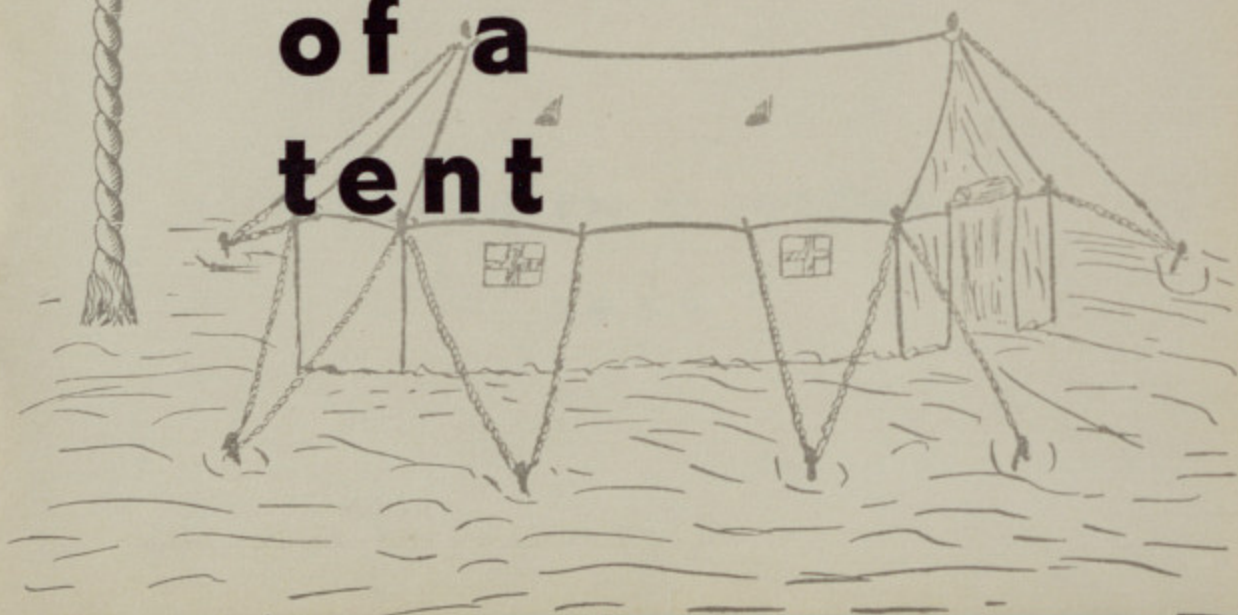




THE
Y.M.C.A. JERUSALEM
IN
JORDAN

A NEW BEGINNING AND HOW A
CHALLENGE WAS MET

**the
story
of a
tent**



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Y. M. C. A.
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THE STORY OF A TENT



CHRISTINA H. JONES

JERUSALEM - JORDAN

1965

The Story of a Tent



A solitary tent pitched on the border of Aqabat Jabr Camp, Jericho became the nucleus of the significant program that was to develop in a most spectacular way through the years.

Over the years, the tent on the border of Aqabat Jabr Camp has become a nucleus of a significant program that was to develop in a most spectacular way through the years. The program was initiated by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in 1948. At that time, the tent was pitched on the border of Aqabat Jabr Camp, Jericho, which was a refugee camp for Palestinian refugees. The program was aimed at providing relief and assistance to the refugees, and it was one of the first steps in the development of the Aqabat Jabr Camp. The program was successful in providing relief and assistance to the refugees, and it was one of the first steps in the development of the Aqabat Jabr Camp. The program was successful in providing relief and assistance to the refugees, and it was one of the first steps in the development of the Aqabat Jabr Camp.

The Story of a Tent

They were only five, these young men from the Jerusalem, Palestine Y.M.C.A., of the vast number of refugees that was to swell to a million before the summer of 1948 was over, but they were not daunted by the catastrophe created by the Partition of Palestine and they set to work at once to meet its challenge. They were an unusual team for the work : a waiter, a janitor, a gardener, a swimming instructor, and an accountant who had been the business-secretary of the Y.M.C.A. for some years. As they met to decide what to do, any plans had to be tentative for they fully expected to be able to return to their former posts in the existing Y.M.C.A. in Jerusalem at any time.

To start a Y.M.C.A. program in the midst of the misery, fear, and uncertainty of the Jerusalem of 1948 was out of the question and, quite wisely, the group did not attempt it but turned instead to the very pressing immediate needs of the uprooted thousands who had crowded into the hill country about Jerusalem. Aside from the physical needs of food and shelter, these unhappy people needed to feel that something was being done to help them.

The services of the team were quickly accepted by the government of Transjordan for the distribution of food and by the International Red Cross to help with the distribution of clothing. This was no easy task as no one knew how many refugees must share the food and clothing. Ramallah, Bireh, Bir Zeit and other villages in the Jerusalem sub-district were crowded with people with no roofs over their heads, constantly moving about trying to find shelter. There was urgent need to find out, if possible, how many refugees were in the area and that called for a census. The seemingly impossible task of numbering the refugees was solved by the simple expedient of asking the temporary government to place a six hour curfew over the entire area surrounding Ramallah. During that period, a large number of volunteers, teachers, social-workers, and former government officials went into action and the task was accomplished with

reasonable accuracy and provided the International Red Cross with a workable list when it was called on by the United Nations in November, 1948 to set up a relief program for Arab Refugees. Until this program was set in motion, the first big scale distribution of food and clothing for the refugees was carried on from a modest office which the Y.M.C.A. set up in Ramallah.

Through the hot summer days, the Y.M.C.A. Team and others who volunteered to help them labored to bring relief and hope to the dispossessed, and did their share in maintaining a remarkable degree of personal dignity, confidence, and order in a situation where one might have expected chaos.



Snow in Jericho
1950 - the first snow
in three hundred
years

Jericho

December 1948

The rains came early in 1948 giving a foretaste of the cold winter ahead. Refugees, used to the warmth and gentler climate of Jaffa, Ramleh, Lydda, and villages on the plains, suffered in the cold nights on the hills. They had brought only what they could carry on the long trak in the heat of the summer and their clothing was wholly inadequate.

They endured the chilly nights of the summer months on the hills because there was the constant hope of returning to their homes, but with the first unusual rain in September they were compelled to think of the Jordan Valley, hot and treeless, but a haven in winter for people destitute of clothing. Also, the problem of water for this vast multitude on the hills was a serious one but in Jericho there was an ancient fountain and water could be caught from mountain streams before it was lost in the salty soil of the valley. Some few preferred the hills in order to remain close to their homes, but by December large numbers had moved down to Jericho, 4000 feet below, to the lowest place on the earth's surface.

