Mid-Week Meetings, and the personalities and attitudes of the teachers involved. The association of the two institutions went well enough, however, that Media Friends' School Committee recommended a merger to Chester Monthly Meeting. But the Meeting felt it best to delay action, continuing to seek the right course to follow.

The first regular course in shop work, bearing the imposing name of "industrial arts", was introduced to the students in 1921 with Ruth Thorp (Harvey), a former student, as the teacher. During the 1920s an annual fair was held in Media called the "Corn Show", and the school exhibited many of its artifacts, such as clay objects, color designs, drawings, items built in the school shop, and, one year, essays having to do with the world-wide Disarmament Conference being held after the "Great War" were featured.

This was one of the best ways in which the school on Third Street could acquaint the general community with its unique philosophy, fulfilling the School Committee's desire that the school be a "reaching out to share with others some Quaker aspects of truth."

With this objective firmly in mind, a Parent-Teachers Association was organized in 1924 with Inez J. Woodbury as the first chairman, and Mary B. Elkinton was her successor.

May festivals were popular in the 1930s. One year an elaborate production was given featuring folk dances of German, Swedish, Swiss and Cornish origin. Music represented the compositions of Mozart, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann and the Zuni Indians.

One child represented Mother Nature, another the Queen of May, and a boy was chosen for the Sun. The Fifth Grade girls personified the winds and the clouds. Much of this excitement was generated by the addition of a music teacher to the staff in the early 1930s, but producing plays was very difficult inasmuch as the Social Room, with its stage, had not yet been constructed. Despite this handicap, however, Spring plays were given, and one, at least, *Hansel and Gretel*, was presented at the Woman's Club on South Jackson Street in 1935.

Another innovation of the 1930s, this one suggested by the parents, was an open-air kindergarten. "Our slogan," stated a letter to parents, "is 'Health First' and to this end we have built a room (outdoors) which is flooded with sunshine in clear weather and can be heated when necessary and still be open to the fresh air. We have noticed a marked improvement in the vigor and sturdiness of several of the children." Presumably the teacher benefitted as well.

There is no doubt, however, that the most significant development of the 1930s came about as the result of the Depression as it affected Media Friends' sister school, Friends Select.

As previously noted, the possibility of a merger of the two schools had been explored in 1920, and by 1923 the School Committee of Media Friends suggested such action, but the Chester Monthly Meeting counselled delay.

An excerpt from the minutes of the Media Preparative Meeting of Chester Monthly Meeting, which was held at Third Street on March 25, 1930, notes: "Friends of Providence Meeting have decided to discontinue operation of their school . . . at the close of the present school year. Our Committee has accepted their proposal to make use of their school building (Gayley Street between Baltimore Avenue and State Street) to operate a united Friends School under the care of this meeting."

Between the March and April meetings for business, the attorneys were hard at work, and on April 28, an "agreement of lease" was approved by the Meeting "between the School Committee of Chester Monthly Meeting held at Providence Road, Media, and the School Committee of the Chester Monthly Meeting held at Third Street, Media." (There were two Chester Monthly Meetings.)

The document provided that the Gayley Street structure be leased at one dollar a year, paid in advance, plus payment of all expenses such as heat, light, utilities, upkeep, etc., for one year (starting July 1, 1930). The lease was to be continued on a year-to-year basis, subject to termination upon three months' written notice by either party.

By June plans had been perfected to operate jointly for the upcoming fiscal year using both school buildings. There is no hint of a question involving changes in educational philosophies. Undoubtedly all such problems had been settled during the 1920s, during which time the two schools had been sharing lecturers and ideas, and matters relative to religious observances, etc., had long been resolved.

That September the combined schools opened as one under the direction of Principal Eleanor Ecroyd, and the Monthly Meeting "enthusiastically supported" the School Committee's plans. There was an enrollment of 97 pupils of whom 46 were Friends, 26 of these from Third Street Meeting.

The lease was renewed at the expiration of the first year, and in June 1931, T. Barclay Whitson, chairman of the School Committee, reported that they planned to continue to use both school buildings the ensuing year, and, furthermore, an Eighth Grade would be added.

But the economic climate was still stormy. At the end of the second year of the merger, on June 27, 1932, it was noted in the School Committee's annual statement that one month's salaries were unpaid and the deficit for the school year would not be less than \$1,250. Scholarships had been used to balance the budget, based on an expected enrollment of 110 pupils. Enrollment had just reached the 100 mark.

These were the years before Dr. Salk discovered his polio vaccine and infantile paralysis was the scourge of every September school opening. The severe outbreak in 1932 forced the school to remain closed for four weeks. Salaries, furthermore, had been reduced 20 percent. The problems presented by the depressed economy and the low enrollment were met by the School Committee's deciding to house the entire school—six grades and the kindergarten—at Gayley Street for the school year of 1933-34.

The minutes of February 26, 1934, show an enrollment now of 75 students, reported by Principal Eleanor Ecroyd. She had three teachers on her staff at the time: Amy S. Way, Frances Darlington and Barbara Armstrong.

For the first time since 1886 there was no school activity around the Meeting on Third Street, all classes being held at Gayley Street. It was not a satisfactory situation, and by April 29, 1935, Media Third Street Meeting had decided to bring the entire school back to its original location.

The move could not be made immediately for the Meeting had to expand to provide for the change. It was agreed that the west side of the Meeting would be renovated, a Social Room would be located on the ground floor, and the area above would be enclosed to form a second story which could accommodate three classrooms.

These alterations indicated strong determination on the part of the Friends, for the economy had sunk to its lowest point. But faith in the school and a generally shared conviction that it must progress was evident in the generous financial support which took place.

Then, on September 28, 1935, Media Friends School opened again at Third Street after being located for the three school years of 1930 to 1933 in both buildings, and the two years of 1933 to 1935 at Gayley Street only. Helen Hall was the new principal, with an enrollment of 99 students now under one roof.

Another step forward came that year. William Dodson became the first male teacher. He instructed in shop and physical education. The next year William Brinton was engaged to teach the Fifth Grade.



THIRD STREET FRIENDS SCHOOL PUPILS of 1902-03. Back row, left to right: Thomas W. Elkinton, Frances Elkinton (Stokes), Teacher Grace Evans (Pusey), Anna Elkinton (James), Agnes Dickson. Front row, left to right: Alfred "Pat" Vail, Walter J. Evans, Anna Dickson, Pemberton Dickson, Alice Trimble (Allen), Howard W. Elkinton, Francis E. Evans.



