

MARY BONSAI

Mary Bonsal, originally from West Chester, lived at the Friends Boarding Home in Newtown from 1904 to her death in 1940. She and her sister Sarah regularly attended Newtown Meeting where Mary acquired the affectionate but amusing nickname among the George School students of "Manifestation." It was a favorite game of theirs to count how many times Mary used the word "manifestation" during one ministry. However, she could be graphic and succinct in her ministry, too, as in her comment in Yearly Meeting when some difference of opinion arose and an air of uncertainty prevailed. Mary rose and said, "Every tub should sit on its own bottom," and promptly sat down. When she became excited, she was likely to lapse into "sing-song" ministry. "Sing-song" ministry resembled the stylized form of intonation of a priest saying the Mass and used to be popular among some Quakers as an indication of being especially moved by the Holy Spirit. With the death of Mary, "sing-song" ministry ended in Newtown Meeting.

Lois Mammel
From conversations with
Julia Balderston,
Elsie Cooke, and
Lucretia Mammel