When the International Red Cross went to Jericho to set up camps, the Y.M.C.A. team was already on hand to assist and supplement their work with its program. Thanks to the World Service Committee of the Y.M.C.A. of the United States and Canada funds were available for

Children from the Camp attend the Y. M. C. A. school. Aqabat Jabr has remained the largest refugee camp in the Middle East.



some relief work, and although a long program was not anticipated, these organizations have continued to support the Jericho work through the years.

It has been estimated that at the beginning of December, 1948 there were 67,000 refugees in the Aqabat Jaber camp alone and large numbers in two other camps some distance away. The Aqabat Jaber camp has remained the largest camp in the Middle East, having at the present time 38,000 persons.

The relief agencies could provide food, shelter, and medical care for the refugees but it soon became evident to the leaders of the Y.M.C.A. that something more was needed for the young people who comprised almost one-half of the camp population. How to get a program of recreation and education started became the first challenge to be met.

A school seemed a logical beginning, but when fifteen-hundred boys applied within the first few days, the idea had to be given up temporarily as there was no equipment, or facilities of any kind, for such a large number. The resources of the Y.M.C.A. in Jericho in December, 1948, were the FIVE MEN of varied occupations and a SOLITARY TENT pitched on the edge of the camp area. The tent was the office and residence of the general secretary and in it and from it was developed the significant program that was to grow through the years in a remarkable service to the refugees.

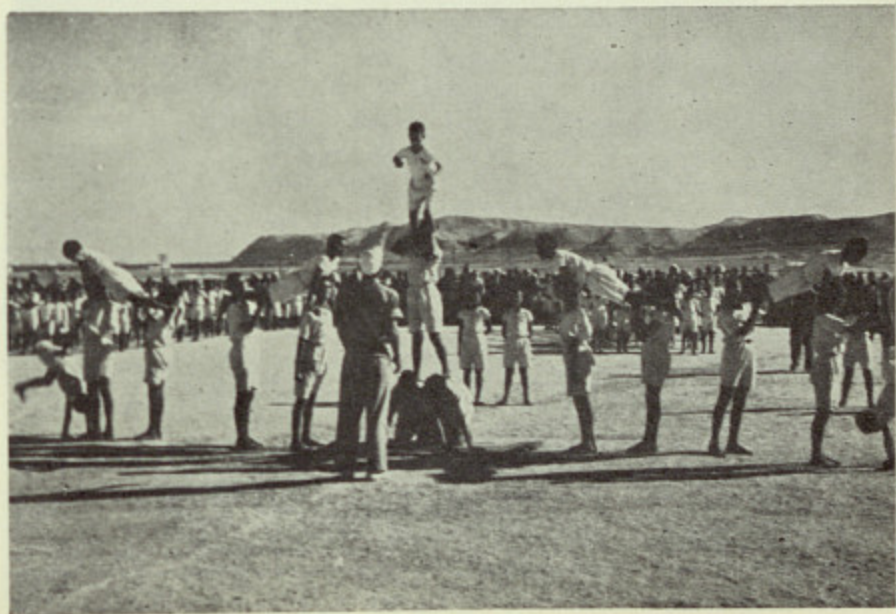
If a school could not be started at once, recreation was possible and soon the fifteen-hundred boys were organized into teams for sports and other activities such as lectures and discussion groups. UNICEF milk, distributed daily at the Y.M.C.A. Center augmented the 1500 calorie ration the boys were getting at home. This was a modest beginning where the need was so tremendous, but under the conditions existing in the Palestine of 1948-49, it was an achievement that was to make the Y.M.C.A. trusted by the refugees and their future work possible.

Summer 1949

The hill country again

Summer came with its burning heat, and the hills which had offered protection from the winds from the west during the winter, now cut off the breezes which might have made life more comfortable in the valley in summer. The refugees from the plains who had enjoyed the Mediterranean Sea in the summer found Jericho almost unbearable and they moved up to the hills in large numbers. The Y.M.C.A. followed. Three schools were opened in tents, one on the playing field of Friends Boys School in Ramallah, another at Bir Zeit College, and a third at Nebi Yacoub between Ramallah and Jerusalem. The clear bracing air on the hills combined with a well-organized program of lessons and recreation was a great service to the boys and when the time came to return to Jericho in the fall, the boys were eager and ready to continue their studies. Money and equipment for this program also came from the World Service Committee of the Y.M.C.A. of the U.S.A. and Canada.

Sports provide wholesome activity and relieve the monotony of camp life.



Formal Schooling begins

In the fall of 1949, a formal school program was organized and the government curriculum was followed from kindergarten through third secondary. As funds became available adobe huts, cheap and practical for the sub-tropical climate of Jericho, replaced the tents. Within ten years, thirty-one such buildings for class-rooms, workshops, recreation, and store-rooms were erected to meet an expanding program.

Seen from the Jerusalem-Jericho road today, the Y.M.C.A. compound presents an attractive, ordered, business-like appearance, and as one looks across to the great concentration of refugees in the camp served by it, he is thankful for the vision and courage which led the team to initiate the program only a step from the tents which were to be the homes of the boys for the first eight years. Fortunate the boys who could spend eight hours a day in the clean, cool, rooms of the Y.M.C.A. buildings getting on with their education in a busy, disciplined atmosphere with classes, sports, and hope for the future.



Formal schooling begins
alif, ba, ta, . . . !

Vocational Training

As time passed and the return of the refugees to their homes seemed increasingly remote, it became clear to the Y.M.C.A. Team that something should be done for young men beyond school age. There were hundreds of them spending their days in enforced idleness, exposed to the temptations which Satan proverbially finds for idle hands and keen minds, and this presented a new challenge. The answer came in 1950 when some tools were offered to them by the World Alliance of the Y.M.C.A. No one on the team had vocational training or any experience in that line, but all were learning to adapt themselves to the new and unusual and they were willing to try anything that offered hope. They were fortunately able to find among the refugees men with skills and eager to be using them, and soon a small project in carpentry and wrought-iron work was begun. It is significant that this project which started so simply in a tent with a handful of boys, six to be exact, was to develop into the most spectacular aspect of the Y.M.C.A. program in Jordan.

