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KINGDOM FARM and GILEAD SCHOOL

Adapted by WILLIAM HEIDT, JR.

CITY HISTORIAN



1971

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*This modest volume is
dedicated to
DAVID ABBUHL
whose eyes saw it all and whose hands
contributed so much*

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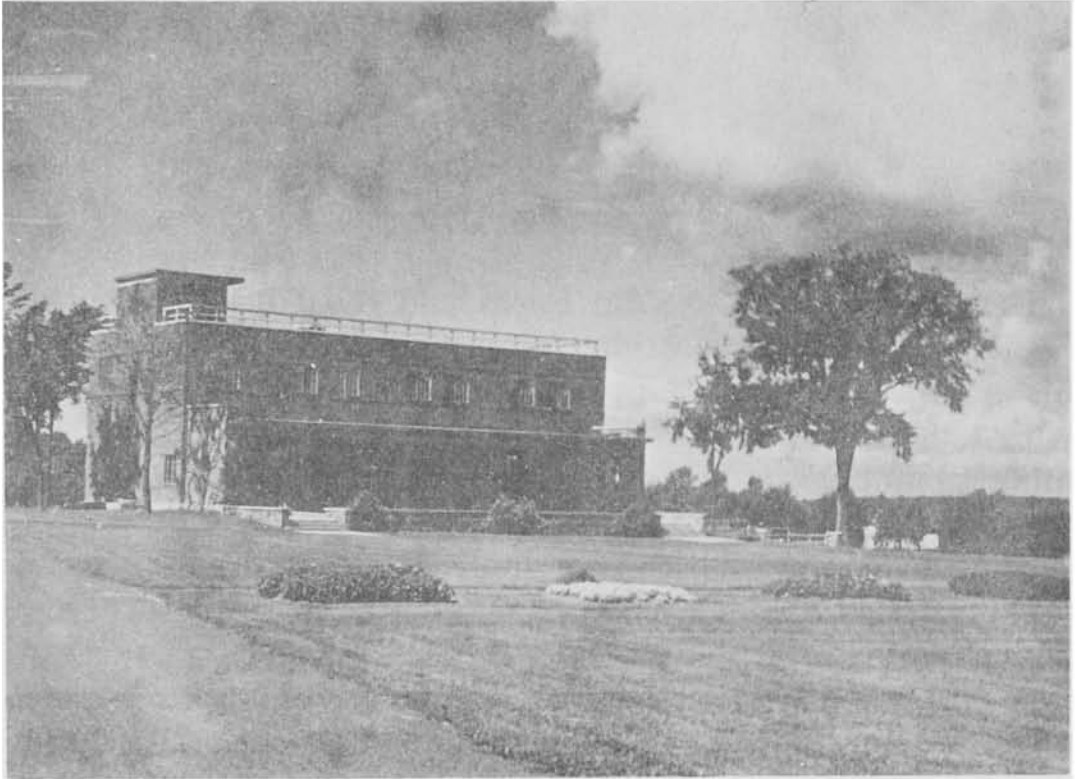
An Explanation

Development of Kingdom Farm and the Gilead School at South Lansing a generation ago provides a segment of local history that has not been preserved on the printed page, notwithstanding the importance and scope of the enterprise. This modest pamphlet is presented as an effort to overcome an apparent neglect.

