

Annual Report of Jacksonville
Meeting to be presented to
All Florida Friends Conference
March 8th and 9th, 1952

The Jacksonville Meeting has just completed its first year. As a direct result of Elizabeth Abbott Christ's interest in compiling a list of Friends and friends of Friends in Florida, thirteen of those she found to be living in the Jacksonville area first got together in February last year and began what developed into a regular Meeting on the first Sunday afternoon of each month. Business matters of the Meeting were directed this first year by Alice Howland Macomber, clerk, Virginia C. Greenleaf, recording clerk, and Calhoun Geiger, as treasurer.

In the beginning we met in homes and then feeling that it would be easier for us to be "found" by others we settled on one spot, an attractive parlor of Swain Memorial Methodist Church. Our numbers have varied from nine to twenty-one including three or four children. Through newspaper announcements and through Meeting notices in Friends Intelligencer, the American Friend, and The Friend, we have had occasional visitors both from the Jacksonville area and out of town.

Most recently we had a visit from Elizabeth Abbott Christ on an appropriate Sunday, our first birthday, which we marked by having a special tea with birthday cake after Meeting. We also had a four day visit with Bernard Walton who met with as many of the Jacksonville people as possible. Since his visit was between regular Meeting dates we had a wiener roast-supper with lots of informal talk at one of the homes. Our most recent visitor was Harold Chance who met with our weekly discussion group and attended our Meeting. All three have had much experience with the problems of Friends and the problems of Meetings so that their presence was most welcome and helpful.

We have had some correspondence with those on the Florida list who live in the neighboring towns such as St. Augustine, Penney Farms, and various Jacksonville beach communities, but so far only one couple has found it possible to meet with us even one time. In the case of those who live at Penney Farms, both their age and distance from Jacksonville make it a little difficult to come so far.

As a related item, Florida Young Friends should be mentioned although a full report from them will be given separately. Out of the discussions at the first Florida Young Friends Conference in May grew a weekly discussion group in Jacksonville which began in June by using the booklet, The Vocation of Friends in the Modern World, as a base. On completing this first booklet we took turns

having an evening to bring up our own concerns for discussion. Soon we shall resume the World Conference booklets using the second one on The Vocation of Friends in the Modern World. The discussion group has been inter-racial and has averaged in number around fourteen each week. Some of the group have been regular attenders at Meeting and some have not.

To keep from being all talk and no more, we looked for and found a project just needing some workers. About one Saturday a month since fall we've been working on "beautifying" the block-sized campus of Boylan-Haven school, a Negro girls high school with a bi-racial faculty operated by the Methodist Church. Beginning work could hardly be called "beautifying" but it has also included grounds cleaning, weeding, planting grasses, flowers, shrubs, pruning palm trees, and most recently repair work to fire escape, basketball back-stop, painting blackboards and the like. Working with us were girls from the school, young people from various Jacksonville churches, mostly Methodist, and some other interested people of varying ages. Each work day concluded with a wiener roast-supper, perhaps some singing and/or discussions. A new work project is being thought out with the officials guiding the development of a Negro girls/scout camp not far from St. Augustine.

The Meeting has gathered together and repaired some clothing which was sent to the American Friends Service Committee warehouse; a rough estimate of this would be 400 lbs.

In June we received a very last minute enquiry from the Friends Fellowship Council about nominating a delegate from our unaffiliated Meeting to attend the Oxford Conference. Hurriedly we looked over the situation, decided and conferred with John Barney and forwarded his name to the Fellowship Council. We were delighted to find that they accepted our nomination. Recently each Meeting in the state has received from us a letter telling about John and his program for the summer. Although John regularly attends the newly formed Gainesville Meeting, this Meeting was not in existence at that time and he was originally suggested by Jacksonville.

We should mention that eight of us visited the Gainesville Meeting in November. We had come to know several of the students interested in having a Meeting and feel that our encouragement might have helped a little in getting the Gainesville group together.

It may be of interest to know some of the related activities of individuals in the group. There is one who works almost full time with occupational therapy in an orthopedic hospital for children and besides gives haircuts and shaves to men in an old folks home; another is actively concerned with the Urban League; two are working with the Boys Home Association and Boys Clubs;

one has a peace literature booth at the county fair and frequently has letters to the editor in one of our newspapers; several are active in both state and local Mental Health Associations; and one family of six grown children have all worked with the American Friends Service Committee at one time or another both in this country and in Europe, Asia, and the Near East. Due to their wide activities they are never all at home at any one time.

We feel that with all these concerns and concerned people we have the basis for developing a group that has depth and can grow as we work together. Our first year has been exciting because those of us who have lived in Jacksonville for some years did not realize that there was so much potentiality around us. It has been a wonderful experience to get to know one another and find so many concerns in common.

Virginia C. Greenleaf
Recording Clerk