GAYLEY STREET FRIENDS SCHOOL PUPILS of 1902-03. Top row, left to right: Margaret Hawkins, Alice C. Byers, Harriet French. Second row: Bessie Tindall, Miss Frances Darlington, Virginia Hawkins, Carlotta Broomall, Miss Caroline Buckman, Dorothy Dallett. Bottom row: Louise Wells, Robert Tindall, Charles Darlington, Charles Brinton, Henry Strong, Jean Dallett.

CHAPTER IV

CRISIS BORN OF INTEGRATION



“Friends’ belief in ‘that of God in every man’ should lead us to reverence personality in every human being regardless of race. Let us encourage all efforts to overcome racial prejudices and antagonisms, as well as economic, social and educational discrimination.”

Faith and Practice

The school met with its most serious financial crisis not from the Depression but from the admission of the first Negro student in 1937.

The decision of the School Committee in January of that year to enroll a Negro child in the Nursery School was not as revolutionary as it appeared to be in the minds of many persons. Several forces had been at work in the Meeting community during the previous years which resulted in making the decision a natural and, to the Committee, an inevitable one.

First was a study at Pendle Hill which focused on the present day implications of a Christian way of life, and which had served to challenge beyond expectation any previous thinking and experience in the matter. (Pendle Hill is a Quaker center for study and contemplation founded in 1930 in nearby Wallingford.)

The other force was the influence of Elsa Lotz, who was the first Religious Education Secretary of Arch Street Yearly Meeting. She had spent time with Friends of the Meeting, visiting their homes and sharing with them her hopes and ideas for the uniting of spiritual forces in their lives so that their children might experience something truly significant through the Quaker approach to life.

“Perhaps none of us realized fully,” wrote Dorothy James, chairman of the School Committee, “how important these two things had proved to be until a decision had to be made which put to the test these things which we had come to recognize as basic and true.”

The chairman of the School Committee received a telephone call from Thelma McKnight, the wife of Dr. Lances McKnight, a Negro physician who had moved into the Media community several years before. The McKnights wished to enroll their four-year-old son in the Nursery School. The chairman visited the McKnight family that very evening, and came away from the interview much impressed by the attitude shown by the parents.

The Executive Committee and the Advisory Committee discussed how best to proceed, and a feeling of unanimity with an increasing sense of purpose for the school grew out of that evening together.

The importance of knowing the attitude of the faculty as a whole was recognized since no one, regardless of how interested they were in admitting the child, wished to bring him into an atmosphere unready to accept him.

With the exception of two non-Friends who were giving part-time service on the staff in exchange for tuitions, everyone was in favor of accepting the application. A week was allowed to go by before the McKnights were notified of the decision in order that any misgivings on the part of anyone directly concerned might be expressed "out of conference."

A major question was whether parents should be notified first. It was decided not to, inasmuch as it was felt such a letter could be interpreted as an assumption that parents would object. The feeling was that unless the action could be handled with complete naturalness, it should not be done at all. After all, had a white child applied for admission in the middle of the year, no letter would be sent or expected.

Monday, February 15, the McKnight child came to school and was accepted into his group as naturally as though no difference of color existed.

By Thursday, however, of that same week, some parents reacted with a strong protest. A meeting was set for Sunday evening so that the Committee might explain the reasons for what had happened. In the meantime a protest meeting was called by patrons for the afternoon of the same day.

The outcome was a statement, signed by 39 parents, which was presented to the Principal, Helen Hall, with the comment, "We've had our meeting and have no intention of coming out tonight to be preached to." The statement said, in effect, that these parents would take their children out of the school if the Committee's decision was not reversed.

The remainder of that school year was a difficult one. The Meeting gave sympathetic support to the school. Clarence Pickett, Patrick Malin, Robert Yarnall, Douglas Steere and Edith Cope, all recognized leaders in the Religious Society of Friends, met with the parents of the school to seek a way through the difficulty. There was disagreement in the school's "family" over procedure. Should not the school have sought first the permission of the Monthly and Yearly Meetings? Should not the school have first sounded out parental opinion?

But the School Committee felt it had acted rightly and informed parents, by letter, that it would "proceed along the course adopted until it became clear that some other way is a better one. We have always thought," the letter continued, "that the school was a means to an end rather than an end in itself. A very real part of this end, to us, is the developing of attitudes that will help children face life in terms of ultimate values. Among these values we consider the recognition of persons on the basis of worth, regardless of race or creed, to be most important."

Enrollment dropped from 95 the previous September to 62 in September 1937, and although this was a serious loss, it was not as great as expected. And there were some areas of great encouragement. The Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Adams of Wallingford approved the school's stand to such a point that they removed two of their children from public school and enrolled them in Media Friends.

It was characteristic of the school that in the midst of its own difficulties it did not forget those in need in other places.

That Fall many packages of food and clothing were collected, wrapped and sent to the refugees of the Spanish Civil War. The staff turned its attention back to academics and the subject of study that winter was the value of the kinesthetic method of teaching mathematics, a means whereby the muscles of the hand reinforce memory and visual observation by having children actually make and touch such things as peck and bushel measures, areas and perimeters.

During that same year the First Grade established a "Post Office." Letters from all the classes were mailed there each day, and delivered by a little postman, complete with cap and mailbag, about 10 o'clock each morning. Not to be outclassed, the Fifth and Sixth Grades started a bank—using play money of course.

Teachers that year also participated in an elementary science study group given at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, and all the grades from the Third on up made at least one trip to that fascinating educational institution on the Parkway. *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin's* celebrated "safety dog" named "Knee-Hi" visited the school. And to round out the year, students of the Fifth and Sixth Grades constructed a model of a coal mining camp in their classroom, and participated in a genuine radio broadcast from a real coal mine.

The financial problems caused by the 1937 loss of enrollment continued to plague the School Committee for many years. Conditions were so discouraging in 1940 that the Committee felt obliged to tell its teachers they should feel free to look for other positions.

But somehow, the doors remained open although the budget was not balanced until 1943. Principal Mary Alice Wright could not resist passing on a note to the Committee, written by a Sixth Grader, which said, in part, "I hope Media Friends lasts forever."

The Second World War touched the life of the School more deeply than the first. Quaker schools, Media included, received criticism for not displaying the flag of the United States and for not teaching the children the traditional salute.

More difficult to deal with than even the provisions required for air raid attacks and incendiary bombs was the effect of the war news on young minds. The Parent Teachers Council sought advice on this subject from Robert Yarnall, who delivered a lecture to parents to help them cope with the overstimulation.

Other trials just had to be endured, such as when the shortage of coal in 1943 brought all children together again under one roof, and the classrooms in the Meeting House were vacated for the time being. Gasoline rationing made it almost impossible for parents to continue to drive their children to class every day, and this put the school in the transportation business for the first time.

The children of the war years were just as concerned about the victims of the war as were their predecessors in 1917. They chose to help, through the American Friends Service Committee, the children of Japanese-Americans in West Coast internment camps.

