

Marshallton Friends Meetinghouse
(Bradford Friends Meetinghouse)
East side of Northbrook Road (LR 15077),
.1 mile south of State Route 162 (Strasburg Road)
Marshallton (West Bradford Township)
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1105

HABS,
PA,
15-MARSH,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. PA-1105

MARSHALLTON FRIENDS MEETINGHOUSE
(Bradford Friends Meetinghouse)

Location: East side of Northbrook Road (LR 15077), .1 mile south of State Route 162 (Strasburg Road), Marshallton (West Bradford Township), Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: Marshallton Friends Meeting, Miss Anna Embree, Clerk, West Chester R.D. #4, Pennsylvania.

Statement of Significance: This is a fine example of an eighteenth century Friends meetinghouse still in use and relatively unchanged retaining many fine original interior features.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Marshallton Friends Meeting, Miss Anna Embree, Clerk, West Chester R.D. #4, Pennsylvania.
2. Date of erection: 1765.
3. Architect, builder, suppliers: Unknown.
4. Original plans, construction: The meetinghouse consists of one room with the usual sliding partitions to separate the men's and women's business meetings. An usual variation to this general plan is the addition of a second set of sliding partitions at right angles to the other partitions, with space for two rows of pews between this partition and the south wall. Locally it has been supposed that this area was intended for slaves. But in 1761, even before the building's construction, the Society of Friends had been unfavorably dealing with slave owning members. It seems doubtful that this unique section was built for slaves since the tax records for 1780 list no slaves in the township. Perhaps this unusual partition was only to allow for a small committee room for private meetings.
5. Alterations and additions: There have been few alterations. In March of 1788 the roof caught fire and had to be replaced. The interior was not damaged too much, but evidence

of the fire can still be seen. The roof ~~was~~ replaced again after a fire in 1883. The original pent eaves were replaced by a porch added on the south and west elevations in the late nineteenth century. The pedimented hood over the south (front) entrance was also removed when the porch was built.

6. Important old views and references:

Views: In the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania, is a daguerreotype of the meetinghouse with the pent eaves on it in excellent condition. There is also a large collection of photographs from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards in the same place.

References: Sources of information, all to be found in The Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, unless otherwise noted.

J. Smith Futhey and Gilbert Cope, History of Chester County, Pennsylvania, Louis H. Everts, Philadelphia, 1881.

Classified printing and manuscript files at Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania, under heading West Bradford Township Churches - SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

The first meetinghouse was built in 1726, but on a different site. The second was built shortly after 1729 on the present tract. When the present meetinghouse was built in 1765, the old one was moved to the farm of Abraham Marshall and used as a barn or stable for years. The 1765 structure is still an active meetinghouse.

Prepared by Bart Anderson
Curator, Chester County
Historical Society
July 1958

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a fine example of an eighteenth century Friends meetinghouse still in use and relatively unchanged retaining many fine original interior features.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The structure is approximately 38' (three-bay front) by 45' (three bays); it is one-and-a-half stories.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Random rubble.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: A shed-roof porch extends across the south and west elevations. This porch replaced the original pent eaves and pedimented hood over the south entrance when it was added in the nineteenth century (some-time after 1850).
5. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney located on the ridge at the center of the roof.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The south (front) entrance has a double paneled door. The interior sliding partition extends to the south entrance allowing the men and women to enter directly into their own sections. The interior side of the doors have diagonal boards. The east door is also a double paneled door with diagonal boards on the interior. The west door is a single paneled door with two lights cut into the upper panels.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Two windows, each flanking an entrance, appear on each elevation (south, east and west). They are six-over-six-light double-hung wooden sash windows. All the shutters have three panels on each side.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with wooden shingles. The roof was replaced after two fires, one in 1788 and again in 1883.

b. Cornice, eaves: The pent eaves were replaced by a porch in the nineteenth century.

