THE OLIVE PRESS

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Ramallah Friends School's Monthly Newsletter

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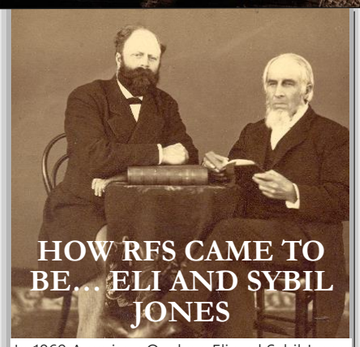
RAMALLAH FRIENDS SCHOOL



HOW RFS CAME TO BE… ELI AND SYBIL JONES

In 1869 American Quakers Eli and Sybil Jones from the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends visited Ramallah. They met with a young girl named Miriam. Upon asking Miriam about what she needs, she immediately replied: *a school for girls. We have none.*

The Jones established several schools for girls in Ramallah and surrounding villages, and in October of 1889 the Friends Girls School opened as "The Girls Training Home of Ramallah" (now RFS Lower School) with Miriam as a teacher.

As well-known Quaker Ministers, the Jones' had worked for education and peace their whole lives. Eli Jones (1807-1890) had visited most of the Yearly Meetings in USA and journeyed overseas. Sybil Jones (1808-1873) had comforted Mrs. Lincoln after the US President's assassination and gave spiritual advice to President Johnson.*

Besan Jaawan '01
RFS Development and Communications Manager

Letter from RFS Head of School

Welcome to the second issue of our Olive Press. The weather has changed in Ramallah and we have now had the first rain. The olive picking season follows the first rain and the school community is looking forward to picking the olives from the trees on the campus.

I am writing this from Pendle Hill in Wallingford, Pennsylvania. Just as in Ramallah the weather is changing and the leaves are turning from green to a golden brown. Pendle Hill was established in 1930 as a Quaker study center designed to prepare its adult students for service both in the Religious Society of Friends and in the world. Its mission was both educational and religious. It was to be a school rooted in Quaker community life where students and staff would live according to Quaker principles and practices and where learning would be experiential as well as intellectual. It is named after the Pendle Hill located in the east of Lancashire, England. In 1652, George Fox climbed Pendle Hill where he had a vision of a "great people to be gathered" waiting for him. It was this vision that led to him forming the Quaker movement.

HoS during his visit to Quaker institutions in the USA.

Ramallah Friends School has a strong connection with Pendle Hill because we also are based on Quaker values of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship. It is important that we understand what these principles mean in our daily lives. Based in Ramallah RFS is a school surrounded by the conflict that affects Palestine. We talk about peace and we promote peace but we should also understand how peace is understood by Friends. Peace is not just the absence of war and violence – it is more than that. It is about our day to day relationships with our families, our neighbors, our students and our colleagues. Peace is about how we cope with people we may find sometimes difficult and different from ourselves. It is about accepting there are different ways of doing things and that different does not mean worse. It is about right relationships. It is an important understanding to bring to our students and our community.

In this issue we look at the history of Ramallah Friends School through pictures, stories and through the people who make up our community. RFS as a school has changed dramatically over time yet the heart of the school remains the same. I see this time and time again in talking with teachers, and with alumni over the ages. At RFS we have a community living and working together to create a truly unique experience. It is an experience so unique that it lasts through the ages and has long lasting effect in people's lives.*

Adrian Moody

Adrian Moody - Head of School

GLANCE AT RFS HISTORY

Source: www.rfs.edu.ps

Established in 1869, the Ramallah Friends School's history is closely tied with the history of Palestine. Over the last century, the school has experienced Turkish, British, Jordanian, and Israeli occupation, world wars, and closures. The RFS, in its checkered political history has served not only as schools, but also as a center for refugees, a hospital, and a center for community lectures, concerts and other cultural activities.

Here is a quick glance at RFS during the last 148 years of Palestinian history:

The Ottoman Empire: In October 1889, Friends Girls School opened as "The Girls Training Home of Ramallah". The fifteen students who enrolled the first year came from Lydd, Jaffa, Aboud, Jerusalem, Beirut and Ramallah, and six years later the first class graduated. A Boys Training Home was founded in 1901 and later became the Friends Boys School.

First World War: The Girls Training Home (now the Lower School) and the Boys School (now the Upper School), like all other schools in Palestine, were closed throughout the war. During those years Turkish and then British troops occupied the buildings. British troops used the Boys School as a hospital in 1917.

