

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Friends Advice
Montgomery County
Maryland

M: 18-15

Section number 8 Page 12

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

The evolution of Friends Advice, also known at one time as Walldene, is a reflection of its association with the members of a prominent Montgomery County family whose achievements became part of the chronicles of American history and who inevitably anchored their lives there, to carry, through one era after another, an ambitious cycle of development - improving, changing, adding to, altering, and redefining Friends Advice until it reached its present level as an authentic American country seat. Beginning in 1792 with the Reverend Townshend Dade, the history of Friends Advice has been highlighted by the biographies of his son Robert Townshend Dade, great great grandson William Guy Wall, and his great great great grandson-in-law General Albert C. Wedemeyer.

Reverend Townshend Dade (1742-1822)

Two hundred years of Dade family ownership of Friends Advice began in 1792, when the Reverend Townshend Dade purchased 345 acres of "Resurvey on Friends Advice" for £630.¹ Reverend Dade's residency in Montgomery County came after three decades of religious and revolutionary activities in Virginia. In 1765 the 23-year-old Dade, whose ordination had been sponsored by family friend George Washington, became the rector of Falls Church and of a small Episcopal chapel of ease near Alexandria, Virginia. When the congregation completed Christ Church in Alexandria in 1773, Reverend Dade became its first rector.

Reverend Dade was an active participant in early revolutionary events. With his father, he signed the "Resolutions of the Patriots of the Northern Neck of Virginia," drawn up by Richard Henry Lee to protest the Stamp Act; in 1774 he was recorded as a member of the Fairfax County committee.² In 1778, Reverend Dade resigned and relocated in Loudoun County, Virginia. Visits to relatives and occasional preaching led Reverend Dade to Maryland, where his marriage in 1784 to Polly Simmons of Piney Hill (present-day Boyds) settled them in Montgomery County by 1792.³

By 1792, the Dades had two children and twice that number of slaves. Reverend Dade practiced medicine and occasionally married couples upon request, but was not affiliated with any church. To the original acreage, he added 120+ more, as well as a stone spring and dairy house (1806), tobacco barns, and other buildings necessary to a growing plantation.⁴ He continued to live at Friends Advice until his death in 1822.

Robert Townshend Dade (1786-1873)

Colonel Robert Townshend Dade, only son of Townshend and Polly, brought his bride Ruth Simmons to Friends Advice in 1808. This event probably occasioned the need for improvements to the original five-room log house on the property. Robert Townshend Dade "cleared my places of stones, and put up a good deal of fence, built a large three-story stone house." The three-bay Federal-style block made of local Seneca sandstone faced south, featured front and back parlors on the west side, a spacious hall, and six bedrooms on two floors above, and was joined to the earlier building by a covered arch or breezeway.⁵

Robert served as a captain in Cramer's Detachment of the Maryland Militia during the War of 1812, taking part in the disastrous Battle of Bladensburg and in the victory at Baltimore. Setting a family military tradition, he was known as Colonel Dade for the remainder of his life. At his death in 1822, Reverend Dade left his son a substantial estate, including cattle, hogs, horses, turkeys, ducks, geese, furniture, nine slaves, crops of wheat, rye, corn, and tobacco.⁶ Robert continued to live at Friends Advice with his wife and children, mother, and two unmarried sisters. He added other farms and slaves to the holdings, by 1856 owning 1200 acres and 20 slaves. A democrat, Dade served three terms in the Maryland Legislature, beginning in 1832, and in 1861 represented Montgomery County at the convention held to determine the State's role in the impending conflict. During the war, the Dade family sided with the south, as did most of their neighbors.⁷

Robert Townshend Dade died in 1873 at age 86, a few months before the B&O Railroad Company opened its Metropolitan Branch through Montgomery County. His son Robert and daughter Anna, who remained at Friends Advice, took advantage of being located one mile from Bucklodge station.

Mary Catharine Dade Wall (1849-1932)

After the death of her father Robert in 1881, Colonel Dade's granddaughter Mary Catharine Dade Wall, with her husband William Edwards Wall, took over operations of the farm.⁸ The Walls moved into the house with their six children, governess, and friend Laura Kendall. William Wall, a selling agent for the B.B. & R. Knight cotton mills, best known for Fruit of the Loom cottons, remained based in New York City. He traveled extensively on business and came to the Boyds farm on holidays and many weekends. Before her husband retired from active business in 1920, Mary Wall was responsible for overseeing the farm. She hired a professional farm manager and constructed a frame house for him and his family.