c. Dormers: None.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: One room divided by two sets of sliding partitions.
2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: The original wooden floor boards remain.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: Sliding wooden partitions.
6. Trim: Very little trim except the paneled partitions.
7. Hardware: There are some large wooden pegs, but mostly wrought iron nails and hinges were used. Snibell hinges were used for the doors.
8. Lighting: None.
9. Heating: No modern heating system is present; there is a stove with a central chimney.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The meetinghouse faces south and is set back from the road. It is surrounded by large areas of grass with a graveyard to the east.
2. Enclosures: The graveyard dates from the late eighteenth century. It is surrounded by a stone wall of the same type of fieldstone used for the meetinghouse.
3. Outbuildings: None now; the sheds have been demolished.
4. Walks, driveways: There is a dirt driveway which connects the meetinghouse with Route 162.

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5. Landscaping, gardens: There are many trees and shrubs within the graveyard as well as surrounding the meetinghouse.

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA
PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

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Previously transmitted to the Library of Congress were five pages of data pertaining to the "Marshallton" Friends Meeting House; Bradford is preferred both currently and historically.

Location: 1364 West Strasburg Road, Marshallton, Chester County, Pennsylvania

Owner: Trustees for the Bradford Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Present Use: Meeting House for meeting for worship of the Society of Friends; site also includes a burying ground and caretaker's dwelling.

Significance: Among the oldest extant Friends meeting houses in the Delaware Valley, erected in 1767, Bradford Meeting House's seemingly unconventional design more closely paralleled that of English meeting houses than the emerging American Friends forms.¹ Bradford's design is a melding of English and early colonial-period American meeting house types. Its (original) interior plan was like the typical English meeting house, with a larger apartment and facing bench at one end, partitioned off from a secondary apartment for business meetings. The exterior of Bradford Meeting House, however, resembles the single-celled, three-bay wide, central entry meeting house of the period of early settlement. Bradford is vernacular in design and erected of indigenous rubble stone. The precision stonework and fine galleting, however, are the marks of a highly skilled mason.

Bradford Meeting House is also of interest for its peculiar, partitioned rear section. This small section likely was created to enable the building to conform to the size of any meeting thereby facilitating the sense of a close-knit community. The partition could be lower to create a more intimate space for use by the preparative meeting, and raised to accommodate the increased capacity of the monthly meeting. It also may have provided space for committee meetings. Bradford Meeting House is in almost pristine condition. It has received no modern additions or renovations, and is still without central heat, electricity or plumbing.

¹ It was built on the cusp of the evolution from the less-patterned early settlement era structures to the prototypical doubled meeting house form, the first of which was completed the same year as Bradford. Buckingham Meeting House (1768) in Lahaska, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, was probably the first meeting house in the Delaware Valley to be built as a two-cell, doubled type, with dual entries for men and women. This "doubled" plan, with equally sized men's and women's meeting rooms, would become the standard form for Friends Meeting House design for nearly a century.

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Historian: Catherine C. Lavoie, 1999.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1767. Most likely, construction began in late 1765, or early 1766. The meeting house largely was completed by the end of 1767,² when the (Western) Quarterly Meeting minutes record the construction of a new meeting house at Bradford.³ The preparative meeting minutes first mention the construction of the new meeting house in March of 1766, when members are asked to pay their subscriptions “to get the meeting house built.”⁴ By the 10th of September 1767, the minutes indicated that the work was still underway. Although the minutes do not indicate exactly when the meeting house was completed, it was in use by the early Fall of 1768. It was at that time that the previous meeting house was dismantled. Whether a reflection of incomplete construction details or tardy subscriptions, the accounts for the expenditures towards the construction of the meeting house were not settled until the middle of 1770.

2. Architect: There presumably was no architect for Bradford Meeting House. As was Friends tradition for that time, the meeting house form was determined by the members themselves. This often was done in collaboration with the larger monthly meeting. One member of the meeting, Humphrey Marshall, was said to have been a stone mason, and therefore may have influenced the design (see section 4.).