British Mandate: Both schools reopened in 1919. At the newly named Friends Girls School, day students and boarders were accepted. Electric light was first used at the schools in 1923.

Nakba and Partition 1948: The partition of Palestine in 1948 and the subsequent expulsion of many Palestinians again changed the character of the School. Friends Meeting House and School grounds became the temporary home for refugees. Student numbers swelled to accommodate refugees from the coastal cities.

Jordanian Rule: The School had a relatively peaceful life during the Jordanian period from 1948-1967. Beginning in the late 50s, enrollment figures for the FBS (now the Upper School) rose dramatically, reaching a peak in 1966 at 320 students.

Israeli Occupation: Following Israeli occupation in 1967, the boarding sections in both schools were closed, as students from neighboring countries were no longer able to come. In 1990, the campus of the Girls School became a co-educational Elementary School and Kindergarten and the campus of the Boys School became a co-educational High School.

Palestinian National Authority: Following the Oslo agreements, the uneasy peace brought greater stability to the School with the emergence for the first time of a government in waiting that had a real interest in Palestinian education. The second Intifada began in September 2000 and RFS grounds were at the center of the cities exposed to a new level of violence with sequences of nightly shelling from Israeli tanks and light artillery and attacks by helicopter gunners.*

RFS Archive Project

As our beloved school turns 148 years old this year, we near the 150th anniversary of its establishment. A hundred and fifty years of history, culture, and identity lay within our school walls.

The **RFS Archive Room** will be located in the Middle School building, Upper campus, and is set to include all RFS' historical documents, photographs, and other historical materials. The archive project locates, collects and preserves all types of records relating to the school's history.

History of the RFS is a vital part of Palestinian history, and the history of Ramallah itself. We invite any member of the RFS community who may own any historical documents related to the school's history to please contact lmurra@rfs.edu.ps – We promise to take good care of your photos, all we need to do is scan them and return them to you.

Please help us gather this wonderful institution's history together!*

RFS, Lower School students 1890-1900

Alumni in the Spotlight

The Upper campus was delighted to receive special guest RFS Graduate, *Dr. Ibrahim Muhawi (Class of 1954).* Dr. Muhawi is a world-known writer and academic, and has taught in universities in USA, Amman and Palestine. Dr. Muhawi remembers the Upper campus when the RFS was still a boarding school, *"The dormitory was the 2nd floor of the Main bldg., that is where boarding students used to sleep." Dr. Ibrahim Muhawi*

As he walked around campus, Dr. Muhawi told the Olive Press about the hardship he had faced in trying to come home after finishing his studies in the USA. After the war of 1967, it was difficult and sometimes impossible for him and his school peers to come back to Palestine.

IN 2011, Dr. Muhawi won the PEN Translation Prize for his translation of Mahmoud Darwish's Journal of an Ordinary Grief. He had achieved his Ph.D from the University of California, Davis in 1969. *

HISTORY OF RFS UNIFORM 1869-2017 IN PHOTOS

RAMALLAH FRIENDS SCHOOL

UNIFORM

LEARNING SUPPORT PROGRAM… THE HISTORY

By Rana Mustaklem – Lower School LSP Department Head

Every child is a different kind of flower and all together these flowers make this world a beautiful garden.

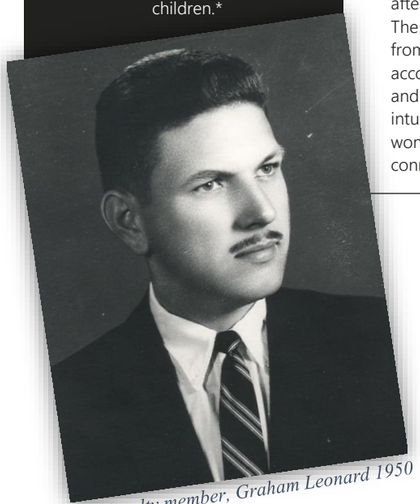
Inclusion is a value that supports the rights of children regardless of their diverse abilities, to participate actively in natural settings.

In 1995, the Learning Support Program (LSP) was introduced at the Ramallah Friends School and has been since then implemented adopting an inclusive philosophy. RFS is the first and the only school in Palestine to adopt the inclusive approach. Over the years and in the midst of all the challenges it has developed to become a pioneer model in inclusive education in Palestine.

