

BERTHA BROWNELL BELT
January 6, 1892 to March 21, 1980

Although Bertha Belt had already retired from her career in Nursery Education when she joined the Friends Meeting of Washington, she slipped naturally into the work of the Religious Education Committee. Several here may remember the joyous experience of watching the children's expectant faces as Bertha told them the Christmas Story in the same lovely way she had done in her own nursery school.

A graduate of Teachers College, Columbia, Bertha further prepared herself for her career by graduate study at Columbia, George Washington and Maryland Universities. She taught Nursery Education in a Methodist Training School for Teachers and was active in the Religious Education Department of the Chevy Chase Methodist Church. In 1931, in cooperation with one friend, she opened the Outdoor Nursery School in her own home. Over the years two more teachers joined the cooperative and the number of children could be increased. When Bertha retired in 1962 the school had moved to another property, had ten teachers and sixty children enrolled.

Parents as well as children grew and developed at the Outdoor Nursery School. Bertha made it possible at least once during the school year for parents (unseen by the children) to observe their children at play. She arranged parent-teacher conferences and developed a parent-teachers association.

In 1919, Bertha married Rigel O. Belt. One son, Osborn, and two daughters, Avis and Molly, were born to them. For many years Bertha and Rigel were both devoted members of the Methodist Church but Methodism did not meet all of Bertha's needs. She joined the Unitarian Church for a time and finally came to Friends in 1964.

She could have been describing herself when, in her letter of application to this Meeting, she wrote, "Quakers seem to me to be gentle and truly tolerant, and at the same time, firm and unswerving in their devotion to the principles in which they believe." Bertha herself was all of these things - gentle, tolerant, firm and unswerving in her devotion to the principles in which she believed. That she was so Friendly while a member of other churches is mishaps not surprising for she also wrote, "My ancestors were New England Quakers. Maybe at last, after long wandering, I am returning home."

As her husband's health declined, Berth, was very limited in participation in Meeting affairs but kept in touch regularly by correspondence and monetary contributions. After his death and the death of a beloved daughter, she wrote, "The warmth with which I have been accepted (in the Meeting) has helped me bear the loss of loved ones . . ."

All who knew this gentle lady of loving spirit, strong faith and delightful humor would wish to agree with her husband who wrote of her in his slim volume of verse:

Where'er You Walk
I'll tell you, dear, where earth and heaven meet:

It's ever that spot just beneath your feet.

To Bertha

"I Love You"

Put this in the Soul's Archive,
That the thought may never die;
For when life shall cease to be
I will still be loving thee.