There are strong similarities between this meeting house and of Chichester Meeting, built within a year after the completion of Bradford. Although the two meetings were not

² The generally accepted date for the erection of the meeting house is 1765. Although construction may have begun late in that year, the 1765 date likely derives from the fact that the extant minute books for the Bradford Preparative Meeting begin that year. The first mention of a meeting house appears on the 5th day of the 4th month 1765, when the minutes record payment to Ann Clayton for “sweeping and making fires (fires) in the meeting house ye year past....” This entry is somewhat misleading, and is most likely a reference to the old meeting house. Prior to the construction of the current meeting house, the Bradford Friends met in a house erected at this site in 1727, which was not dismantled until 1768.

A note on dates: except where quoted and in the formal references, the report translates the “Scriptural” (ie. numerical) names of months favored by Friends into the more common names. According to the Julian calendar in use before 1752, the year began in March. Within the text of the report, the pre-1752 dates have been converted to their modern equivalents. However, no attempt has been made to confirm the modernization of dates derived from secondary sources.

³ Western Quarterly Meeting, Minutes, 17th day of the 8th month 1767.

⁴ Bradford Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 6th day of the 3rd month of 1766. “James Kenney and Richd Buffington are appointed to receive the subscription money of the members of this meeting and pay it to those appointed (sic) to get the meeting house built.”

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located within the same sphere of influence (Bradford was part of the Western Quarter, and Chichester, of Concord Quarter) there is a clear resemblance between them. It may have been the result of the inspiration of a recently relocated Friend, or a "Traveling Friend." Traveling Friends were Quaker ministers who were given special permission by their meetings to travel from meeting to meeting to carry their message. Their interaction within a broader range often was responsible for the transmission of ideas between meetings. The similarities may otherwise reflect their mutual adherence to English program and meeting house form.⁵

3. Owners: In 1729, the trustees of the Bradford Preparative Meeting purchased 2-1/2 acres from Edward Clayton in order to establish a meeting house and burying ground. In 1792, Humphrey Marshall donated property adjacent to the meeting house tract to provide space for a new schoolhouse (razed in 1916). When the meeting was "laid down" or discontinued in 1922, its members were transferred to Caln Preparative Meeting and the property was deeded to the Friends Fiduciary Corporation.⁶ The meeting was revived in 1933, and the title reverted back to the trustees for the Bradford Meeting.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The construction of the meeting house was undertaken and/or contracted by the members of the meeting who formed a building committee. James Kenney and Richard Buffington were appointed to collect subscriptions and, therefore, may have served on a building committee. The only other names given in connection to the building of the meeting house were those of Richard Baker and Humphrey Marshall. The two men were asked to settle the construction accounts, and thus were involved – in some capacity – with the building's construction.

It is likely that Humphrey Marshall (1722-1801) played a major role in the creation of the meeting house, although no substantiating evidence was found. Humphrey Marshall was a "weighty" Friend of Bradford Meeting and the son of founding member, Abraham Marshall. Like his famous cousin, John Bartram, Humphrey Marshall was a botanist. He constructed his own greenhouse or "plant room" within his residence at Marshallton. Although he probably is best known for his scientific experiments in this area, Marshall was also a stone mason. This was a trade that supposedly was passed down from his father. The stone house that he built for his own family still stands, not far from the meeting house. A further argument for Marshall as the builder, or at least designer, of the

⁵ It would be interesting to know if similar ideology regarding program and the role of the women's business meeting caused both meetings to build structures that more closely adhered to English meeting house types than any others in the Delaware Valley. The size of the meeting may have also been a factor; both were evidently small meetings.

⁶ Pennsylvania Historical Survey Division of Community Service Programs, Work Projects Administration. *Inventory of Church Archives, Society of Friends in Pennsylvania*, 1941, p. 163-64.

