

A Pelham Quaker in the '50s

By Barbara Smith

Fifty years ago! Doesn't seem that long ... Growing up in the Pelham Friends Church meant growing up in a Friends' atmosphere that was already united. Every Sunday our family "went to church." Dad was Sunday School "superintendent" and Mom played the piano for church in a programmed meeting. We sang, heard a sermon and had some period of silence. From a time before my birth, we Genesee YM Friends had met with the Orthodox (FUM) Friends in their "red brick" meetinghouse (having become too small a group to continue supporting the "white" frame meetinghouse around the corner). The Willson, Lundy, Weed names of years before still carried on.

Silent worship as expressed in Genesee YM was experienced when we attended Coldstream Meeting on visits to Grandma Brown and family. On other occasions, we would attend Orchard Park (NY) meeting, which was part of an international Pelham Half Yearly Meeting of Genesee YM, and include visits with Willson relatives. My Quakerism and relatives were all mixed in together!

My first contact with organised Young Friends came at Camp Neekaunis. To be old enough to "go to camp" was a real privilege. Young people meeting at Camp were just Quakers — not from any branch — just young Quakers. We discussed and worked and played. We met during the year for weekends of work and play. One summer a

carload of us drove to Quaker Haven, Indiana, for the Young Friends Committee of North America conference. What a revelation to discover Quaker young people of every ilk — programmed, unprogrammed, evangelical, southern drawls, Midwest twangs, and we very few silent-worship Canadians — all meeting together.

Canadian Young Friends were one group. Why couldn't all Canadian Quakers be one group? They met at the same time in separate sessions at Pickering College so Young Friends wondered why they couldn't meet together as one group. They expressed this idea in a Minute sent to the YMs. The idea took root and, over time and with the dedication of many, a union of Genesee YM, Canada YM (Conservative) and Canada YM (FUM) occurred.

Unfortunately, complete unity did not take place. The (Orthodox) Meeting that had for so many years met in unity with Genesee Friends in Pelham chose not to unite with Canadian Yearly Meeting, but instead to become a part of the evangelical Ohio Yearly Meeting (now EFI).

The religious naiveté of my childhood had been broken but the pieces formed the basis for a deeper spiritual faith. 🍀

Barbara Smith is a member of Pelham Executive Meeting.



1947 Yearly Meeting Children

Bottom step: ?; Second step: Mavis Keffer Jesson (Newmarket, Canada Yearly Meeting Orthodox [CYM-O]), Rosemary Wolf _____ (Newmarket), perhaps Betty Cutler Preston? (Coldstream, Genesee YM), ?, Ron Brown (Coldstream), Florence Brown (Coldstream); Third step: Philip Bowerman (Toronto, CYM-O), Anne Willson Keffer (Pelham, Genesee YM), Barb Brown Smith (Pelham); Fourth step: Bev Brown Jackson (Pelham), Margaret Clayton Chapman (Norwich, Canada Yearly Meeting Conservative); Top step: Ruthanna Clayton (Norwich)

(Photo provided by Beverly Jackson of Pelham Executive Meeting)