The project caught on so well that soon more young men were enrolled and more equipment needed. Mr. Nasir brought this to the attention of the Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work which met in Jerusalem under the name of International Christian Committee.

Vocational training started in a tent with a handful of boys





To-day, one-hundred and sixty young men are learning to be skilled artisans.

The opportunity to give relief constructively to the youth of Jordan appealed to the committee and soon it was contributing to the operating budget of the Y.M.C.A. Jericho Center to such an extent that in its annual report in 1958 it could say : "The Vocational Training Center owes its continuing existence, in the first place, to the N.E.C.C.R.W." Aid has come from other sources also. The Evangelical and Reformed Church, the United Presbyterian Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Church of the Brethren, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, German Bread for the World, Tapline with headquarters in Beirut, and numerous individuals have been moved to give machinery, tools, and other aids. Today, one-hundred and forty young men are in training. They make furniture of wrought-iron and wood, are trained in electric-welding, leather work, spraying, painting, french-polishing, upholstering, plumbing and sanitation, Central heating, basketry, and the installation and care of electrical appliances. The shop in Jerusalem, Jordan where finished articles are on display, set up in a town of considerable size in any country, would attract attention from the magnificent wrought-iron door through which the visitor enters to the smallest table or wallpiece in a far corner.

The Y.M.C.A. V.T.C. is alert to changing needs of the community and even anticipates them. For example, leathercraft has been added. In former times, Palestine depended on Syria and Egypt for leather for shoemaking and imported most of its leather goods. With the introduction of a tannery into the economy of Jordan and subsequent tariffs on imported goods, a class was opened for the making of suit-cases, handbags, brief-cases and other articles. Fortunately, Jordan is well supplied with shoemakers so that the making of these more intricate items can be taught. More recently, another interesting development in their varied program has come about. With tourism rapidly becoming a major "export" of Jordan, new hotels have been built to accommodate the large number of people who come in a constant flow throughout the year. From that has grown a demand for cooks, waiters, maintenance-men, and receptionists. Classes for these vocations have been set up in Jerusalem and Jericho.

An important aspect of the program is that the students are trained not only in mechanical skills but they learn how to compute costs so that if they set themselves up in small businesses, as many do, they have the necessary training to handle accounts. Early the boys learn the value of material and equipment and the cost of mistakes and are shown how to correct them, and to meet exacting standards of workmanship. When Mr. Nasir is asked about profits from this program, he is quick to point out that his boys are learners, not yet master-workmen, and that his project is not for profit but for education. They learn on the materials they will be using when the time comes for them to earn a living. Mistakes may be costly and that is a lesson the boys must learn early and they also know that their work put on the market on a competitive basis must meet the highest standards. So it is that when the boys get their certificates they can go out from the V.T.C. with confidence in their ability to meet the requirements of the open market.

The story of Ramadan who completed the course in 1957, is a good example of the success of the program. He was among the first to enroll in the elementary school in 1948, and he remained to get the school certificate. He entered the V.T.C. when other boys with certificates felt that they were now ready for "white collar" jobs. Intelligent, alert, ambitious, Ramadan entered the vocational program with enthusiasm. He took pride in making the lovely furniture which was being sought after so eagerly by people trying to rebuild their homes and which made the showroom in Jerusalem so much admired. He was eighteen when he completed the course. Two years later, he had his own work shop in Amman and employed six assistants.

Thus, seven families were benefitting from the industry and enterprise of one graduate. It took marked initiative for a young man to start his own business and hard work to make it succeed, but Ramadan had acquired the confidence necessary to go ahead from the careful training and manifest achievements of the V.T.C. in Jericho. His example is a continuing inspiration to the rest of the trainees and even younger boys, and has helped break down the prejudice against manual work by young men who hold school certificates. Also, he who had received so much as a pupil is now in the position of a donor, for he is passing on his skills to his workmen as he tries to maintain the high standards of his school.

The "success" story of Ramadan could be repeated over and over again with other names. Graduates of the V.T.C. are found in many parts of the Middle East and a few in Germany. They are earning good salaries and are contributing to the support of their families in Jordan. Fortunately, the changing economy and demands of the entire area offer increasing opportunities and employment for all.

Splendid as these achievements are, Mr. Nasir and his able staff feel that the most successful aspect of the program has been psychological. In the early days of the vocational training program, it was hard to keep boys long enough for them to become highly skilled. Eager to be earning, more eager to be getting away from the limitations and restrictions of camp life, they tended to leave as soon as they had a few skills. In addition, it was almost impossible to persuade boys who had reached secondary grades to learn handicrafts. Today, however, young men from many parts of Jordan who have passed the matriculation examinations, the equivalent of college boards, are applying for places in the V.T.C. program. At first the lack of equipment and boarding facilities made it impossible to accept them. Even so, several boys walked the seven miles daily from another camp in the Jordan Valley to attend classes. World Refugee Year with its challenge to the conscience and heart of the world, was a blessing at this point. The British Council of churches contributed twenty-thousand pounds, (approximately \$ 56,000) and the N.E.C.C.R.W., the rest of the funds needed for a boarding-school and additional machinery. Early in 1961, the program was in full swing. This breakdown of the "white-collar complex", the recognition of the dignity of labor, and pride in skilled workmanship are a source of great satisfaction to the staff of the Y.M.C.A. and ample reward for the years of quiet, patient effort which it has taken to achieve this goal.

Perhaps the most graphic achievement of the W.T.C. as a whole and its enduring monument stands in Jerusalem, Jordan valley. When the master stone-carver had raised the walls of the impressive bench-dressed stone building that is the new Y.M.C.A., an army of skilled artisans working and eager was ready to do all that was necessary to make it habitable. One thing that was needed for the building.



The staff takes pride in the achievement of Ramadan Hamed. Over the door he has written: "PALESTINE - Ramadan H. FURNITURE" a sign that recalls his beloved homeland.

Perhaps the most tangible achievement of the V.T.C. as a whole and its enduring monument stands in Jerusalem, Jordan today. When the master stone-cutters had raised the walls of the impressive hand-dressed stone building that is the new Y.M.C.A., an army of skilled artisans, young and eager, was ready to do all that was necessary to make it habitable. One-hundred and forty strong, they wired the building, installed the plumbing, painted walls and polished doors, and moved in the decorative wrought-iron work and beds, tables, and chairs which they had made in Jericho while the walls were going up. Fittings for the games rooms, window-frames, partitions, in fact all wood-work was done by them. This building will be loved and treasured for into it has gone the best they could give. The new building will be described later on but it seemed only fitting that this tribute should be given here.