They put together small Christmas parcels and tagged each one, indicating whether the present was for a boy or a girl and at what age level it would be appreciated. Then in 1943 they had an opportunity of welcoming one of these children into their classes, the first of several such refugees to attend the school.



PLAYS AND PAGEANTS were always an exciting activity at Media Friends. This photograph, taken of the student body in 1911-12, shows many of the girls dressed as famous women. They are, back row, left to right: Dorothy Biddle (James) as Harriet Beecher Stowe; Teacher Ethel Whitson, Ruth Thorp (Harvey) as Joan of Arc, and Esther Whitson (Cope) as Elizabeth Browning. Middle row, left to right: Hildegard Jacob (Farquhar) as Queen Elizabeth; Sarah Yarnall as Elizabeth Fry; Lee Worrell, Rebecca Biddle (Alexander) as Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean; Jack Starbuck, Florence Magilton as Florence Nightingale; Raymond Kessler, Albin Thorp, Mary E. Evans (Thorp). Front row, left to right: Anne Longstreth, Dorothy Blair (Lacy) and Mary Frances Murray.



A PLAY ABOUT PILGRIMS in 1940 continued the tradition. (Can you name the unidentified pupils?) Left to right, sitting in chairs: Mary James (Hetzel), Ann Johns (Barney), Ruth Whitson (Stokes), boy standing, unidentified, Jane Spackman, Anna Whitson (Fisher). Sitting, left to right: Joan Adams (Mondale), Caroline Furnas (Trueblood), unidentified, Ruth Harvey (Mavronikolas), unidentified, Jane Adams (Canby), unidentified, Dickie Foulke, Roy Gillespie, unidentified.

CHAPTER V



THE “ALEXANDER WORK” PERIOD

“The technique of Mr. Alexander gives to the educator a standard of psycho-physical health—in which what we call morality is included. . . . It bears the same relation to education that education itself bears to all other human activities.”

Professor John Dewey, in his
introduction to *The Use of the Self*
by F. Matthias Alexander

Toward the end of the war a new educational technique was discovered or developed by F. M. Alexander, a Tasmanian living in England, and it was tried at the Media Friends School. It came about through a meeting of Esther Duke, a member of the School Committee, and A. R. Alexander, brother of the proponent of the new theory.

After one lesson with him she felt he had something she must know more about. It seemed to her to be a tool which would aid in the development of the Quaker idea of the “abundant life”; something which would help a child master his own self through conscious control.

F. M. Alexander said that there was a relationship of the neck, head and back which conditions the manner of response to all activity—how we walk, stand, sit, sleep, take criticism. This is known as “primary control.” If the direction of the primary control is right, nature can function normally.

Animals have this control, Alexander declared, but man has lost the art of employing it through wrong habits which civilization has forced upon him. By learning to regain control, the hoped-for result would be more adequate functioning, release of tension, and an ability to meet life in a normal natural way.

Not all of the Media Friends School community agreed on the usefulness of Alexander’s ideas.

Some were skeptical; some adopted a wait-and-see attitude. These methods, nevertheless, were employed at the school, sometimes with special classes, sometimes with individual grades and sometimes with the entire school.

Some members of the staff felt so strongly about the technique that they left to form their own school, which followed the Alexander philosophy completely, an institution which became known as the “Alexander Foundation School.”

The technique enjoyed a wide popularity after World War II among some educators. Today there are several training schools devoted entirely to the Alexander Work idea.

The question of admitting Black students to the school, this time in the grades, presented itself again in 1945, but there was a remarkable change in parental attitudes as against the situation in 1937, and there appeared to be little of the former fury. Chester Monthly Meeting was consulted beforehand and it recorded its approval, wishing the school to be "a real expression of our Quaker belief that color of skin should not be the qualification for entrance to a school." Three Blacks and three Japanese-Americans were enrolled that year.

The post-war population boom was felt at the school very soon, and the Principal suddenly found she had 100 students to accommodate. There were other changes also, particularly in educational philosophy. Old notions of education were giving way to a more individualized process.

"In keeping with one school of thought," Ruth Thorp Harvey wrote, "we strive to avoid strain in the learning process by having each child proceed at his own rate of learning. Thus, at any given time we may find various children in the same age group doing different levels of work. By this method a child will pass from one grade to another when he has achieved that level, but no stigma is placed upon him for not being up to grade if he is doing the best that he can do."

She wrote this in 1946. It was during Teacher Ruth's time that one of the most elaborate Halloween celebrations took place. The older children took the initiative and organized the usual parade of costumes into a play with a stage setting which represented a small child's dream of All Saints Eve. Thus, through dialogue and ceremony, it was possible for everyone in the school to participate.

The Parent Teachers Council (which, as noted, had been founded as the PTA in 1924) got into the act by producing a play in 1949 for the school's benefit: *Mr. Pim Passes By*. Beatrice Taylor, the kindergarten teacher, organized this dramatic effort, calling on the school's parents, teachers and their spouses. In the following three years this group produced *You Can't Take It With You*, *Laburnum Grove* and *Fashion*. In other years the PTA has helped the school by putting on annual Spring Fairs for fun as well as supplementary school income. A popular fund-raising project in later years has been a theatre benefit, many of these being held at Hedgerow Theatre in Rose Valley or the Players Club of Swarthmore.

In January of 1950 Media Friends School enrollment reached an all-time high of 102 students. During this particular period the school, like all schools, was forced to accustom itself to the "Age of the Atomic Bomb" and the post-war realities of life.

Parents pressed the school administration to prepare itself for the possibilities of an atomic attack, but the faculty wanted this done in a manner that would not terrorize children, as it was reported happening in some public schools over inept handling. So Media Friends' students were told that just as fire drills are held for protection inside a building, a different kind of drill would be learned to guard against dangers from without. The faculty saw to it that the drills did not involve hiding under desks or other actions which might provoke hysteria or nightmares.

Despite this and similar situations Media Friends eased through the middle 50s in a relaxed atmosphere under Principals Dorothy Russell and Florence Paulmier. When Louise Lindley (Wells) took charge in 1957 it consisted of two classes of pre-school children (three- and four-year-olds), kindergarten, and three higher grades.

Media Friends School was the beneficiary of the tremendous growth of the suburbs during the Fifties. There were some drawbacks in this movement as well, as the Principal wrote in 1955: "we have exchanged father for a few feet of lawn." To counter this trend the school declared that Washington's Birthday would be a special "Fathers' Visiting Day" an idea that was successful enough to last for a number of years.

But more children meant more problems, particularly those of transportation and space. As referred to previously, the school began to provide transportation in the middle years of World War II because of gasoline rationing, and continued the practice afterwards as a convenience for the parents. The operation of three—sometimes four—station wagons or the big diesel Mercedes bus was always a losing proposition, mostly through the strain it placed upon the human nervous system.

