

Appreciating The Canadian Friend

By Elaine Bishop

I have always had a fondness for *The Canadian Friend* (CF). In the boxes of memorabilia that have accompanied me on my life's journey there are a few complete old issues, a few collected articles and various front pages with pictures of treasured Friends. Coming across these from time to time can initiate a memory journey into a past I share with Canadian Friends. My April-May, 1972 edition has a wonderful picture of Strangewood Quaker Centre on its cover page, with George and Mary Pollard smiling forth and Sylvia McMechan embroidering away. The Strangewood experiment in King City, Ontario was a short-lived leap of faith, but it is important to me

that we remember that we had the courage to leap, even if the experiment did not survive for long

Yet it was my decision to explore Canadian Quaker history as part of my PhD thesis, "Land and Peace: A Challenge to Quakerism," that lifted my appreciation of CF to new heights. Here was a source of writings and pictures of my people extending back to long before my relationship with them began. I could dip into writings of Canadian Friends over almost 100 years, searching for insights into how we had responded to my particular issues of interest: peace and the role of land justice in peace building. Because I was giving more detailed attention to the five years between 1995 and 1999, I explored the CF's from those years in depth. I was delighted to find that I had complete sets of most years so could browse, underline and explore to my heart's content. Some issues spoke more strongly to me than others: for example the 1996 issue on Quakers and Indigenous Peoples, and the May 1999 issue on Quaker Testimonies. CF also proved useful in providing some context for other

parts of my thesis. The March 2002 issue on Land, for instance, helped me in thinking about my chapter on the role of land in species survival.

This process, combined with my exploration of Canadian Yearly Meeting minutes from 1955 to the present, also part of my research, has left me with a sense of profound gratitude. I am thankful to the Friends who faithfully wrote about their experiences and thoughts over all those years. I am grateful to those who faithfully edited, published, addressed and sent copies across the country and even further afield. After all, I read many issues at the Library at Woodbrooke, the Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham England. And I have come to a renewed sense of thanksgiving for the Yearly Meetings, Canadian and its predecessors Canada Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) and then, in 1907, Five Years Meeting, which nurtured, stimulated and, at times, struggled with, this wonderful witness to this Quaker life blood in Canada. Thank you, CF! 🍀

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Excerpt from "The Canadian Friend" June, 1905: Our Young People.

The hope of any church lies in its young people. There is a future for any meeting that retains and uses its younger members. If, on the other hand, the older members are passing away with the years and others are not coming forward to fill their ranks, the time must come when the meeting will be "laid down." This has occurred in different parts of our Yearly Meeting in the past. Have we learned our lesson? Are we meeting the needs of the young? In many places we find that some of the zealous workers in other denominations have been brought up in the Friends church. Why have they gone from us? Does it not show very plainly that in some way we, as a church, have failed to meet the needs of the young? Should the Yearly Meeting see its way clear to continue the publication of this journal, we hope to have a number of contributed articles on "How the Friends Church may Retain and Use her young Members." 🍀