But we must not forget the other feature of the Jericho program. An elementary school is still maintained and one feature which shows the thought which goes into even so modest a program which tends to be over-shadowed by the V.T.C., is the summer program for the younger children. When the academic work ends in June, a summer schedule goes into effect. The refugees no longer flock to the hills in summer and camp life is difficult for children, so the vacation program is a godsend to parents and children alike. To the teachers and leaders who remain with them in the valley special tribute must also be paid.

YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS

Rising above Aqabat Jaber Camp with its thousands of refugees is the traditional Mount of Temptation. Here is the place, we are told, to which Jesus retired after his baptism and the realization that the time had come for him to be about his Father's business. He was young and the world called to Him. Should He use his glowing personality as a miracle worker, a conqueror, or a teacher bringing to mankind the truths of God. His decision is the heart of the Christian message today and the Y.M.C.A. was organized to keep before young men this ideal. The Team, working through the years in quiet service at the foot of the mountain is a testimony to Divine leading. Here is "Christianity in action" in an association of youth. Some of the Y.M.C.A. Team might have gone to other Arab countries in 1948, and with their training and experience found plenty to do. They, at a critical moment of decision, remained to share the lot of their people. Their service to the refugees has never been interrupted and has withstood the various crises that have threatened the security of Jordan



Aqabat Jaber Camp — Y.M.C.A. Vocational Training Centre
with a background view of Mount of Temptation

from time to time. That has been the test of their work and it bears the stamp of approval of leaders of Aqabat Jaber Camp and all agencies in the relief program.

This chapter of the story of the Jericho work may well be concluded by the following quotations, the first from a statement by Dr. Van der Meulen, noted Dutch diplomat, administrator and traveller, after a visit to the V.T.C., and the other from an article in Time Magazine, January 4, 1960.

“Important visionary work is being done here by Palestinians for Palestinians. ...What I especially like in this center is its nearness to the daily life of the boys. There is no cleft between the camps and the schools. They are outwardly nearly the same, the difference is inwardly. This institution does not raise jealousy, does not take the boys away from their families and physical surroundings. The leaders told me that when in 1955 the disturbances occurred, they were in no danger and they could refuse protection by the police and military force—they did not want it”.

“Palestine Arabs tend to be better off and better educated than other Arabs and many have readily found new lives. Today, tens of thousands of them earn their living in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, where there are no refugee camps. And their numbers grow, thanks to vocational training schools, such as the Y.M.C.A.'s at Aqabat Jaber where 480 boys are enrolled. A recent graduate of the Y.M.C.A. school now runs his own carpentry shop in Amman, has six men working for him”.

The V.T.C. has been paid many glowing tributes by officials of the Jordan government and countless visitors from all walks of life. One tribute, however, in which they take special pride came to them in 1961. In that year, Jordan held its first Agricultural and industrial Fair. In competition with numerous commercial firms making furniture, the V.T.C. won first place with its display and a gold medal was awarded on this occasion as a permanent record of this achievement.



Jerusalem

The basic and continuing center for the Y.M.C.A. in Jordan must inevitably be in Jerusalem where it has had a history of more than eighty years of service. Its greatest period of usefulness, however, followed the dedication of the "most beautiful Y.M.C.A. building in the world" during the Easter season, 1933. This building was the realization of a vision of service by three young boys in a school in New England, James Newbegin Jarvie, Charles Davidson, and Archie Hart. When young Archie Hart felt called to devote his life to Christian service, his friends promised they would stand behind him in all his efforts. The time came when Mr. Jarvie could give \$ 1,000,000 for the building of the Y.M.C.A. and Mr. Davidson give funds for furnishings and equipment. Archie Harte came to Jerusalem at the end of the First World War after long years in India and remained with the Y.M.C.A. until 1931. Dedicated leaders maintained the ideals of the organization through the years and it became a beautiful witness in the city of three faiths.

With the Partition of Palestine and the further partition of Jerusalem, this building is now in the Israeli sector of the Holy City. Since in the partition plan Jerusalem was to be an international city, and so recognized today by the United States and Great Britain, it seemed wise for the staff on the Jordan side to carry on with its emergency program for the refugees pending a return to the mother building. Arab Jerusalem in 1948-49 suffered much from the war in destruction of property, loss of business, an impoverished population, and an uncertain future. Most of the Arab population had been living in the newer, attractive residential parts of the city. When they were driven out in the early months of 1948, some sought refuge in Ramallah, Bethlehem, and other villages in what was left to them of Palestine and others fled to Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and the Gaza Strip. A number owned old family property in the Old City, but it was months before they felt that it offered security. The large Armenian Community fled to the relative security of the Armenian Quarter of the Old City; other refugees found shelter in the convents of their faith, living in the small rooms that had been provided for pilgrims. The situation was not propitious

for a new program, yet as soon as it was possible to do anything at all, steps were taken to try to revive the Y.M.C.A. program in Jerusalem.

The only property which was available was the rather badly damaged Lind House which before the fighting in 1948, was a lovely home. Extensive repairs were necessary before it could be used, and again the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A. of the U.S.A. and Canada came to the rescue, providing funds for the purpose. Soon the house was filled with young men for whom almost no recreational or social facilities had been available for a long time.

Fortunately, before the partition line became the fixed entity it is today, Mr. Nasir was able to transfer seventeen English and Arabic typewriters from the big Y.M.C.A. a short distance away. Classes for secretarial training were started and Mr. Nasir taught accountancy and book-keeping to competent young men and women. Funds were provided to help thirty boys complete the remaining year or two of their high school courses.

Soon the Lind House became too small for the needs of the members who finding "something to do, something to help us get on" crowded its doors. In 1953, Miller Hall, named for Alvah L. Miller who for sixteen years was the beloved secretary of the Palestine Y.M.C.A., was built on the grounds of Lind House. More classes were offered, and as life returned to Arab Jerusalem, book-keepers and secretaries were much in demand. Many found employment in other Arab countries where trained personnel was needed, too, and soon funds were coming back to Jordan to parents to help them find better homes.

A sports program was needed also, and it was fortunate that one of the original team was not only a swimming instructor but could direct other sports. Although Mr. Mnatzaganian, or Mr. Jack as he is affectionately called, was by this time much involved with the Jericho program, he was able to assist with this aspect of the Jerusalem program. Basket-ball, tennis, football, volley-ball, weight-lifting, and calisthenics offered sufficient variety. Mr. Nasir, Vice-Chairman of the Arab Olympics Sports Committee for Jordan, was able to enter contestants for the first time at the contests in Beirut in 1957, and had the satisfaction of seeing all entrants win medals, two of them winning first and second places in the weight-lifting contest.