Everyone was relieved when this service was taken over by the public schools in 1973.

The decade following the war years was a difficult one as Media Friends struggled to maintain its "Friendly" purpose against a background of Committee and Administration tensions which resulted in a fluctuation of first full and then low enrollments.

By 1956 a deeply concerned Media Meeting labored over the advisability of "laying down" the school. Morale had rarely been lower in the school's history and it seemed impossible to get a dedicated and qualified person to administer the educational institution.

Two developments set the school on a steady course. First, the base of support for the school was widened to include not only members of Media and Providence Meetings on the School Committee but also members from the surrounding meetings of Springfield, Swarthmore, Middletown and Chester.

Second, Louise Lindley (Wells), a member of Media Meeting and a member of the School Committee, accepted the challenge of resuscitating the close-to-expiring school.

Her goal during the eight years of her Principalship was to eliminate fads or innovations which would distract the school from providing the basic skills to children from nursery school through the Third Grade. She sought to create a quiet, orderly atmosphere in a student body which was to experience two disasters.

The first came, ironically enough, shortly after she took over in 1956 and began to look for additional space. Every possible area was being utilized, and still the students were storming the doors.

In 1935, the last expansion, three classrooms had been constructed over the west side of the Meeting. Now the only space left was over the meeting room on the east side. In 1957 a full second story with three more classrooms was provided, utilizing this area. The construction required no outward change in the appearance of the Meeting, even to the windows, for they had merely been windows high up near the original ceiling, operated from floor level by a lever and pulley.

No sooner had the school expanded than the first "disaster" caused a sharp drop in enrollment. In 1957 Rebecca Mitchell became the first Black teacher in the grade school. She was assigned the Third Grade. There was no apparent reason to expect the adverse reaction which occurred.

Problems over integration had been apparently solved by the passing of years since the McKnight incident in 1937. The school enjoyed a solid tradition of social consciousness, particularly in the civil rights area. In 1956 the Green Circle Program, a Friends' sponsored project emphasizing racial harmony among school children, had been instituted.

The crisis came unheralded. Mrs. Mitchell was hired in the late Spring to begin work in the Fall. By September, the upcoming Third Grade had evaporated. Quietly parents had withdrawn their children and registered them in other schools. It is to the credit of all those responsible for Media Friends in those days that Mrs. Mitchell was used in other teaching capacities for the entire year, and, despite sharply reduced income, the school survived and grew.

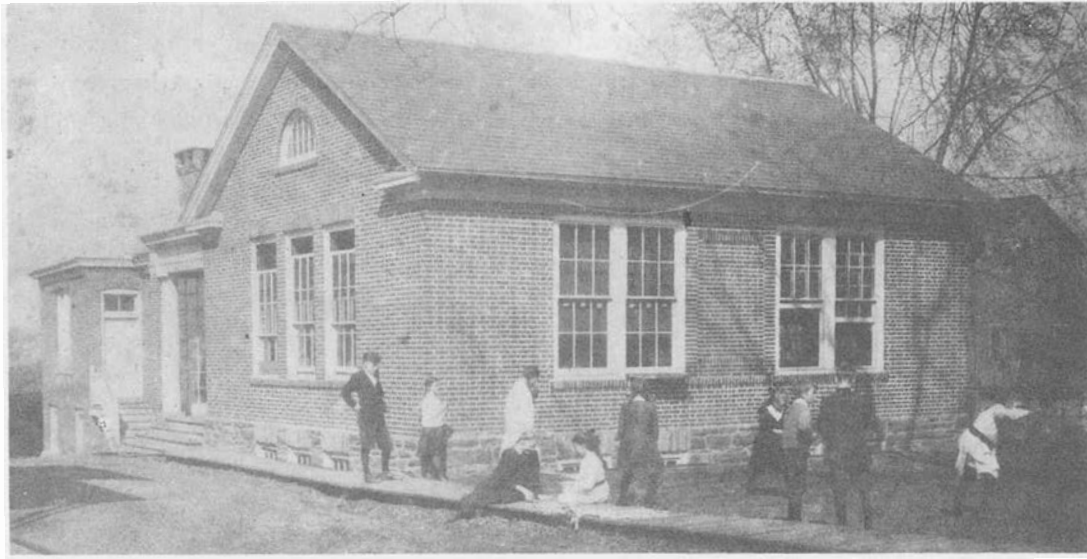
By the beginning of the next decade therefore, Media Friends had attained a sound financial condition, and began a period of multi-faceted development.

By now there were three groups of pre-schoolers in the care of Teachers Janet Donahue, Terry Paxson and Margaret McClain. Two kindergartens were in operation: one with Marian Elkinton, and the other with Joyce Keevil. Kathryn Heulings, a 10-year-veteran teacher at Media Friends, taught First Grade; Laura Hoover taught the combined Second and Third Grades with the assistance of a new teacher, Murry Engle, a member of Providence Meeting.

The pre-schoolers had their own little fenced-in play yard complete with sandbox, slide and jungle gym . . . everything a three-year-old could desire.

This was the year also when the entire student body participated in the American Friends Service Committee's Algerian relief project by creating a "coin tree" at Christmas time.

The second "disaster" was still several years away.



TWO LARGE ROOMS were constructed on the front of the school building in 1919, completely changing its appearance. Playing "Red Light," left to right are: Walter Wilson, Susan Carter, Ruth Holcomb, Deborah Harvey (Lebo), Sarah Cope (Swan), Layton Ford, Cyrus Harvey, Eleanor Pusey (Copp) and Katherine Wetherill. Playing "Jacks," left to right: Frances Cope Kimber, and Caroline Wilson.



STUDENTS AND TEACHERS of Media Friends in 1924 in front of the Meeting House. Back row, left to right: M. Elizabeth Whitacre, Principal; Teacher Amy Way, John Walton, Teacher Hazel DeLong, Ruth Sykes, Teacher Margaret Flounders, Ruth Barker, Ruth Balderson, Teacher Florence Willett. Second row, left to right: David Elkinton, Charles Outland, Charles Stratton, George Trimble, John Stratton, Benjamin Vail, Edith Barker, Margaret Balderston, Ethel Coppock, Rebecca Elkinton, Walter Balderston, Betty Pennell, Vivian Parlette. Third row, left to right: Morton Stratton, (Note old Media Jail over his shoulder) Margaret Perrin, Clifford Woodbury, Virginia Tomlinson, W. Robinson Johns, Gilpin Johns, George Allen, Thomas Barker, Howard Curtis, Marjorie Murr, Harold Barker, Betty Balderston. The identity of the students of the front two rows was not known at the time this went to press except for the following: Richard Walton, then Charles Walton and Mabel Coppock, third and fourth) and down front, fifth and sixth from the left, Donald Walton and Laddie Mills.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST EVALUATION



“ . . . there is an urgent need in this world for styles of education which will raise up peace-makers, inventors of new futures, and persons confident of their own humanity—not competitors, consumers, and diminished selves.”