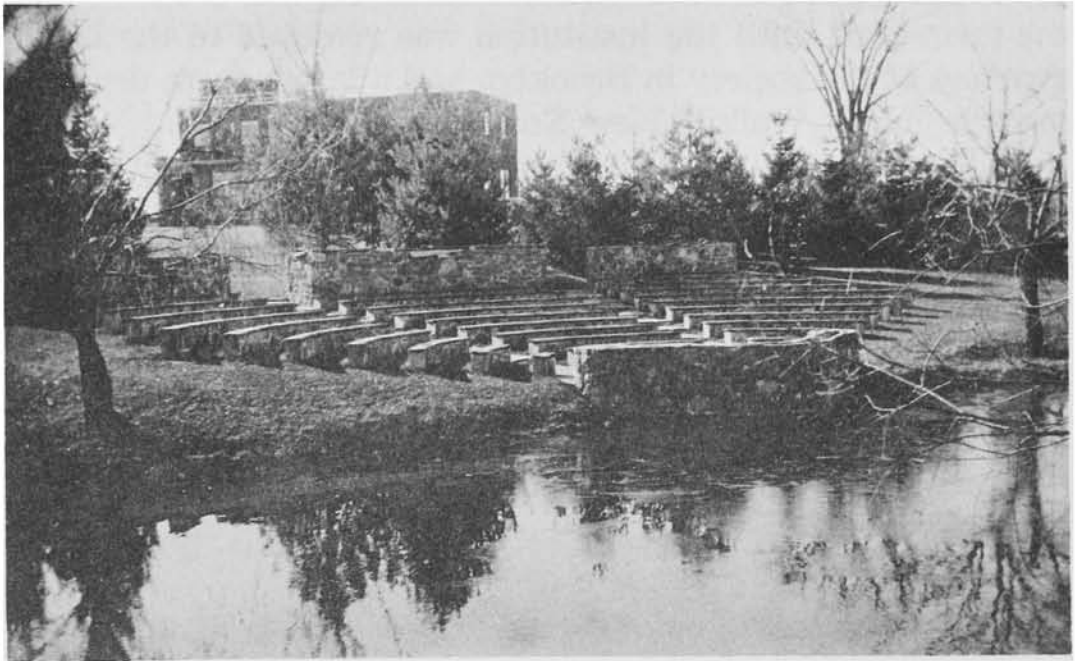
The reader may notice that the material is credited to no author, a fact that in no way mars the authenticity of the manuscript from which the account is taken. It is pointed out that author's names are normally omitted from matter issued under the imprint of the Watch Tower and Tract Society under whose auspices it was prepared.

The manuscript has been reviewed by the Watch Tower authorities as to its accuracy. The chronological record of events was provided by LaVearne L. Ebel, minister of the Ithaca congregation of Jehovah's witnesses. He was a member of the farm staff until the institution was removed to the headquarters of the society in Brooklyn and a larger farm development begun at Walkill, New York.

The original draft of this report and a carbon copy of the course of study as filed with the State Department of Education, together with six large photographs of the buildings comprising the Lansing complex, are deposited in the DeWitt Historical collection under Lansing 2-2-7. The material is available to history researchers.—W.H.jr.



Library Building completed in 1946



Stone Amphitheater as seen across the South Pond

Farm Development Launched in 1935

Kingdom Farm today in the year 1953 is a prosperous self-contained community of 170 persons. Its brief history is filled with many reverses, but by sheer perseverance and faith, prosperity and blessings have come. Those who compromise this community are Jehovah's witnesses who are members of the Watch Tower Society, an international organization dedicated to Bible education.

The legal corporation of Jehovah's witnesses is known as Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, incorporated. It was chartered in the state of New York in the year 1909. In January 1935, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society purchased a 600-acre tract of land north of the village of South Lansing.

Farming operations were commenced and the operations were undertaken under the name of Kingdom Farm Association, although the Watchtower Society was the sponsor. A number of volunteer workers of Jehovah's witnesses were called to work together as members of the Kingdom Farm Association. The purpose of operating this large project was to produce food for the Watch Tower Society's international headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. The lands that were purchased proved to be good for dairy operations, raising chickens and general arable farming.

Operations were commenced in the dead of winter of 1935 with a few head of cattle which were kept in one of the small barns obtained along with the land. As spring approached some arable crops were set out. Then came their first great reverse in the spring of 1935. A great flood occurred which ruined many of the Association's crops and washed out two dams on the farm. It washed out also an old railroad bridge of the former New York, Auburn & Lansing Railroad which ran through the farm.