A good library, lectures, discussions, plays, and musical evenings round out the three-fold program of the Y.M.C.A. and with bigger and better facilities, a new day would seem to have dawned for it in this age-old city which is ever new.



Exhibition room in Jerusalem for Jericho Products

This shop has many buyers attracted by the beauty of its display from the magnificent wrought-iron door through which they enter to the smallest table in the corner



Boys Work
in Jerusalem

Y.M.C.A. Ideals
in action.



BOYS WORK

Although work for young men is obviously the chief function of a Y.M.C.A., implicit in its name, a boys department is an important feature of the program. The Y.M.C.A. is the only organization in Jordan which has a recreational program for boys between the ages of eight and fifteen. This program is at its greatest usefulness during the summer months when schools are closed. Because many boys had to be turned away for lack of space and personnel, ample provision has been made for them in the new building. Tennis, basket-ball, and gymnastics are offered the outdoor boys. Indoors, especially on hot days, chess, ping-pong, and dominoes furnish exciting contests; and for the studious boys, reading and hobby rooms and the library are open all day. Historic and Biblical sites furnish endless resources for the "Get to Know Your Country" club and camping in the Shepherd's Field in Bethlehem affords an experience in growing up and learning to live with others outside the family circle.

AND THE LADIES

It should be noted that classes in English and all secretarial courses are open to women, and the Y.W.C.A. has the use of the Shepherds' Field when they wish it for their annual summer camp or conferences. The Y.M.C.A. is giving further service to its sister association. As this story goes to the press, July, 1965, young craftsmen and artisans from the V.T.C. in Jericho are busily at work installing electrical units, plumbing and sanitation equipment, central-heating, doors and windows, finishing the walls, in fact, doing all they have done for the Y.M.C.A. and so assuring for Jerusalem an equally beautiful building for the women of Jordan. Friends of both organizations look forward to the completion of the two buildings representing international organizations in the heartland of the Christian World.

SERVICE TO THE WORLD COMMUNITY

The Y.M.C.A. is not unmindful of what a visit to Jerusalem means to large numbers of Christians from all lands for whom it is a pilgrimage, too; here is the center of their faith and here are the places associated with the Master. In confused and troubled times, or in times of personal difficulties, people often turn to places and their associations hoping to find answers to their needs. The friendly hospitality of the staff at the hotel, comfortable rooms, consideration for the special needs of the guest, intelligent and understanding guides all contribute to the satisfaction and inspiration of being in the Holy Land.

Olivet on Palm Sunday

Visitors in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday are invited to join members of the Y.M.C.A. on the walk from Bethany to the Mount of Olives. Starting at dawn the party walks up the eastern slope of the mountain to Bethphage and on to Olivet, stopping to read the story of the journey made so long ago. The worship service is held at a place where Jesus might have sat as he wept over the city and prophesied its destruction: "If thou hadst known... the things which belong unto thy peace!". The city lies serene in the morning light and the rising sun catching the lovely colors of the Dome of the Rock casts a rosy glow over the entire area where the temple stood in His time. During the service, the pilgrim tries to visualize the scene as Jesus wept, not for himself but for the city, ancient even then, knowing that he was about to face the greatest challenge to his message, and a clearer insight may come of the swift-moving events that led to Calvary. From here, one can imagine the happy throng that led Jesus to the temple, strewing palms in his way with singing and dancing, a scene which was to be followed all too soon by the loneliness of the journey to Golgotha. A reverent silence enfolds the party as it returns to the Y.M.C.A. for the Fellowship Breakfast which ends this memorable experience.

Another service sponsored by the Y.M.C.A. which has been added to the Holy Week events in Jerusalem is the presentation of a religious drama, "Eyes on the Cross", in English and Arabic by a local drama group. This is given in St. George's Cathedral on three evenings and the Church of the Redeemer on two evenings and is attended by large numbers of tourists of all faiths.



Palm Sunday in Jerusalem.
Sunrise over the Mountains of Moab seen from Bethany.

Approaching the Mount of Olives



Even unto Bethlehem

Before turning to the story of the new building in Jerusalem, we shall go to another center of many activities and a place of hallowed association.

When Dr. Harte was secretary of the Palestine Y.M.C.A., 1918-1931, he purchased a plot of ground in the valley below Bethlehem which had been traditionally called "The Field of Boaz" or "Shepherds' Field". There on Christmas Eve, members of the Y.M.C.A. and their friends used to meet for a service which ended with a supper such as shepherds might have shared. At this place, away from the crowds that thronged Manger Square and the Church of the Nativity, it was easier to capture the scene of that night when shepherds saw the star that was to lead them to the Child. This service was discontinued for a few years when the main road to Bethlehem was closed making access to Bethlehem difficult, but with the opening of a new road the service was revived. The discovery of a large cave in the field has added to the atmosphere of the place and has provided an excellent background for the service which each year attracts an increasing number of local Christians and tourists. The sermon is usually given by a visiting minister and local choirs furnish music. Sheep are roasted in ovens at the entrance to the cave and timed to be ready when the service ends. Each worshipper is given a piece of lamb with freshly baked whole-wheat bread as he enters the cave on his way to an exit on the other side.



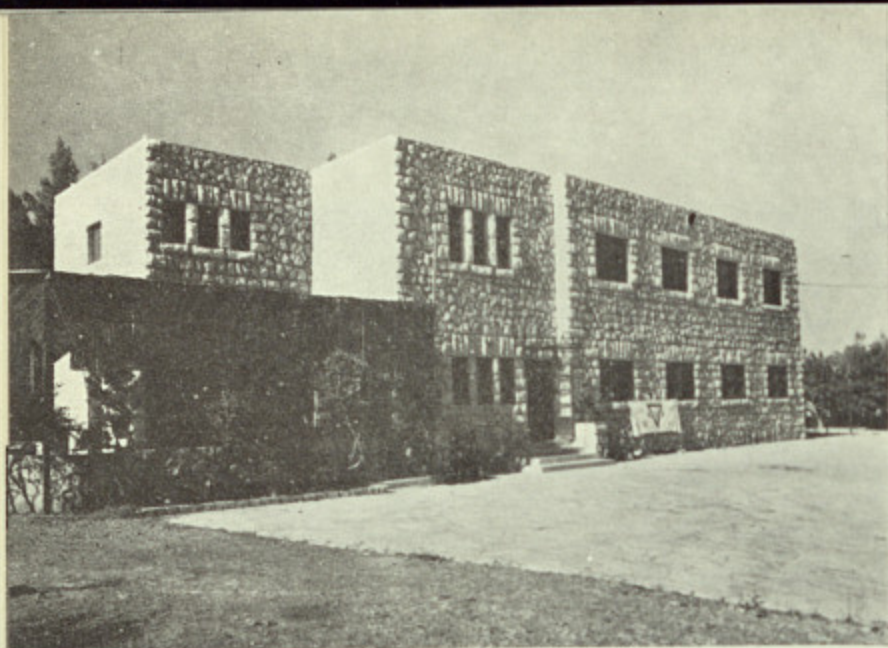
Bethlehem - Christmas Eve.
Sheep grazing in the Field of the Shepherds ; in the background is the cave.