Parker J. Palmer
Dean of Studies, Pendle Hill, 1976

In 1962 a great amount of anxious preparation went into the first evaluation of Media Friends School by the Pennsylvania Association of Private Academic Schools (PAPAS).

The team of educators which visited the school required, among other things, a detailed statement of the school's philosophy. That which was formulated could have served adequately for any period of the institution's history.

As described by Principal Louise Lindley (Wells), it was the faculty's objective to make it a school where academic learning could flourish because of a relaxed, happy atmosphere.

Straining competition at the three- to nine-year-old level was to be minimized; arousing young minds to find satisfaction in problem-solving was seen to be challenge enough.

Children learn at different rates, and this was recognized in the curriculum. The role of the teacher in the classroom was to be that of a guide to whom the children are to look with respect and friendliness, with the understanding that the teacher would be the final judge of what was best for the child and the group. Finally, and not the least important, social, emotional and intellectual growth are made more meaningful by the spiritual growth of love and wonder. By helping the student to see the community that comes from each person's dependence on the other, an important step would be taken in awakening to the meaning of love of God and the student's part as a channel for that love in the world.

The PAPAS team spent two days visiting classrooms, talking to teachers, inspecting equipment and generally gathering information. The final report, delivered a few months later, recommended accreditation with commendation.

That good news was just in time to bolster morale in the face of perhaps the most serious crisis a school can suffer, fire—the second disaster! In July of 1963 flames swept through and destroyed a large section of the Meeting House. Fortunately school was in summer recess, so that a possible catastrophe was avoided.

The school community, however, under the leadership of the School Committee, lost no time in attacking the task of restoration. In a short space of time Media Friends rose like a modern Phoenix. The school was actually in better condition than it had been in a long time. New lighting fixtures were installed, new paint applied, old desks replaced and the floors refinished.

Though the smell of charred wood remained for months, the school mended well and turned its attention again to the future. The “new math” concept was occasioning much discussion and a special consultant, shared among Friends schools, led the way into this unfamiliar area of study.

Reading came under scrutiny, receiving much more serious consideration than before, and a new reading program was introduced in 1964. It grouped pupils according to reading levels, crossing grade lines if necessary, in order to effect more coherent instruction for each child.

A section on Black history was added to the social studies curriculum, emphasizing culture and traditions of African origin.

Media Friends became even more cosmopolitan through the efforts of Teacher Murry Engle, when her Third Grade group presented an original play in French, titled *Le Café de la Paix*, with great success. The play was later published in the April 1964 issue of *Elementary School*.

Then there were the cookbooks to produce. These were Media Friends School originals, collected from those who had a flair in the kitchen. The recipes were collected and published in book form, and sold by the school to help satisfy expenses.

There was yet another building addition needed by the school and the west side of the Meeting House porch was enclosed to provide a library and a principal’s office.

After careful consideration of the needs of the community it was decided, in the Spring of 1965, to make Media Friends School a complete “kindergarten through Sixth Grade” elementary school. Enrollment was now at 140, and a full six-year curriculum seemed a sensible decision.

Teachers, also, were expanding their skills. A series of weekly workshops were held after school hours to discuss the best method of presenting the “new math” to the students. Across the driveway in the “Primary Building”, Teacher Marian Elkinton initiated an afternoon transition program to help children move easily from kindergarten to First Grade.

Art had been in the school curriculum almost from the founding years, but now that aspect of human expression and communication received the attention it deserved when a special classroom was set aside for such instruction in 1965.

When Louise Lindley (Wells) resigned to resume advanced studies in education (after serving 11 years, eight as Principal), Alice Brodhead became principal, under unusual conditions. A member of the faculty of Swarthmore College for many years, she retained that status and administered Media Friends on a part-time basis.

For three years she would be at the school in the mornings from 9 to 12 o'clock, and carry out her college functions in the afternoon. During this period a new Sixth Grade was added (1966) and there was also a pre-kindergarten, a kindergarten and a pre-First Grade, as well as teachers specifically assigned such subjects as music, French, science, shop, mathematics, art, reading and physical education. Media Friends had come a long way from the room above the livery stable on Baltimore Pike 90 years before.

In 1968, when Alice Brodhead gave up her Media Friends responsibility, Murry Engle, who had been teaching at the school for nine years, became the school's first "Headmistress".

There is a little story about the title. It was believed that the name "Murry" would be mistaken for a man's name, and to prevent confusion and possible embarrassment, the title "Principal" became "Headmistress" for the next six years.



STYLES CHANGE IN CLASSROOMS over the years. The top photograph taken in 1921 shows the Audubon bird prints and the once-familiar fence through the window. The middle photograph, taken by Philip Mayer in 1969 shows a modern class situation. The bottom photograph taken by David Camp, comments on our modern gadget-filled age, complete with tape recorder and motion picture camera at an outside music session.

CHAPTER VII

ROUNDING OUT A CENTURY

“New time always! Old time we cannot keep. Time does not become sacred to us until we have lived it, until it has passed over us and taken with it a part of ourselves.”

John Burroughs
American Naturalist; 1837-1921

Headmistress Murry Engle was deeply committed to the Quaker approach to life and education. Very soon after she assumed her new responsibilities she instituted “Quaker Week”, which provided an opportunity for children in all the classes to study all aspects of Quaker faith and practice.

This concentration upon Quaker principles enabled the faculty and all associated with the operation of the school to re-examine the spiritual as well as the intellectual resources of the Religious Society of Friends. An outside speaker was secured and everyone was exposed to the mystery of the Meeting for Worship.

The innovation was not only a success at Media Friends, but has also become a tradition in many other Friends schools in the area. Later, at Media, it was decided to set every other year for the innovation, as it took so much time to prepare. Not all experiments were successes, however.

The Headmistress instituted a “Learning Center” for the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Grades, which was to provide a multitude of interest-catching ideas and materials for the curious student. It proved to be ineffective, and was dropped.

The mathematics program was being run in a practically ungraded manner, and this policy was continued as a natural one for a Friends school, each student moving at his or her own pace rather than being confined to a closed classroom curriculum.

Another experiment was deemed a success, the combination of a class project with total school involvement, such as celebrating “Africa Week” with theatricals, art projects, crafts and specialized history.

It was during this period when a shift in age brackets from nursery to older children marked the end of the Nursery School. Evaluation time arrived again. As in 1962, the school was accredited with commendation.