After suffering these losses, it was decided to build a new

house with a large communal dining room to serve as a center for the new development. This large house was completed in the late summer of 1935. Then to replace a burnt-down dairy barn, the Kingdom Farm Association decided in 1936 to build a large, modern barn structure measuring 180 feet by 30 feet and 40 feet high. This was completed in 1936; it is one of the largest dairy barns in this part of the county. It has a hayloft which holds 100 tons of hay. It is equipped to house at least 50 milking cows and contains modern milking and feeding equipment.

After many years of painstaking effort, an excellent herd of Holstein-Friesian cattle now fills this barn. A small milk plant was added to the former passenger station building of the New York, Auburn & Lansing Railroad, which building the Association had also acquired. In this small-built plant milk was processed into butter and various cheeses. A machine shop also was added to this same former passenger station building.

As the years went on, further improvements and expansion through added farm lands were realized. In 1938 another 100 acres of contingent lands were acquired and still later, in 1953, further acreage was purchased, bringing the total land area of Kingdom Farm to now approximately 800 acres.

A greenhouse was built after 1937 and still later a small powerhouse was constructed and installed were three diesel engines to furnish stand-by electric power. In 1941 a large brick building was completed, adding a floor space of some 40,000 square feet for the Association's administrative purposes and for dormitory and general household uses.

At the dedication of this building on June 1, 1941, Judge Rutherford, the president of the Watchtower Society, stated, "I assure you at the outset, this building is built for a good purpose with the hope of doing good to all as we have opportunity and to do evil to no one. This building will stand as a monument to the name of the Almighty God and His King and testify to the fact that men and women who built it had faith in God, Christ Jesus His King, and who know that the Bible is His Word of truth." The large building, which had

been built by means of volunteer labor, was given a Bible name, that of "Gilead" which means "heap of witnesses."

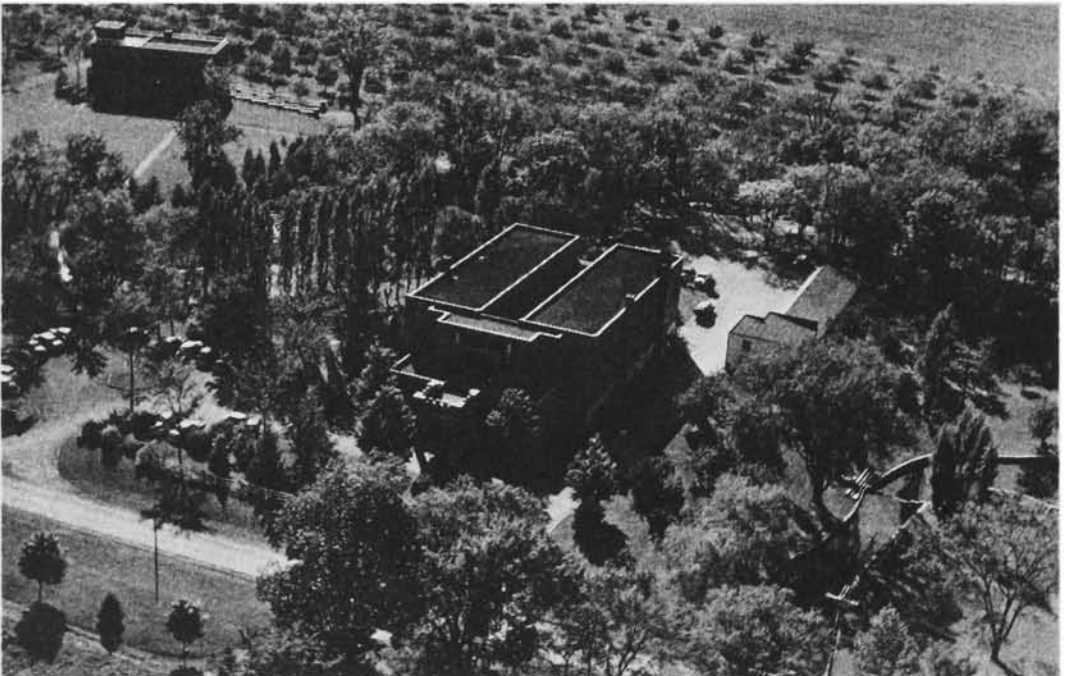
In 1941 a mill elevator was built with a capacity of 15,000 bushels of grain. This additional building was equipped with an elevator, grinding, cleaning, and mixing machinery where flour is ground and feed mixed. In connection with the mill, the Association operates also a puffing machine which puffs wheat, corn, and rice. Still later, another building was constructed and known as "the carpenter shop."