By 2004, LSP was extended over to the Upper campus, and an LSP department was created and has since grown rapidly and beautifully.

Currently, the learning support team at RFS consists of two full time Learning Support Heads, six full time teachers and a full time teacher assistant. In addition to that, there are individual assistants on both campuses supported through parents' contributions.

RFS encourages all students with challenges to apply for admission to LSP; however, acceptance of students with needs is contingent on vacancies in the school and on the school's ability to address the needs of these children.*



RFS Faculty member, Graham Leonard 1950

Significant Milestones in the Development of RFS

Frieda Khayat – Lower School Principal

As a RFS graduate, a mother of two RFS graduates, and currently the Principal of the Lower School I am privileged to share RFS' enduring journey throughout the history of Palestine. Founded in 1869, RFS has been a part of Palestine's dramatic history. It witnessed and withstood transitions from the Ottoman Empire, WWI, WWII, British mandate, Jordanian rule, Israeli occupation, and the Palestinian National Authority. Steadfastly, it continues to nurture intellectual freedom and influence generations in spite of all challenging instabilities.

RFS has not only served as an educational institution in Palestine yet it has supported Palestinians in times of crisis as a hospital in 1917 and a refugee shelter in 1948. RFS dynamically transforms to cater to the needs of the Palestinian people. Nevertheless, it strives to provide opportunities within the culture of the Palestinian people and to embed Quaker values in daily life practices and attitudes of all.

Originally, Quaker Friends missioned to educate people in the surrounding villages of Ramallah in 1869. Opening their hearts to Palestine, they turned a Palestinian two-story house into the first Friends School, "Girls Training Home of Ramallah" with intentions to educate and empower girls by giving them the opportunity to flourish in their communities. In 1889, the first principal assigned to the Friends School was Ms. Katie Gabriel. Triumphantly, her first fifteen girls graduated six years later.

During an era where education was unheard of, the Friends Girls School had girls graduating year after year and steadily began to expand its facilities.

In 1897, a dormitory was established in addition to a dining room, adjourning room and a hallway.

Development Stages at the Lower School

In 1897, a dormitory was established in addition to a dining room, adjourning room and a hallway. In 1910, a third floor was added. Later in 1929, the home economic cottage was built. Other additions included the Whittier building in 1934, Shaheen building in 1992, and the new kindergarten building in 2011. An additional floor to the kindergarten building is currently under construction.

In 1990s, the Friends Girls School (FGS) was united with the Friends Boys School (FBS) to accommodate grades KG-12th as one coeducational school with FGS as the Lower Campus and FBS as the Upper Campus.

Generation after generation, RFS continues to inspire and prepare the youth of Palestine for the unknown future. Our Quaker Friends wholeheartedly planted that very first seed in 1869, and it has been fruitful ever since.*

MOSAIC

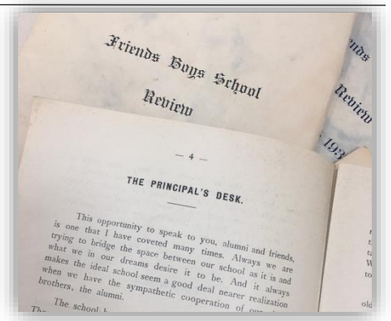
Riyam Kafri – Upper School Principal

Who isn't tempted by the allure of a historical school? A school that stood the test of time, and still does. A school that has so much tradition you cannot help but be drawn to the old stories, the myths and the legends.

The Upper School that was founded as the Friends Boys School in 1901 is nothing short of legendary. Today the home of 700 plus students, its walls seem to be waiting to tell us the stories of many generations past.

My friend Graham Leonard came to visit a few weeks ago, Graham is a former teacher at FBS and an avid educator who is still very much active in educational discourse. I love his visits, and the hour I get to spend with him leaves me with much to think about for months to come. This time around, he came bearing gifts. He gave me several Friends Boys School publications from the 1920's onwards. He asked that those be properly archived, and I dutifully promised that they would, only after I took the time to read through them.

The publications included journal entries from students, a letter from the principal properly called The Principal's Desk, a historical account of how Quakers entered Palestine, Syria and Jordan… and much more. What was striking the most is the legacy that is intuitively passed on from one generation to the other, and the wonderful anecdotes that someone who feels an umbilical connection to the school would appreciate.


Friends Boys School Review

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THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK.