There have been many “constants” in the school’s history. One, certainly, has been the Parent-Teachers Association started in 1924, now renamed the Parent Teachers Council. Its work has benefitted the school

for a half century. Another was Anna Guy, who prepared hot meals for over 30 years, from 1939 to 1969. And what would Media Friends School be without Bettie Smedley, the efficient business manager for 22 years?

Another “constant” at this time in the school’s history, was movement . . . physically relocating classes to better use the school building and supporting structures, rather than changing curriculum to meet problems of location.

One weekend, for instance, the First and Second Grades were moved into the “little” building with the kindergarten, and the “Primary Unit” was created. From that time forward there was to be no distinction between the First and Second Grades . . . each child was encouraged to do as much as she or he could manage. Another relocation coincided with Christmas vacation, and the school enjoyed a bonus benefit . . . the fellowship of students, parents and teachers all working together which lasted long after the actual move.

Perhaps the most significant innovation was the creation of the “Middle School” which provided for the merger of the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Grades in one large area. This took place in 1972-73.

The students were grouped into “islands of interest” in a huge room without walls. Teachers had their desks, cabinets and bookcases in plain view, all immediately accessible. The three grades formed one cohesive community of learning.

The curriculum concentrated upon the core subjects of English and mathematics. Additional subject matter was provided for by “mini” courses which took place at appropriate times in the main enclosure or at any other convenient place throughout the school. Even the community became an auxiliary classroom when the interest called for visits to the county courts, museums or other institutions.

Such an ambitious and all-inclusive program depended heavily upon the leadership and commitment of the Headmistress and the faculty, and the fact that the innovation was an immediate success reflects the staff’s enthusiastic support.

The move was preparative in nature, but the success of the first year led to the official formation of a Middle School, using the same group of children, who were now Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Graders.

At the conclusion of the term such a bond had been welded that the parents of the students in the Middle School looked about for some way in which their children could continue in a Friends school after graduating from Media.

Encouraged by Media Monthly Meeting, the adults studied alternatives, and one of the teachers who had been very effective in the Middle School experiment, John Callahan, was selected to conduct a feasibility study. All the resources potentially available to Junior High School age students were studied, and it appeared that an alternative school was practical.

The School Committee of Media Friends, strongly in favor of the proposal, was unable to accommodate the project in its already over-crowded facilities. Arrangements, therefore, were made with Provi-

dence Monthly Meeting, across town from Third Street, to use their First Day School classrooms on Providence Road.

September 1974, therefore, marked the opening of Providence Friends School, with John Callahan as Principal. It began with 19 students in the Ninth and Tenth Grades. Its enrollment reached the 50 mark by June, 1976.

That same year Headmistress Murry Engle resigned her Media Friends post and became chairman of the Providence Friends School Committee. She was succeeded by Mark Bailey, who became the first male principal in the school's history.

His experience as a teacher in the school, and the exceptional rapport he had with children of all levels through his musical facility (he directed several full length Gilbert and Sullivan operas when in charge of music), made him a widely applauded choice.

It should be noted that the school under Murry Engle's leadership was not untouched by the tragic Vietnam War. For several years the school's Christmas project was support of the Friends Day Care Center operated in that ravaged land. The evils of warfare were brought sharply into focus on October 15, 1969, when the students and the faculty participated in the world-wide War Moratorium Day. Classes were suspended as the entire school discussed the importance of the observance.

One of Principal Mark Bailey's projects, when he followed Murry Engle, was the school's upcoming centennial observance in the Fall of 1976.

He hoped this observance would be a time to take a long happy look at the past and renew commitment to the school's future. Through his encouragement a Centennial Committee with members drawn from the alumni, the faculty and Media Meeting was formed and charged with the task of planning for a centennial celebration.

After two years of meetings, the Centennial Committee had provided for the writing of this history, communicated with many of the school's alumni and friends and established the Centennial Fund. This Fund was to support the publication of the history and aid any celebration events or publicity related to the one hundredth birthday.

The Centennial Committee also stimulated faculty plans for a school celebration. Teachers began work with children on 1870 costumes to be worn in Media in the school's parade scheduled for Friday, October 8, 1976. Teachers Emmy Barbour and Peggy Hasbrouck enlisted the help of their primary students for the baking of a many-layered birthday cake for the occasion.

Another school group was assigned the task of planning the participation of the school's associates and friends. They began preparations by enlisting the help of the Parent Teachers Council to provide a catered dinner at the school Saturday evening, October 9, 1976.

An exhibit of historic school memorabilia and verbal vignettes by several Friends and the Principal will be featured. Simultaneously, Mark Bailey has called together another committee to plan for the school's next one hundred years.

This Long Range Planning Committee has already worked many long hours seeking solutions to many of the same type of problems which Media Friends has faced through its first hundred years.

The principal consideration is the need for more space, presently hampered by an over-used aging building in a neighborhood of drastic architectural development and troubled social change. The committee seeks significant input from Friends and alumni during the period of celebration.

In addition to the need for more space is the old problem of financing a meaningful educational institution. It is hoped that the Centennial Fund will grow sufficiently to satisfy the costs of this observance and erase the remaining deficit before the close of 1976.

As a concluding comment, "our point of view" as expressed in the 1922-23 brochure for Media Friends School is as accurate now as it was then:

"Media Friends School is primarily an attempt to express and interpret Christian ideals of life and character. Its first concern is to lay foundations which shall stand the stress of later years. Here is no conflict with high scholastic standards. The record of more than three decades attests the fact that our children have borne themselves creditably in higher schools after leaving us. Modern methods in kindergarten and grade work make possible an emphasis on character and personality which is out of the question in larger groups."



DRIVEWAY ENTRANCE to MEDIA MONTHLY MEETING and MEDIA FRIENDS SCHOOL in August, 1976. Actually the school has spread throughout the Meeting House, and as of June, 1976, had 143 students and a teaching staff of 23.



MEDIA FRIENDS SCHOOL GRADUATES OF 1976. Back row, standing, left to right: Hugh Carpenter, Joseph Barbato, Paul Johnson, Lisa Narva, Michael Meli, John Gorry, Troy Leslie, Meg Backus, Liz Eversole, Laurence Lindenmeyer, Carolyn Clark, Rick Morris, Lori Goldhammer, Anni Isard, Edith Thompson, Lois Qualls, Tammy Booker, Carole Woodworth. Kneeling, left to right: Mike Hudicheck, Steven Linvill, John Fellows, Tracy Davis, Julee Mayer, Sandy Pearson, Ella Royce, Nancy Baker, Anita Covert.