Youth Center

But the Shepherds' Field is not only a place of pilgrimage; it is a place of year-round activity. In 1955, an attractive hostel was provided through the generosity of Mr. Donovan Beachley of Hagerstown, Maryland and the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A. to serve as a retreat and a center for a summer camp program. This was so successful that further expansion was indicated. It was not until 1962, however that this became possible.

At that time A. Willard and Christina H. Jones were on the point of retiring after many years of service in the Holy Land, first under the American Friends Board of Missions in charge of the Friends Boys School in Ramallah and later under the Near East Christian Council in charge of its work for Palestine Refugees. Partly to honor the the Joneses, but primarily to give further tangible expression to its deep concern for the plight of the refugees from Palestine, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. suggested that a sum of \$ 20,000. which it had available might be used to memorialize the work of the Joneses in the Near East. Because of their life-long interest in the youth of Palestine the Joneses asked that such a memorial might be used to expand the great work being done for young people by the Jerusalem Y.M.C.A. This suggestion was warmly approved by the donors and as a result ground was broken for the WILLARD AND CHRISTINA JONES YOUTH CENTER at the Shepherds' Field in Bethlehem on May 27, 1962 — happily the fortieth wedding anniversary of the Joneses in the country where they had spent their first anniversary and most of their working years.

Plans for the Center call for three separate units each with facilities for twenty people. Two units are already complete and in almost constant use. Indoor and out-door recreation equipment has been provided in addition to dormitories and conference rooms. Its use is not restricted to young people as there are times when school and college duties prevent



Hostel

SHEPHERDS' FIELD

Jones Boys Camp

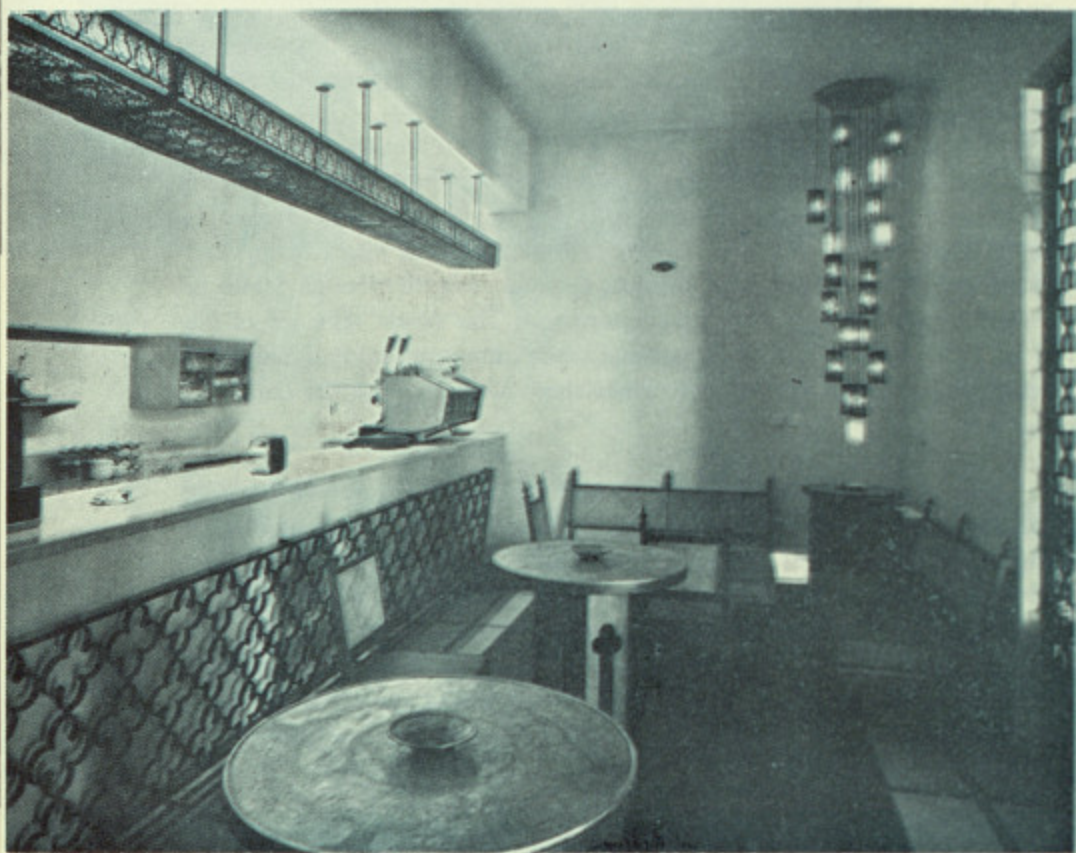


use by regular members. In these times, the Center is available for church groups for special meetings and retreats for tourist-pilgrims who wish to spend a little time in the Holy Land in quiet meditation. Youth hostellers find a welcome there, also.

The original hostel in the Shepherds' Field has simple, pleasant rooms and dining-room service for people, not necessarily young, who wish to spend a little time in Jordan away from the towns and for tired workers in the country who need the inspiration of the serenity and peace of the quiet setting of the Field and the hostel.

The Youth Center also serves youth beyond the borders of Jordan as it shares its facilities with other agencies in their youth work. They come to it from refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, and the Gaza Strip, and international volunteers from Europe, Canada, and the United States of America join them in work and fellowship. The World Alliance of the Y.M.C.A. anticipates an international work camp; an international boys' camp, and seminars for students where they can study both the Land and the Book.