Other construction in the course of years comprises the building of an outdoor swimming pool, an outdoor amphitheater seating 350, a 35,0000-gallon underground water supply reservoir, a library building, transforming of three farmhouses into modern school dormitories, and in 1952 the building of a large, new combination milk plant, deep freeze and cold storage building. Additional water dams also have been constructed in connection with our own water system as well as for irrigation and school campus purposes.

During the past eighteen years of operation, the lands have been fertilized and built up. Several orchards have been planted and are now bearing fruit. An apiary has been profitably operating for many years, producing honey. Aside from the dairy herd which has taken third prize in New York state, a beef herd of 150 head is also operated. Hogs, sheep, poultry, turkeys, and geeses are raised to provide a meat supply for the resident staff and the resident students, but also to supply meat for the Watchtower Society's headquarters staff in Brooklyn which numbers 450 persons. The Association operates a ditch digger which has laid many miles of drain tile and has greatly improved our lands.



*Farm Buildings ca. 1953, including slaughterhouse, creamery;
1935 farmhouse, 1952 cheese factory, 1937 barn (in corner)*



School Campus

Bible School of Gilead Established

Toward the end of 1942 the Board of Directors of the Watchtower Society in Brooklyn decided to establish a ministerial training school to be located on Kingdom Farm. It was proposed to use the large brick building constructed in 1941 as its principal school building, and from there to build a radiating campus in due course as well as other school-plant buildings. After some months of preparation, the ministerial school was dedicated and commenced functioning on February 1, 1943. This new educational institution was named "The Watchtower Bible School of Gilead."

The school auditorium, which seats upwards of 200 persons, is also the assembling place for the Ithaca and the South Lansing congregations of Jehovah's witnesses. There are nearly 100 of Jehovah witnesses and associates living in Tompkins County who meet regularly at Kingdom Farm for their congregational meetings on Friday and Sunday evenings. Congregational Bible studies are conducted and public lectures are held. The public is invited to attend these Christian assemblies.

The Bible school conducts two graduations each year. The winter graduation generally is held the first week in February and the summer graduation, the last week in July. For the summer graduation of 1952, 12,500 people assembled on our premises. For the winter graduation of 1953, 2,300 were in attendance. At each graduation the school graduates 110 to 130 ministerial students and missionaries. Graduates of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead are now found in more than 90 countries of the earth. Kingdom Farm together with its school is not only a nationally known place, but has become a location of great international publicity and interest. In 1950, following the international convention of Jehovah's witnesses at Yankee Stadium in New York City, more than 15,000 per-

sone from 70 countries visited the farm and school premises.

Jehovah's witnesses at Kingdom Farm, being ordained Christian ministers, spend much of their time preaching in accordance with the primitive Christian methods as established by Christ Jesus. Saturdays and Sundays are spent in visiting people in Tompkins County from house to house to preach the Bible message concerning the incoming new world of righteousness. During the weekdays in the evenings, home Bible studies are conducted by members of the Kingdom Farm family in the homes of interested people living within a radius of 30 miles of South Lansing.