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Bradford Meeting House is the unique interior flue that was part of the original heating system. Marshall created a similar but more elaborate system in his own residence in order to heat his greenhouse.⁷

5. Original plans and construction: Documentation describing the Bradford Meeting House at the time of its completion has not been uncovered. However, the exterior probably looked much as it does today. Porches were added. Other appendages were erected over the years, but they are no longer extant. The meeting house resembles the early, single-cell meeting houses. It was built with two principal entries, one to the center of the east facade, and another in the south gable end (that currently serves as the principal entry). These entrances may originally have been of equal importance, with the south entry providing access to the women's meeting apartment and the east, to the men's apartment.

Bradford Meeting House originally had a partition that ran east-west, with the meeting room sitting front-to-back rather than side-to-side. The design was indicative of English meeting houses of the period, and much less common in American. However, the plan was conducive to the English program that still predominated the American meetings. This is evident in Bradford's disproportionately sized apartments. What was probably the women's apartment to the rear, had virtually no visibility to the facing bench located at the far north wall. The design was considered somewhat unusual by later standards, because it ran contrary to the prototypical meeting house form that developed by the late eighteenth century.

6. Changes and additions: The first of two privy additions was made about 1776. Only the remnants of the foundations exist today. The minutes of August 8, 1776 noted, "Richard Barnard, Abia Taylor and William England are Desired to proceed to prepare materials & build a conveniency at ye backside of ye meeting house at the expense of this meeting."⁸ Between 1794 and 1795, this structure was supplemented by a larger one of wood frame construction. Both additions appear in historic views of the meeting house.

⁷ According to the HABS report for the Humphrey Marshall House, "The most unusual feature in the house is the flue from the first floor main room." The flue begins at a fireplace in the west wall and travels back and up to the second floor room above, and then steps along the west wall to the outer wall where the chimney is located. The goal was to heat the "plant room" on the first floor and the "long room" over it on the second by means of a single system.

Biographical information pertaining to Humphrey Marshall also comes from the HABS report; see HABS No. PA-203, HABS/HAER Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁸ Bradford Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 8th day of the 8th month 1776. The first mention within the preparative minutes of the construction of a privy was on the 8th day of the 9th month 1774, when Samuel Cope, Joseph Hawley, Henry Marshall and Abia Taylor was appointed to "see what is necessary to be done concerning a conveniency at the back of the building." Construction apparent was not started for another two years, probably due to lack of funding, for they are still collecting "the account of ye expenses of ye back building" during the first month of 1779.

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At the same time, a shed was added to the rear facade. The July 1794 minutes stated, "The committee appointed in consequence of the proposed improvement at the backside of this house report they think it will be right to build a shed 20 feet long and 8 feet wide with some other conveniences."⁹ The work was reported to be completed by September 1795. The addition of this structure may have prompted the filling in of the north rear doorway.

On March 2, 1788, a fire occurred in the meeting house. The repairs may have changed the interior plan. The fire was caused by a faulty flue, and thus the damage was principally to the roof. Evidence of its destruction can be seen in the floor where falling embers left burn marks. While these charred areas have somewhat defaced the floor and facing benches, their existence indicates that the damage to the overall structure was not too extensive. The meeting house did not require reconstruction. The original chimney flues, which presently are visible from the interior of the gable ends, were abandoned at this time. A central chimney was then added.

The partition that divides the meeting house into two apartments appears to have been moved from its original position. It formerly ran east-west, and was located just south of the east and west side doorways. It currently runs north-south, between the two doors of the paired south entry, and the center of the facing bench at the north wall. The new location of the partition created two equally sized apartments. (The reorientation of the interior may have effected the exterior orientation as well, placing greater emphasis on the southern entry, which was reconfigured as a paired or two-door entrance.) Evidence of the original location is seen in the markings along the east and west walls, and in the replacement of the floor boards located through the center of the meeting house. The meeting house also has an unusual partition that runs perpendicular to the principal partition. By so doing, it creates small enclosed apartments that flank the south entry. These small apartments were probably a later addition as well. Two new stoves were installed in the meeting house during September 1800. They were replaced again later in the century. The current stoves have a patent date of 1877. They are used to heat the meeting house still.