EPILOGUE

*"I cannot but remember such things were,
That were most precious to me."*

Macbeth: Act IV, Sc. 2

Editor's Note: Following are a few reminiscences of persons intimately associated with Media Friends School. For each one offered and used, we know there are a half dozen more which would have enriched this supplement, had they been available. Those included, however, reflect the spirit which has always supported the school.

"I was just out of college . . ."

(*Lucie Logan Stephens* came to teach at Media Friends in 1915, and remembers clearly her five years there.)

"When I came to the Media Friends School Elizabeth Whitacre was the principal. Anna Walton was the supervisor from the Yearly Meeting. After her death, Gertrude Shearer became her successor.

"I was just out of college (Teachers College, Columbia University) and like Dickens' old lady who was 'swellin' visibly' after nine cups of tea, I was filled with the undigested fragments of the philosophy of education, and poised (in crass ignorance) to become the crusader of John Dewey's heady new doctrines.

"I look back with love and gratitude to both Elizabeth Whitacre and Gertrude Shearer for their handling of the zealous advocate of these new theories. I was conscious of no restraining reins . . . no dicta handed out as 'this is the way we do it!'

"Elizabeth had an innate love of children coupled with gentle firmness and respect for them as individuals that made her regime an easy one to work under. I never remember being aware of any criticism of my fumbling progress in sifting out workable positive methods of teaching.

"Always I was aware of the sympathy and support of these two intelligent and understanding women. It was a rare introduction to a career and I have never ceased to be grateful.

"Another cause of gratitude was the support from Elizabeth as I became convinced of the hideous consequences of war and its uselessness. Some of the parents were unsympathetic and were openly hostile

to our stand. Elizabeth's quiet but unrelenting conviction gave support to my wobbly, wavering search for the right answers. Her strength nourished and comforted me.

"By the same token the unquestioning backing given me by the School Committee, of which Mary Hutton Biddle was the head, was a source of strength, making my teaching years completely satisfying. This loving understanding coupled with the inherent simplicity of the school set-up has tintured all of the nostalgic memories of my years at Media Friends School."

"Individual and loving teaching . . ."

(Charles E. Pusey, Sr., tells us that he attended Media Friends School from about 1912 to 1918, under Teacher Elizabeth Whitacre, and says the teaching and training he got there was a great heritage. Some of his memories are very pertinent to MFS centennial observances.)

"Our family lived on a farm on Old Forge Road in Middletown Township. To go to school I went by horse and wagon to Lima, awaited the small trolley at Howard E. Woodward's grocery store, ending up at the old Ellis drug store at Orange Street after the car wound its way through Lima, Elwyn and up Media Hill on Baltimore Pike.

"Sometimes I would alternate with the train which I boarded at Darlington, and which deposited me at Media. In either case, I would walk to Media Friends, short-cutting through the Court House. There were a number of occasions when I walked the three miles from our farm (which was near Darlington) to Lima, and once when the trolley failed to show, I walked all the way, to my family's consternation.

"And what do I remember from Media Friends School? I remember building snow forts in winter and engaging in snow ball contests. I remember Teacher taking us for long walks in the Spring, and we would pick wayside and woodland wild flowers. My life-long love of hiking, of birds and flowers, of all the outdoors had its birth on the farm and at Media Friends.

"There are other memories. For weeks on end I practiced the 'Barefoot boy with cheeks of tan,' etc, a poem of which the foregoing are the first words. This was to be recited for a school performance for families and other visitors. When the time came I refused to budge out of the school house to the lawn where I was to perform. Stage fright at an early age! I often wonder how Teacher and my parents felt.

"Then I remember winning a box of candy as first prize for making the best kite.

"My ego was suddenly deflated when Teacher Elizabeth insisted I treat my classmates, and I saw my goodies diminishing rapidly. I remember when our school participated in some event at Friends Select School. Wire circles were attached to poles, and with great pains, adorned with wild daisies. In the center was a silver paper letter, so that when held upright and in proper order, by the children, the letters spelled 'Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men'.

"There was a shortage of children so that I had to hold two poles. They were heavy, and I couldn't keep them from swaying. There was laughter, but it was no laughing matter to this young one!

“It is with regret that contact has not been maintained between me and Media Friends, although the memories are bright, clear and dear. Perhaps in this centennial year, we can renew these friendships, and engage in helpful participation, one with the other, to enrich the heritage of Media Friends School. I am looking forward to such a reunion, to meet personally with all associated with the school.”

“Many happy days I spent in that school . . .”

(One of the priceless fragments of Media Friends School memorabilia is the autobiography written in 1916 when the late *Sarah Little Yarnall* was a student of Friends Select School in Philadelphia. She was 13 years of age, and her third “chapter” titled “School Days” related to her experiences at Media Friends.)

“When we moved to the country my brothers began to attend a small school in Media, Pennsylvania.

“The school house sat a little ways back from the street with a long boardwalk connecting the front porch with a small gate in the fence. Upon this walk we had many fine races. The building was only one story high with two rooms and a vestibule inside.

“For quite a while one room was used for the school and the other for the kindergarten, but after a while the kindergarten stopped and left a nice large room to play in on rainy days.

“When I had attained the age of six years I was allowed to attend this school. When I began there were 20 (in) attendance but they gradually departed to Friends’ Select and Westtown, my brothers being among those who went to Friends’ Select.

“Many happy days I spent at that school, for every year the whole school would get into autos and go for a picnic in various places. Among them were Valley Forge, the Zoo, the Brandywine, etc.

“When I became 12 I started at Friends’ Select. I enjoyed it very much for several reasons. It had a gymnasium which was something new to me, a nice large playground, different sports and a great variety of teachers, as I had only one at the other school.

“Although I consider Friends’ Select almost perfect, I think there is still room for improvement. Such things as in my opinion would improve the school are electric lights in the whole building and a swimming pool . . .”

“I wondered what would happen . . .?”

(*Dorothy James’* term of service as chairman of the School Committee began early in 1935. She singles out two experiences she had in the school’s middle years that were of great importance to its survival.)

“The Depression had hit hard in 1934-35 at Media Friends School, and many persons were deeply concerned and discouraged.

“At this point I can remember saying to Ruth Vail, ‘I wonder what would happen if a few of us put interest in the school ahead of everything else?’ And a few of us did put our heads together and, in what must have seemed to others a high-handed manner, offered to ‘take on’ the school, and, hopefully, pull it out of the doldrums.

“We asked five very busy men to back us up when it came to financial matters and policy making, and we would handle the details such as finding a principal, etc. The original five women were Ann Pennell, Ruth Vail, Emma Forsythe, Rebecca Nicholson and myself. When Rebecca Nicholson moved away Alice Kirk took her place.