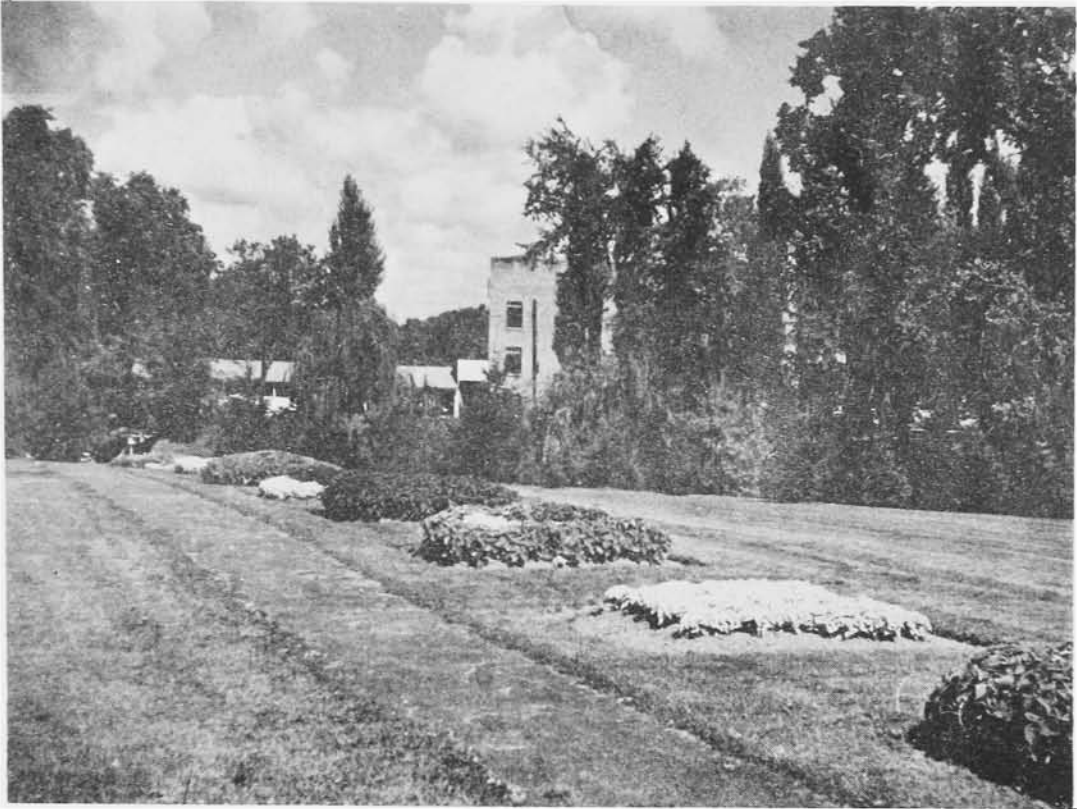
Before concluding this report, it must be stated that all who live on Kingdom Farm are fully dedicated Christian ministers. Also the 120-some students must be dedicated and practicing ministers before they enter school. The others who reside as part of the permanent staff of farm operators and members of the faculty are also full-time ministers of the gospel, having practiced such before being granted an appointment to serve on Kingdom Farm. The permanent staff of 50 is made up of men and women, married and single, all volunteering their services. They receive an allowance of \$12 a month to cover their incidental expenses. Food and lodging are supplied by the Association.

Along with this report, several photographs are being appended that show many of the buildings and give various views of the campus and farm lands. Our neighbors residing in Tompkins County and all persons of goodwill who are interested in true Christianity are welcome to visit our school and farm operations at any time.

GILEAD SCHOOL MOVED

After graduating 3,638 at the school while it was located on Kingdom Farm, Gilead moved to Brooklyn in 1960. New quarters in a new building became its current home.

But until 1967 facilities on Kingdom Farm were used for the Kingdom Ministry School. It was a short refresher course for congregation overseers (presiding ministers) and their assistants from over the United States; 7,000 were trained. In 1967 this, too, was moved to Brooklyn.