Porches were added to the west and south elevations of the meeting house sometime during the mid to late nineteenth century. At this time, porches became popular additions to meeting houses (as well as many domestic building forms). They provided protection from the heat and inclement weather, and created social space for visiting before and after meeting. It appears that the western porch was built first, and later enlarged to include coverage of the south facade. The porches are hung from large iron hooks imbedded into

⁹ Ibid., 10th day of the 7th month 1794.

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the stone walls of the meeting house. The porches likely replaced hoods, such as the one that remains over the east doorway.

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Early History of Bradford Meeting

Bradford Preparative Meeting was set up by Newark Monthly Meeting¹⁰ in 1726, after having served as an indulged meeting under the guidance of Kennett Preparative Meeting since 1716. Bradford Meeting was established for the convenience of a contingent of Kennett Meeting that lived farther up Brandywine Creek. The minutes for the Newark Monthly Meeting noted on the 6th August 1716 that Kennett Preparative Meeting had requested permission to help establish a meeting “to be settled in the forks of the Brandywine twice every week for this winter season.” Shortly thereafter, the “friends living upp Brandywine [...] in the forks of the said Creek near William Marshall” were given approval by the quarterly meeting.¹¹ The meetings presumably were allowed for the winter months due to the difficulties imposed by traveling poor roads in inclement weather. Otherwise, they would have meet along with the other Friends of this region at Kennett Meeting House located many miles away. However, in May of 1721, the Bradford Friends requested that they “might have the priveledge in tho Sumor [Summer] as they have in the winter in keeping their meetings.” The Quarterly meeting gave their consent the following Spring. Finally, on the 3rd of December 1725, the minutes noted, “Newark Monthly Meeting lays before this meeting that the friends of the forks of Brandywine request to have a meeting every first day and fifth day, the preparative meeting week excepted, which this meeting after consideration thereof allows of till farther order.”¹² By 1726, the Bradford Friends officially became a preparative meeting.

The first meeting house of the Bradford Preparative Meeting was built about 1726-27. It was erected on or near the northeast corner of the farm lot belonging to Abraham Marshall, in whose home the Friends previously had held their meetings. This early structure was of log construction. In his compendium of Friends’ meeting houses of the Delaware Valley, Chalkley Matlack claimed that the log meeting house was removed from the Marshall Farm and used by

¹⁰ Newark (or New Ark) Monthly Meeting, which included Kennett Preparative Meeting, and was later renamed Kennett Monthly Meeting, was set up by the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting in 1686.

¹¹ It was approved on the 1st day of the 10th month 1717.

¹² Meeting, Minutes, 3rd day of the 10th month 1725.

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the meeting as a stable for many years.¹³ If so, this structure was probably the same log stable that members of the meeting discussed repairing in 1798.¹⁴ In 1729, 2-1/2 acres adjacent to the log meeting house was purchased from Edward Clayton. On this site, a second meeting house was erected and a burying ground laid out. Little is known of this structure other than it was of stone masonry construction. It stood until 1768, when it was replaced by the meeting house that now stands.

Construction and Evolution of the Bradford Meeting House

The construction of the current meeting house probably began early in the year 1766. The Preparative Meeting minutes give no information regarding the planning and design process for the current structure. The first reference to its construction appears in March of 1766, when it was recorded that, “James Kenney and Richard Buffington are appointed to receive the subscription money of the members of this meeting and pay it to *those apointed to get the meeting house built*” [emphasis mine].¹⁵ During June 1767, comments recorded in the minutes indicated that tardy subscriptions were delaying the construction process. A few months later it was noted that “The men that were apointed to get ye meetinghouse built *are desired to get it finished*” [emphasis mine].¹⁶ In May 1767 the Friends nominated a committee to approach those delinquent in their subscriptions. By November, the delinquents were instructed to surrender their portion or “to appear at next preparative meeting and show their reasons to ye contrary.”¹⁷ Despite the difficulties in raising the necessary funds, the new meeting house was almost fully completed by late Summer 1767. As part of the annual queries,¹⁸ the Western Quarterly Meeting reported in August of 1767, “One new Meeting-house built at Bradford, in this County, near the place of the old one.”¹⁹ The old meeting house was not dismantled until the early fall of the

¹³ Chalkley T. Matlack. “Brief Historical Sketches Concerning Friends Meetings of the Past & Present” [unpublished manuscript located at the Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, PA. Copy available at Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.] (Moorestown, N.J., 1938), 233.