One cannot refer too often to the part the Jericho Vocational Training Center shares in all the development of the Y.M.C.A. work in Jordan. Furnishings, beautiful wrought-iron work, installations for lighting, sanitation, recreation, all the "work of their hands" add to the efficiency, comfort, and beauty of the Bethlehem buildings and grounds. No one could have foreseen that the modest, emergency vocational training program in the depths of the Jordan Valley would serve the expanded program on the hills in and around Jerusalem and "even unto Bethlehem".



Soda Fountain

A new building and a new challenge

Jericho, Jerusalem and Bethlehem, each serves the young people of Jordan in a unique way. In Jericho, vocational training for refugees who have lost their heritage of the land of their fathers and must seek new ways of earning a living; in Jerusalem, professional training for the needs of townsmen and the new life that is springing up everywhere in the Middle East combined with social and cultural advantages; and in Bethlehem, a place for retreats and the outdoor life so necessary and inspirational for young men, especially for those forced to live in the abnormal conditions of refugee homes and camps. These three places and programs are a continuing challenge to the staff that started so modestly in a tent in 1948. Reviewing the years and knowing what they have meant in patient, steady growth through "trials and tribulations" one cannot but rejoice with them in the crowning achievement of the new Y.M.C.A. building. Almost within sight of the old building "the most beautiful Y.M.C.A. building in the world", the new one commands respect for its beauty too, and is worthy of the place it holds in the life of Jordan. Gifts from the Buildings for Brotherhood program of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.'s of the United States and Canada and from various churches and individuals have made this new home possible; the skills of the people of Jordan have made it beautiful; and the staff has made it of service.

The date of the purchase of the building site was November 29, 1958, exactly eleven years after the fateful decision of the United Nations to partition Palestine with its tragic repercussions on all aspects of the life of Palestine and throughout the Arab World. If the Y.M.C.A. leadership felt an inner joy on the occasion of signing the papers on this date it was not surprising, for they had eleven years of hard work and many crises behind them. The first years in the Jordan Valley had indeed been an uphill struggle to meet enormous need; the extension of the work up in Jerusalem began at a time when the future of the city seemed to hang in the balance; and the expansion of the program to Bethlehem, no longer the easy four-mile drive from Jerusalem but four times that over a rough

and hilly road, seemed too ambitious to many friends of the Y.M.C.A. So they had reason to feel that the date, unplanned as it was, had been more than a coincidence; rather it was to them a good omen and to their friends an inspiration and testimony to the power of the human heart and will to surmount and survive.

The Y.M.C.A. commands an excellent location on the road which leads from Damascus Gate to the airport, and on to Ramallah and Birah as it winds its way to Nablus and villages beyond. In the pre-partition days, travellers could follow this road all the way to Damascus as did Paul in his time. It is within easy walking distance of the Old City and close to the new one springing up near it. Bus service brings the towns of Ramallah, Birah, Beit Hanina, and Sha'fat to the north and Bethany to the east within easy access of the services of the Y.M.C.A. so that it is not only Jerusalem which benefits. From the roof one can have a panoramic view of the Jerusalem scene and beyond. Across the wall to the south, the roof-tops of the Old City are dominated by the high dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — east of it the tower of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer rises shining white against the blue sky; to the southeast stands Bethlehem on her hill facing the opalescent colors of the hills of Moab with the Jordan Valley between; looking east one sees the whole expanse of the Mount of Olives with Gethsemane on its steep slope and the two towers of the German and Russian compounds dominating the land; and to the west is the Shephelah which formed a bulwark for Jerusalem in ancient times and beyond which lies the Mediterranean which lured the Phoenicians to great voyages and which still calls the youth of the East. A view to be enjoyed at all times — but especially at the sunset hour.

Because of the limited area of the building site, bordering as it does the wall which divides Jerusalem, it took careful planning to get into the structure floor space for the many rooms necessary for the program. The building stands high, four stories above ground level, has fine proportions, and is spacious in appearance. Its historic name, Aelia Capitolina, is a reminder of the Romans who gave that name to Jerusalem after they had conquered it in 70 A.D. and ruled it for so long, leaving many evidences of their rich culture throughout the country.

A tour of the building will show how well the program has been provided for. In the basement, in addition to the heating and maintenance

Views from the Roof
of Y.M.C.A. Building

East

Mount of Olives
background

South

Part of the Old City with the
Church of the Holy Sepulchre

North

St. Georges Cathedral
Basketball & Tennis playgrounds

units, a swimming pool and changing rooms, hobby rooms, men's club room, and a section for Boys Work have been fitted in miraculously.

On the ground floor, the one the visitor enters from the Nablus Road, are lounges, restaurant and kitchen, soda fountain, gymnasium with squash courts, junior club room, and last but not least, a library where one can browse and get books on loan.

HARPER SIBLEY MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

The auditorium with a seating capacity of three-hundred and seventy is named for Mr. Harper Sibley of Rochester, New York, a great American Christian layman who for most of his life was closely associated with the International Y.M.C.A. . In his later years he served as chairman of Church World Service, the service arm of the National Council of Churches of Christ in America. This brought him into close understanding of the problems of the dispossessed of many lands and he and his equally dedicated wife travelled widely among them, visiting the Middle East on several occasions and taking part in the conferences on the Palestine Refugees in Beirut in 1951 and 1956. His death was a great loss to the Church as a whole so it was eminently fitting that Church World Service should give \$ 20,000 as a memorial to him in Jerusalem in loving recognition of his abiding interest in international goodwill and service to suffering humanity.

This auditorium occupies a large part of the second and third floors and is not only a great asset to the Y.M.C.A. in its program but is a boon to Jerusalem as it has not had a public hall for concerts, lectures, plays and receptions since 1948, having to depend on the facilities of private schools for these affairs, often at some inconvenience to them.

Adjoining the auditorium is a chapel, the gift of the Evangelical and Reformed Church of the U.S.A. for private meditation and for small groups which might wish to meet for worship. A large window in this chapel faces the Mount of Olives with its sacred associations and is an inspiring view.

JERUSALEM PROTESTANT FELLOWSHIP

One group which uses the chapel regularly is the Jerusalem Protestant Fellowship which according to their bulletin was organized to :

“provide a simple worship service for Protestant Christians away from home. The first service was held on January 3, 1960, under the direction of a committee composed of interested people who were then residing or visiting in Jerusalem. Since that time a steering committee has been elected by the congregation. An effort is made to utilize the talents of ministers who are visiting in Jerusalem and who are willing to share in this unique worship experience”.