Main School building as seen from Library

Although in 1968 the school buildings and some of the farm buildings and land were sold to New York State for the Lansing School for Girls, 550 acres remain for Kingdom Farm. The farm is now chiefly used for a few main farm crops and some beef-breeding cattle in support of the development of a 1,600-acre farm at Walkill.

Kingdom Farm and the schools there and in Brooklyn have played their part in the worldwide increase of membership in Jehovah's witnesses. Five years before the school was started, there were slightly more than 59,000 Witnesses worldwide. Five years later, when the Gilead School was started, the number had more than doubled to 126,000. When Gilead was moved in 1960 this number has grown to be 916,000; but seven years later, when the Kingdom Missionary School moved, the million-mark had been comfortably surpassed at 1,160,604.

David Abbuhl, His Eyes Saw It All

The following account was compiled from chronological information taken from the official records. The first part concerns David Abbuhl who, though small in stature, has done the work of a giant in development of Kingdom Farm.

Born at Rome, New York, in 1888, he was a Lutheran until he was 22. Like so many people of his era, he became acquainted with Jehovah's witnesses through the newspaper syndicated sermons of Pastor Russell. On an occasion he had the privilege of hearing Russell speak in person.

Hard working but not an extrovert, he enjoyed working with people. For three years he devoted full time to pioneer ministry where no congregations existed, an area which included Schuyler County, Louisiana, and east of Binghamton.

On January 1, 1935, he was asked to take care of seven horses for a few days when the Jersey Milk and Cream Co. was in receivership and the farm had been purchased by the Watchtower Society. This was the beginning of Kingdom Farm, when Dave was all alone for two weeks.

The property included houses and the depot building of the old hamlet of Midway, or Gage as listed by the railroad. Even though alone, he promptly sowed the seeds for a congregation.

David Abbuhl was to see many changes, for the next year the buildings at Sanitaria Springs torn down and the salvaged materials used to build the main farm house. No. 1.

The congregation was organized in 1937, the year after the dairy barn was built. Its original service purpose was to supply food in time of emergency for Jehovah's witnesses in full-time activity with the organization.

During 1940 the main building, Gilead, was built; it had 59 rooms. Six years later the Library Building was added. During this time, the Carmel farm near Etna was operated 10 years.



Kingdom Farm Family including instructors of Gilead School about 1954. David Abbuhl is older of two men standing in the foreground

The farm was developed during 1935-42. Dave the cheesemaker worked hard. Then abandoning this craft from 1942 to 1967 he did landscape and stonework. This included pools, dams, stone fronts on buildings, fireplaces. But the big event in Dave's life was Europe in 1955 when a series of conventions were held in London, Paris, Rome, Nurmberg, Stockholm, The Hague. He was one of 10,000 delegates from the United States to travel aboard one of two chartered steamships.

By installing partitions in the Gilead building, Dave beheld the beginning of the missionary school in 1943. This gave him an opportunity to become personally acquainted with young people from all over the world. Between 1960 and 1967 it became Kingdom Ministry School.

From 1945 to 1947 Dave associated with the beginnings of a truly Ithaca congregation then meeting in rented space on E. Seneca Street. Three years later, when the Watkins Glen and Trumansburg congregations were organized, Dave went to Trumansburg where he led weekly Bible study Sundays, but

Saturdays he assisted in putting stonework on the front of the Trumansburg and Ithaca Kingdom Halls.

Graduations always were major events to Dave and all else connected with Gilead. It can be imagined how thrilled he was when 12,000 persons attended the February 1958 services. It snowed during the exercises to necessitate 700 staying overnight. Dave saw quite a rustle to distribute blankets and mattresses off beds. But he was equal to the occasion.

On Flag Day, June 14, 1940, Dave was saddened, for a mob came to Kingdom Farm to destroy it. But his injured feelings were later assuaged when two of the visitors became Jehovah's witnesses.

Semi-retired, Dave joined the new Watchtower Farm Development near Walkill, New York, and took an keen interest in the new activity, especially putting his touch on the landscape until his death early in 1971.