¹⁴ Bradford Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 4th day of the 10th month 1798. Again on the 9th day of the 1st month 1800, the minutes also note that the log stable required repairs.

¹⁵ Ibid., 6th day of the 3rd month 1766.

¹⁶ Ibid, 10th day 9th month 1767.

¹⁷ Ibid, 11th day 10th month 1768.

¹⁸ The annual queries were a list of questions regarding the meetings conduct and the spread of Quaker influence. The queries were read aloud and answered by the meeting, and then forwarded to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

¹⁹ Western Quarterly Meeting, Minutes, 17th day of the 8th month 1767.

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following year, however. This suggests that the meeting house may not have been entirely complete in 1767.

In October of 1768, the Bradford Friends decided that the old meeting house should be dismantled and sold as salvage. In an extreme example of Quaker thrift, when the structure was taken down in 1768, the stone walls were retained to a height adequate enough to begin to create a wall around the burying ground. As noted, "Samuel Cope, Humphrey Marshall & Richard Barnard are appointed to sell ye old meeting house except ye frunt [sic] and end wall about a suitable height for ye grave yard incloser [enclosure]."²⁰ This wall, a remnant of the old meeting house, must stand under a heavy application of plaster that now covers the walls around the burying grounds. William and Evan Jones both purchased "part ye materials of ye old meeting house."²¹ The proceeds probably helped fund the construction of the new meeting house, the cost of which still was not completely paid. The accounts were settled in July 1770, when it is noted that "the acct of building ye meeting house is brought in & lodged in ye preparative meeting book."

Once the meeting house was completed and the accounts settled, the Bradford Friends turned their attention to other improvements to the property. They first considered the erection of a stone wall around the burying ground and the construction of a stable. Benjamin Hawley and Ebenezer Worth were asked to collect subscriptions towards these improvements in May 1772. Their work was delayed until the following year by which time 3-1/2 perches of adjoining land had been purchased in order to enlarge the burying ground. Finances remained an issue. The members appointed to oversee these improvements were instructed to "wall ye grave yard around with stone & lime *as far as this meeting will supply them with money* [...] and if they are to fall short of money for walling ye whole round they are to build ye wall no further then so..." The walls and the stable were completed by early 1774, two years after they were first proposed.

William England served as caretaker for the current meeting house during at least part of the early period of its existence. He was paid to make fires to warm the house prior to the meetings, and, in the winter, to shovel the snow "from ye upping blocks to ye meeting house door" prior to meeting.²² He was also to keep the house in order, including cleaning the stove pipes. For these chores, he was paid three pounds English money per year.²³ Another member's duty was to see that no stragglers were outside once meeting for worship began, and to reprimand those that were

²⁰ Bradford Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 10th day of the 6th month 1768.

²¹ Ibid., 11th day 10th month 1768.

²² Ibid., 12th month 9th day 1773.

²³ Ibid.

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tardy. In 1784, for example, Benjamin Hawley & Nathan Coope were appointed to “walk out and admonish such people as are out about the meeting house during the time of worship.” And Abiah Coope was asked “to have the care of the meeting house doors.”²⁴ Of course, attendance was monitored by the elders and overseers of the meeting. They would extend reminders, and perhaps even pay visits, to those who persisted in missing meeting for worship.

In 1776, attention was again turned to improvements. Construction of a “conveniency” or privy was first made to the back of the meeting house, beginning late that summer.²⁵ A major improvement was anticipated during the summer of 1784, the erection of a school adjacent to the meeting house. A committee was appointed to determine a suitable location upon the meeting house tract. Within two months, a site was selected and the solicitation of subscriptions began. It was recorded that “some friends are continued to *draw a plan of the house* and make an estimate of the cost,” indicating that the Bradford Friends designed, and probably constructed, the building themselves [emphasis mine].

