

Message 10- Nairobi and Archives Jan 13-22, 2020

One new project for this year that arose from last year's QREC (Quaker Religious Ed. Collaborative) was to help the African QREC steering committee in starting a Africa Quaker Archives. On the 13th, I began purchasing some basic office supplies in Kakamega. On the 14th, I travelled to FTC (Friends Theological College) in Kaimosi to help them get one room in their library cleaned out and ready to temporarily store archival materials we have begun collecting.

I met with the librarians at the site and then with Robert Wafula to explain the kinds of preparation needed before the arrival of Mary Craudereuff, from Haverford College Quaker Archives. Then in the afternoon, I travelled quickly to Kisumu and purchased a computer and scanner/printer for the archives with the help of Ken Saina, the bursar of FTC and of FUM African office.

On the 15th, I travelled by easy coach to Nairobi. Troops of baboons were seen along the roadside between Nakuru and Naivasha. Edna Bandi, a youth leader in Kariokor Monthly Meeting escorted me into the city the next day. We visited Donald and Ruth Thomas (Ruth used to be a librarian at Nairobi University and had several suggestions for the archives.) To my delight, we found Miriam Were, the first woman in Kenya who trained as a medical doctor visiting them. She is in the process of writing her autobiography and shared some with us about her early years as a Quaker in Lirhandia, how Quaker women used to be treated equally with men among the first African Quakers and how peacefully Friends lived together while others in the neighborhood beat their wives each night. All were excited to see the archives get started. Then in the afternoon we went to the industrial area to purchase several metal cabinets, plus archival boxes that will be shipped direct to FTC.



Etna Bandi, MKB, Miriam Were, Ruth and Donald Thomas (Donald just turned 90).

On Saturday, I visited old friends from Namirama, Professor Moni Wekesa and wife Rose and we laughed, shared stories, and sang together with joy. That night, we went to Nairobi airport to welcome Mary to Kenya. On the way past the Nairobi National Park, I saw a giraffe not far away. At first it seemed like a statue, but once it lowered its head to eat an acacia tree, it was obviously real.

Sunday we visited Donholm Monthly Meeting and were welcomed warmly. They had around 500 adults, plus a similar number of children that attended. They are in the process of completing a cathedral of a meetinghouse that can hold 2000 people.



The enormous, almost completed building View from top of balcony

Monday, Mary and I and Edna, went to the National Archives, right in the center of the city to meet with two Quakers who work there., Jane Andege and Atsango Iliakim. Atsango showed us book of close to 200 pages describing the boxes of Quaker archival material dating from 1902. In 1980, someone had brought boxes of historical records dating back to 1902 for safe keeping at the National Archives (done during the time the fighting over leadership and splitting of yearly meetings was going on). We were relieved that we don't need to start from scratch. Judith Nandikove will bring a photocopy to FTC next week, and the originals will remain in the National Archives.

Today, Mary and I awoke at 5am. Although the airport is usually only 10 minutes away from the airport, in the rush hour, it took us over one and a half hours through traffic jams to reach.

We flew to Kisumu, were met by Katrina and Shawn McConaughy, and then driven to FTC by their driver and finance manager. We crossed over the equator between Kisumu and Kaimosi.

Tomorrow, we will introduce Mary to the college and have her begin training and consulting with the librarians and help the Kenyan Archives Committee with training, planning out policy and timing of stages of the project. We keep finding many people who have been wanting to see an archives here, but it took a group of younger Kenyan Sunday School teachers to apply for grants with the help of Beth Collea to get the project started.



Mary standing on the equator. Someone had drawn a line across the road as well as erected this new sign.

Thanks for all your support. I leave for USA tomorrow after meeting with my Kenyan support committee.
Marian