Formerly, services have been held in Miller Hall, thanks to the kindness of the Y.M.C.A. and its cooperative staff. Hundreds of tourists have attended and there have met many of the people who are serving the Church in various capacities and also have heard some of the leading ministers of other lands. In the coffee hour which follows the service, visitors get a more intimate picture of the outreach of the Church in its service programs. More than forty ministers have shared in this worship service in each year and have welcomed an opportunity to minister in Jerusalem. The new chapel, designed for worship provides the right atmosphere for meditation and dedication.

A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION

One contribution, less tangible, but nevertheless material, has been the grant of customs exemption on all imported materials and supplies by the government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, a sum the equivalent of approximately \$40,000. This gift is a recognition of the services of the Y.M.C.A. in the past, of its great contribution at the present time, and is a continuing trust.



AELIA CAPITOLINA HOTEL
Y.M.C.A. — Jerusalem (Jordan)

Aelia Capitolina

The two top floors have been reserved for hotel accommodations. There are eleven double rooms and six single rooms on each floor to care for fifty-six guests. Each room is tastefully furnished, has a private bath, telephone, piped in music, and a view. From the moment he or she arrives, for this is a family hotel, and is greeted in Arabic by "Ahlan wa Sahlan — you have come to your home and may your way be smooth", and in English by "We are expecting you", the guest is truly a guest and his comfort the concern of the entire staff.

The first thing which catches the eye of the guest, however, is the beauty of the central lounge. The task of the interior decorating was undertaken by Mrs. Naheel Bishara, a Palestinian artist living in Jerusalem. Her good taste and artistry are found everywhere in the building for she designed every detail of the decor, and she has utilized her rich Eastern background with remarkable skill. Against a background of well-designed furniture in wood and wrought-iron are exquisite representations of native decorative arts. In the central lounge, subdued lights filter through the greens and amber, blues and amethysts of Hebron glass made in that ancient city where such glass has been made for centuries. On one wall is a large replica of the tree of life design in tiles, the work of the Armenian ceramists in their pottery across the road from the Y.M.C.A. . This design was copied from mosaics in the Hisham Palace in Jericho which was the winter residence of an Arab ruler when the Arab Empire stretched from Gibraltar to the Indus thirteen centuries ago. Brass and copper lamps and tables in the traditional geometric, floral, and calligraphic designs have been brought from Damascus where native craftsman still follow their ancient art with its precision and care for every detail. Not least, the students of the Vocational Training Center in Jericho have carried out many of Mrs. Bishara designs with skill and artistry. Their work is in the finest tradition of Oriental craftsmanship.

For the construction of the building the Y.M.C.A. was fortunate in having the services of Mr. John W. Ogg who, before retirement,

was chief architect for the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.. He drew the original plan of the building utilizing his rich experience in erecting Y.M.C.A.s in many parts of the world. Actual construction was entrusted to Mr. Elias Salameh, a Jordanian civil engineer. The two men working together with imagination, efficiency, and devotion have produced a building which wins the admiration of all who have the pleasure of seeing it or enjoying its facilities.

Behind every distinguished enterprise there is a dreamer and moving spirit. It will already be obvious to the reader that that one in this instance is the General Secretary of the Jordan Y.M.C.A., Mr. Labib Nasir. His vision and faith have inspired a program of steady growth and service through the past seventeen years and he it was who envisioned a beautiful building to replace the war-shattered structure which had stood on the present site for twelve years. He has had the loyal support of "Mr. Jack" who has complemented and supplemented him in every way through this entire period. They are the only ones of the original five who are still with the Y.M.C.A., one having gone to the United States, one having retired, and one no longer living. Their combined achievement is a testimony to friendship, cooperation, and unselfish devotion.

As "The Story of a Tent" has unfolded we have seen it come to maturity, so to speak. Nothing could have seemed more temporary or unpromising than the tent in the Jordan Valley in the winter of 1948, set up to help that great mass of uprooted people so near and yet so far from their homes and lands. To have watched its growth has been an inspiring experience for friends of the Y.M.C.A. The "tent" is now a large compound of industry, a center in the Shepherds' Field, and a worthy new building in Jerusalem, Jordan. The city of Jerusalem must ever hold the love and affection of the Christian world and any organization which bears the name of Christian has a great responsibility for here Christianity is daily "weighed in the balance" and the Y.M.C.A. is a center where brotherhood is lived out as young men, Christian and Moslem, mingle in fellowship. To it the poor come for help far beyond the usual function of a Y.M.C.A.

Formal dedication of the new building awaits the completion of the auditorium, swimming-pool, and other recreation facilities, but it has been dedicated in the hearts of the staff and their friends since its inception.



Interior of Aelia Capitolina Hotel
Y. M. C. A.

Main Lounge and Reception



Dining Room



Bedroom

To the world traveller it is a spiritual home in the Holy Land. It has been designed to achieve serenity and beauty with facilities adequate for its multiple tasks. Dedicated to the young men of today, it stands as a living memorial to the Young Man who lived and taught in Jerusalem nearly two-thousand years ago and whose teachings are a continuing challenge to the Christian World.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FOOTNOTE

It is almost impossible to dig into the soil of Jerusalem without turning up some evidence of its ancient past. Thus it is not surprising that when the foundation of the new Y was being laid workmen should come upon a tomb. It has been identified as First Century A.D. and it is in an excellent state of preservation. The tomb was obviously a private one, it may even have been in a garden. In it was found a jar in perfect, or nearly perfect condition. A visit to the "Tomb in the Basement" may be of interest — ask at the desk.

Facilities of the new Y.M.C.A. Building

BASEMENT

1. Swimming Pool
2. Arts & Crafts for Boys
3. Changing Rooms:
(a) Boys (b) Adults
(c) Men's club (d) Ladies
4. Boiler room

GROUND FLOOR

1. Library
2. Squash Court
3. Gymnasium
4. Weight-Lifting Room
5. Games Room
6. Soda Fountain
7. Restaurant
8. Kitchen
9. Lounges

FIRST FLOOR

1. Auditorium
2. Four class rooms
3. Meditation room

SECOND AND THIRD FLOOR

HOTEL

- 3 Family rooms with bath
- 24 Double rooms with bath
- 9 Single rooms

ROOF LOUNGE & SUN BATHING

WILL ACCOMMODATE 70 GUESTS IN ALL

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Y.M.C.A. JERUSALEM