William Guy Wall (1876-1941)

At Mary Wall's death in 1932, the property was inherited by William Guy Wall. Colonel Wall was an automotive engineer and a graduate of VMI and MIT and veteran of the Spanish-American War. By 1900 he moved to Indianapolis, center of activity for the budding automobile industry. He was the founder, vice president, and chief engineer of the National Motor Car and Vehicle Corporation, and in 1917 was one of the first automotive engineers to be called upon by the U.S. government to assist in wartime. For two years he headed the Ordnance Department section charged with design, construction and maintenance of armored cars, tanks, ammunition trucks and artillery tractors, playing an important part in the motorization of the American army.¹⁰

After WWI, he returned to Indianapolis, and became the consulting engineer for several prominent automobile companies. Colonel Wall in 1928 was president of the Society of Automotive Engineers, a professional standards organization for the automobile industry. His first wife died in 1931. Three years later, he married Helen Wessel of Washington, D.C. The couple maintained homes in Indianapolis and in Boyds at Walldene.¹¹

The Walls like to entertain, and the two bedrooms in the new addition were often filled with guests. Colonel Wall's membership in several prestigious Washington clubs and his position as master of the Potomac Hunt, a county institution, solidified their local social connections.

Colonel Wall died in 1941. Helen Wall continued to live at Walldene for another decade. To conserve costs, she used the rear north room on the first floor of the new stone addition as her kitchen. As he had no children of his own, Colonel Wall's will directed his surviving siblings to elect among his nieces and nephews the Dade descendant who should inherit the ancestral home upon Helen's death. They chose Elizabeth Dade Wedemeyer, granddaughter of Mary Dade Wall, who since her marriage in 1925 had lived in different parts of the world with her husband, General Albert C. Wedemeyer.

Albert C. Wedemeyer (1897-1989)

General Albert C. Wedemeyer played a significant role in the American conduct of World War II. A West Point graduate, he was the first American to attend (1936-1938) the Kriegsakademie, the German general staff college. It was he who formulated the grand strategy later adopted by the Allies to win World War II. Known as the "Victory Program" upon its presentation to President Roosevelt in September of 1941, it proposed defeating Germany with ground forces and relegating war against Japan to a secondary role. After Pearl Harbor, this plan served official Washington as the basic guide for deploying the Allied forces.

In October 1943, General Wedemeyer became deputy Chief of Staff to Britain's Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, commander in chief of the Southeast Asia Command. A year later, when General Stillwell was recalled and China-Burma-India operations reorganized, General Wedemeyer was placed in command of the separate China theater. As Chief of Staff to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Chinese Nationalists, and as American commander in China through 1946, General Wedemeyer participated in the early stages of the Chinese civil war.

General Wedemeyer's subsequent career included commands of the Second and Sixth armies, a mission to the Far East for President Truman, and to the Pentagon. He received the Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster and Distinguished Flying Cross.

Throughout their married life, the Wedemeyers lived in Army quarters and, as they moved from one assignment to another, had no permanent home. The family

farm in Boyds was the constant thread in their lives, as they returned to spend summers and lengthy vacations between overseas military assignments. The Wedemeyers entertained military and civilian guests at Friends Advice, and General Wedemeyer worked and wrote there.

Upon his retirement in 1951, General and Mrs. Wedemeyer made the Walldene estate their permanent home, renaming it "Friends Advice." General Wedemeyer was promoted to full general in 1954. In retirement, he served as a director of several corporations, and also published a book of memoirs entitled Wedemeyer Reports.¹⁴

General and Mrs. Wedemeyer lived at Friends Advice from 1951 until the General's death in 1989. During that period, they purchased two adjoining farms and renovated the farmhouses, added a pond, rebuilt the hoghouse into a bathhouse, rebuilt bridges, remodeled the tenant house, and added a new septic system, well, iron gates and posts brought from England, and large flagstone patio. In the main dwelling, the Wedemeyers concentrated on updating the rear frame section; they modernized the back kitchen, installed a hot water heating system, developed the back apartment, and sheathed the frame exterior in aluminum siding.

During their 38-year tenure, the Wedemeyers made few alterations to the 1939 stone section; Helen Wall's front kitchen was replaced with an office, and a small back hall area became a coat closet with trap door over the cellar steps. In the 1970s, they re-roofed the entire house with asphalt shingle. In 1974 General Wedemeyer moved his secretary Elaine Hill from their Washington, D.C. office to the newly-converted west (frame) section of the garage. Soon after, the Wedemeyers converted the east section of the late 19th century frame block into a two-story apartment for Ms. Hill, and she moved there.

Since 1989, General and Mrs. Wedemeyer's son, Albert D. Wedemeyer, and his wife Dorothy have lived at Friends Advice, on the property purchased by Mr. Wedemeyer's family 200 years and six generations ago.