“The men who consented to serve were James Vail, Barclay Whitson, Paul Furnas, Francis Nicholson and Robert James. We started with a search for a new principal. We had heard of Helen Hall, teaching Seventh Grade at Swarthmore Elementary School, who was interested. Not herself a Friend, we discussed with her, among other things, her feelings about responsibilities of a Friends School should there be another war, and how she would react should the opportunity come to accept a qualified Negro applicant. She appeared to agree with our philosophy.

“Next we worked to strengthen all the assets at hand and to consolidate the school on the Meeting House property on Third Street. Some classes were being held in the school building on Gayley Street, the site of the former Friends Select School of the Providence Preparative Meeting.

“Walter Price, nationally recognized architect, and Builder Arthur Binns contributed their services free of charge.

“We converted the West room of the Meeting House into a Social Room and provided for three school rooms on the second floor. A campaign to raise \$15,000 was organized to cover construction costs.

“This project captured the imagination not only of the people who would benefit by improved school facilities but of the members of the Meeting as a whole. Enthusiasm ran high and many hours of volunteer labor of all kinds were contributed by the elderly, the middle aged and the young.

“By early September of 1935 all was in readiness, and the school opened with a large enrollment despite the Depression. The year went well and satisfied patrons returned their children in the Fall of 1936 with more than enough younger brothers and sisters to fill the seats vacated by the Sixth Graders who had left the previous June. But in January of 1937 Media Friends was to face one of its most demanding challenges.

“Without a doubt the most deeply moving experience for me as chairman came as the result of the application for admission to the nursery school of a four-year-old Negro child. The story of the ensuing weeks has been written into the history of the school. There were grim aspects of the situation but positive ones as well. Letters of support and encouragement helped balance those of criticism and disapproval.

“The prospect of a serious loss of pupils for the Fall was devastating.

“Then out of the blue, into the school came two daughters of Max and Eleanor Jane Adams. The Adams family believed strongly in public school education, but because they approved so thoroughly in

the stand we had taken, they wanted to be involved. Their support and that of others helped make it possible to carry on.

"To me personally, and, I believe, to the others on the School Committee, the acceptance of that little boy was the high point in our venture of faith."

"The happiness of the children was a mirror . . ."

(*Murry Engle* [Mrs. Robert F., Jr.], a deeply concerned Friend and educator, came to Media Friends School as a teacher in 1959, became Headmistress in 1968, and served in that position until 1974.)

"My strongest recollection of Media Friends School is the beautiful spirit of cooperation and dedication among the teachers. They were, by and large, deeply concerned for the educational and social progress of their students, and totally involved in their work.

"I felt my role was to be the catalyst, bringing together a group of capable people . . . helping and encouraging them to achieve their teaching goals. They are the ones who made the school sing.

"Many times I took a difficult school problem to a staff meeting, and was often awed and humbled by their creativeness as they tossed ideas around, and finally, together we came to a solution which we could all support with conviction.

"The happiness of the children was a mirror, reflecting the supportive attitude of the teachers and the loving spirit of the school."

"She never gave up the eternal ideal . . ."

(*Ruth Thorp Harvey* was a dedicated educator who gave much to Media Friends School as a student, teacher and, in the 1940's principal. A search through her papers by her daughter Ruth Harvey Mavronikolas, coupled with what she and other members of the Harvey family remember of her, gives us a sensitive insight to this memorable personality.)

"My mother did not keep diaries . . . she did jot ideas on the back of shredded wheat cards when they were larger than they are now.

"She was extremely modest with a self-effacing attitude about everything she did. She had very little physical energy, but she was tenacious in efforts to sustain the Media School with a simple straightforward approach. She was clear in her views of what was good for children.

"She wanted to provide a wholesome environment in the school life with a minimum of fol-de-rol and financial expense. Her greatest pride was her struggle to keep the school in the black regardless of the creative solutions that had to be achieved to avoid monetary costs. She would and did sacrifice herself to avoid this. In fact, this was a major factor for her acting as a full-time teacher while being responsible for the role of principal.

“One of her more caring roles, beyond oversight of the children and the teachers, was her participation in the Media Friends Meeting. She spent countless nights at committee meetings, or preparing reports for the purpose of keeping channels of communication open between the Meeting and the school. She hoped for the understanding and support of the Friends Meeting which I do not feel she ever achieved to the degree she desired.

“My mother was very ingenious and creative in constructing her own learning materials and was critical of full dependence upon purchased programs or materials. She aimed to maintain an open creative approach to education by avoiding gimmicks or ‘things.’

“Although she did achieve this mobility of perpetual responsiveness to the children in the school, I do not think this satisfaction could ever balance the frustrations she experienced over the money problems.

“She was ahead of her time with educational concepts, and as early as 1949, in an article which she wrote for the *Westonian*, Alumni Bulletin of Westtown School, she pictured a future Westtown where students lived in cabins in family groups with the teachers. This does not sound unusual now . . . then it was a very modern idea.

“I wish I could say that my mother felt satisfied with her accomplishments, but as with many other artistic people, she was always working ahead on the next problem and solution. She never gave up the eternal ideal.”

“I was struck at how little had changed . . .”

(Joan Adams Mondale, who attended Media Friends School for four years in the 1930s, returned to her old school September 11, 1976, as the campaigning wife of Senator Walter (Fritz) Mondale, of Minnesota and the Democratic Party’s vice presidential nominee. In a letter to the editor after the event, she repeated the comments she made as she greeted a hundred or more MFS parents, teachers, former pupils and supporters.)

“Thank (everyone) for that lovely reception at Media Friends School last Saturday. I was struck at how little had changed physically, and I like that very much . . . it gave a sense of stability and continuity to my memories.

“I was glad to come back. I remember acting in ‘The Pine Tree Shilling’ on the stage (of the Social Room) as vividly as I remember Teacher Frances Darlington in the Second Grade and Miss Ecroyd’s bird walks. I remember studying the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert in the Third Grade, and the marionette show ‘Cinderella’ in the Fourth Grade class. Little did I know that I would become a Cinderella in real life!

“I remember the wise sayings and the Bible verses we had put on the blackboard each week in the Fifth Grade. The one I most distinctly remember is ‘Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.’ I felt Media Friends School taught me to do that.

"It was also my pleasure to acknowledge Aunt Dottie (Dorothy B. James) who has been a life-time family friend.

"She met my parents as they came to enroll my sister Jane and me in the school when many parents withdrew their children because the school had accepted a Black child, Lances McKnight. You lived your ideals and brotherhood at Media Friends.

"I went from the Second Grade in 1937 through Miss Wygant's Fifth Grade in 1941. It was a great privilege for me to present two books that Saturday to the school library, *The Accountability of Power* by my husband, Senator Mondale, and *Politics in Art*, by myself.

Sincerely yours,
Joan Mondale"