This opportunity to speak to you, alumni and friends, is one that I have coveted many times. Always we are trying to bridge the space between our school as it is and what we in our dreams desire it to be. And it always makes the ideal school seem a good deal nearer realization when we have the sympathetic cooperation of our brothers, the alumni.

You cannot help but feel that you are part of a bigger picture. A *mosaic* of human beings who served this community generously.

Schools are such human places; their psyches reflect that of their community. And because they are human places, simple stories like the first time Chemistry was offered at FBS (around 1931) become significant and hold a meaning beyond just dates and history to a principal serving her term in 2017.

We are all part of the RFS mosaic. Each one of us is either an alumnus, a parent, or an employee, or all of the above. Each one of us is a brush stroke on the RFS canvas.*

RFS in the 1950s

Dr. Graham Leonard visited both campuses and spoke with students at LS Chapel meeting. He had taught at the RFS in the 1950s.

"I came to Ramallah first in 1950, 67 years ago, and I fell in love with Palestine and came back." – Dr. Graham Leonard

Dr. Leonard remembers arriving in Ramallah from Tennessee, USA to find the tiny town flooded with Palestinian refugees after the 1948 exodus. The Quaker Friends Meetinghouse had been occupied by refugees until May 1950, and most of RFS students at that time were refugees from Northern Palestine who had fled to the West Bank.

*"We could see Tel Aviv and Lid, there weren't any high building yet, but we all knew we could not reach there." – Dr. Graham Leonard**

Dr. Graham Leonard and Lower School Principal Frieda Khayat

A Lifetime at the RFS

Donn Hutchison – RFS retired English teacher

I can remember the first day I came through the gate at the Friends Boys School (Upper School). I had never been on a plane, had never been more than 150 miles away from home, hadn't finished college, was young, inexperienced, naïve, and had black wavy hair. It was a lifetime ago.

That first year of teaching was a horrible year. I was a terrible teacher. I drew circles on the board and made talkative students put their noses in the circle. I would occasionally shout and scream. Most of the students had no idea what I was screaming about and took pleasure in my crazy performance. They would look at the raving man and *smile!* It was a lifetime ago.

When I went out the gate for the last time that first year, I vowed I would never be a teacher and I would *never return!* It was 1966. It was a lifetime ago.

When staff posed for the 2012 faculty picture, I found myself standing in the same spot, on the same step, where I had stood for a faculty photo forty-seven years ago!

The Ramallah Friends School (RFS) has been the frame in which I lived my adult life. My late wife's family had been associated with the Friends since the first Quakers came to Ramallah (1869). My children, my wife, both her parents, her sisters, her aunts, and her grandparents were all associated with RFS. It has been a lifetime.

Looking back, I can see the faces of so many students and teachers – and still remember most of their names. I have seen students become parents and grandparents.

At RFS, Donn Hutchinson in 1990s.

I see them today and remember how they were so many years ago. I see the face of the child in the adult of today. That has been a blessing. Those chapters of my life have given me wonderful stories; it has given me the opportunity to meet amazing individuals; I am thankfully that Allah has written the script of my life as it has been written. I am thankful for the chapters that have been. I am thankful for those I have taught; I have loved my students; I always thought I should have had dozens of children, and in a way I have. There is blessing in that, and I am grateful.*

Upcoming Dates and Events

November 4th
US – End of 1st Quarter, no school.

November 6th & 7th
US – Parent-Teacher Conference

November 15th
Holiday (no school)/ Independence Day.

November 16th
LS – End of 1st Trimester, no school.

November 18th & 20th
LS – Parent-Teacher Conference.

November 25th
Staff professional development workshop (half-day)

December 2nd
Holiday (no school) – Al Mawlid Al Nabawi Islamic Holiday (tentative)

RFS Graduation Ceremony 1950s

December 4th – 14th
LS – Report cards distribution
2nd tuition payment due (Grades 10th- 12th)
3rd tuition payment due (Grades KG – 9th)

** LS – Lower School
** US – Upper School

When everything seems dark, consider you may be the light.
Quaker Proverb

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College Counseling Deadlines

November 1st, 14th or 15th
Multiple USA universities Early Action/Decision #1 Applications.

November 10th
UBC and University of Toronto Canadian nomination scholarships (date to submit application for RFS nomination).

December 1st
Multiple USA universities Early Action/Decision #2 Applications.

*For all universities in USA and Canada: Please check application deadlines of your specific universities online.

RAMALLAH FRIENDS SCHOOL
Communications Office