

Friends' Libraries in Maryland.

The earliest record we have of Friends in Maryland is 1658, and in the territory embracing Baltimore City, 1682.

George Fox, on his visit to America, 1672, landed at the mouth of Patuxent river, in Maryland, with his companions. He, and some of his company, immediately proceeded to West River, where he assisted in establishing the first Meeting for Discipline in Maryland. Of the thirteen months he spent in America, a considerable portion was in Maryland, and from there he set sail for England.

West River Meeting (first a Half Year Meeting) embraced all the territory on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay, including the vicinity of Baltimore, and Third Haven Meeting all the eastern shore of the State.

It is a well established fact that George Fox and his followers recommended that Friends' Meetings in England and America should have a collection of books for the service of Truth and use of the members.

I have collected a few minutes from Maryland Friends' Records to set forth this fact.

From Third Haven Meeting Records :—

Att a mans Meeting, at John Pitts, the 8th Day of the 7th Month, 1676 :—

“It is agreed by the Meeting that Thomas Taylor doe Keep ffriends books, and write the Conserns of ffriends in their Mens Meeting.”

Att a Mans Meeting, at John Pitts, the 21 of 12 mo., 1678 :—

“The Meeting hath ordered that a hhd. of Tobacco shall be paid out of the Stock to make good a hhd. of Tobacco that Judged unfitt to send home on account of the Bookes had of William Richardson.”

From West River Meeting Records :—

Att a Quarterly Meeting, held 20 of the 3rd mo., 1681 :—

“Gerrard Roberts, of London, having sent a box of books to friends of this Province by Richard Mitchell,

who brought them to this meeting, the Meeting appoints Richard Mitchell and Tho. Taylor to write as from this meeting by way of acknowledgement of his kindness."

At a Quarterly Meeting, held at Ann Chews, the 6th day of 5th mo., 1682 :—

"There being a parcel of books sent from England for ye publick service, this Meeting chose Edward Talbott and Solomon Sparrow to divide them amongst ye Meetings of friends att ye Western Shore, ye half of them being sent for ye use of ffriends att ye Eastern Shore."

West River Monthly Meeting. At a Mans Meeting held at Richard Johns, on the Cliffs, the 22 of 12 mo., 1683 :—

"This Meeting doth appoint Fras. Billingsley and Richard Johns to inspect those Books at John Garyes House, take account of them, and give to next Mans Meeting at the Cliffs."

At next meeting, they report, "The Books that were at the House late John Gareys, are now in the Possession of Richd. Johns, for the service of Friends."

At Quarterly Meeting. At a Mans Meeting, at Wm. Richardson's, ye 31 day of ye 8th Month, 1684 :—"Several Books and papers from London came by Edward Talbott to ffriends hands, directed to Wm. Richardson, but from whom they came we know nott, by reason of now letter nor account from Edward."

At next meeting, the following report is made, "This meeting have divided the said Books, & Reserved one half left in ye Custody of Wm. Richardson, to be sent to friends att the Eastern Shore, & ye other 1/2 have divided between the five Meetings on this Shore, only some odd Books & Papers Reserved for Pickawaxon & Conotoman friends."

As to what became of these early Friends' Libraries I have no knowledge, all those early Meetings having been abandoned, except Third Haven.

Baltimore Monthly Meeting was established in 1792. The following minute was the origin of the present Library, now in Park Avenue Friends' Meeting House :—

At Baltimore Monthly Meeting, held 13th of 6th Month, 1799 :—

“It being represented to this meeting, that a small, well conducted Library of Friends' Books, and other religious tracts, under the direction of this Monthly Meeting, might have a usefull tendency, and the subject being considered, the following Friends are appointed to report their sence to next meeting, *viz.*, Elisha Tyson, Robert Cornthwait, Izak Proctor, Joseph Townsend, Ennion Williams, William Riley, and Isaiah Balderston.”

At next meeting, this committee made a favourable report, and were continued to prepare a catalogue of suitable books. At meeting held 9th of 1st Mo., 1800, this committee report the catalogue prepared, and that the amount of expenses was \$100.00. A committee was appointed to collect this amount. Later, this committee report that the Library had been opened at the house of William Riley, on East Street.

This Library was the property of Eastern District Friends' Meeting, and continued such until 1819, when that Monthly Meeting was laid down, and its members transferred to Western District. There was then, as now, but one Monthly Meeting in Baltimore, and the Library became the general property of the Monthly Meeting.

Friends' Library is the oldest circulation Library in Baltimore, and the first organized, with the exception of The Library Company of Baltimore, organized in 1796. The books of this latter Library were transferred to the present Maryland Historical Society, in 1854, and the organization ceased.

Baltimore Friends' Library, now in Park Avenue Friends' Meeting House, contains about 4,000 volumes of well selected books on most subjects, but not as great a number of Friends' books as it should contain, although some of its books are rare, and valuable to the student seeking information pertaining to the Society.

KIRK BROWN.

4th of y^e 12th mo., 1684/5. P^d Tho Hudson for Canuiss to putt Round y^e Greate Beed where friends Lodge y^t are prissoners in y^e Compter in Tooleys Streete, & is to Remaine there for y^e Seruice of friends y^t are prissoners there hereafter—9s. 6d.—HORSLYDOWN M.M., *Surrey*.