Plans for the school came to a halt when fire struck the meeting house on the morning of the March 2, 1788. A faulty stove pipe or flue caused the roof to catch fire. The stoves were lit early that morning to warm the meeting house in preparation for the meeting for worship. Legend has it that the Friends threw snow through the doors and windows of the meeting house, thereby saving most of the structure.²⁶ Despite the fire, the meeting for worship was held that day at the home of one of the members. The roof was reconstructed entirely, as evidenced by the lack of charred timbers seen today. The floor of the meeting house, however, still bears the marks from the fallen embers. The minutes give little account of the fire nor the extend of the damage caused. It is merely stated,

The situation of our meeting house coming under consideration as being rendered useless by fire, its thought needful to fall into some method to repair to same as speedy as possible and in order thereto Samuel Cope, Richard Barnard, Humphrey Marshall, William Woodward, Ebenezer Worth, Joseph Cope and Joseph Hawley are supported thereto and desired to report to next meeting.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., 7th day 10th month 1784.

²⁵ Ibid., 8th month 8th day 1776.

²⁶ Mose Cornwell of Bradford Meeting, interview with author, August 1998.

²⁷ Bradford Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 6th day of the 3rd month 1788.

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It is unclear how long it took to repair the meeting house. In December 1788 subscriptions were still sought to “defray the expense of repairing the meeting house.”²⁸

The fire provided an impetus for change. Inside, the Friends altered the plan in the interest of safety and in order to keep pace with the newly implemented American Friends program. Modifications were made in an effort to prevent future problems with the (stove) heating system. The flues in the gable ends were abandoned in favor of a central chimney stack. The stove pipe that traveled from the former chimney flues to the stoves in each apartment would have been disrupted by the current north-south position of the partition. Thus, it is most likely that the partition was moved at the same time that the new chimney was installed. Evidence of the original east-west location of the partition is seen in the markings along the walls to either side, and by the replacement of the floor boards along its former path through the center of the meeting house.

Improvements continued in the summer of 1792. Humphrey Marshall donated an adjoining lot for the school house. The school house committee informed the meeting that Richard Jones had agreed to undertake the work, and that it was likely to go forward. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting gave advice regarding how to build a “suitable house,” raise the funds, and erect a residence for the school master.²⁹ The school house was completed soon thereafter (it was razed in 1916). Late in 1794, a structure was begun along the backside of the meeting house “for the convenience of Friends,” presumably a privy building. Plans were made for a privy addition that consisted of shed-type structure measuring 20' long and 8' wide. The proposed improvement was to include “some other conveniences” besides the privies, perhaps a wood shed or other storage facility. Its construction may have facilitated filling in the north rear doorway. Remnants of the foundation of the 1794, and another, earlier privy addition, are still visible to the rear of the meeting house.

In the meantime, changes were being made in the organization of Friends' meetings in the area. Originally part of Chester Quarter, and later Concord, Bradford Meeting was relegated to the newly formed Western Quarter in 1758. This was in reaction to the growing number of meetings in the region. Oversight was difficult when there were many preparative and/or monthly meetings within a quarter. New quarterly meetings, such as the Western Quarter, were created so that the total number of members remained small enough to sustain a sense of community. While Bradford belonged to the Western Quarter, the site of the actual meetings was London Grove Meeting House. In October 1792, for instance, the Bradford Friends gave 60 pounds to defray the cost of altering London Grove Meeting House to accommodate the Quarterly Meetings. A further division occurred in 1800, creating Caln Quarterly Meeting. Caln consisted

²⁸ Ibid., 4th day of the 12th month 1788.

²⁹ Bradford Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 13th day 12th month 1793.

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of the monthly meetings of Caln, Bradford, Sadsbury, Uwchlan, and Robeson. At that time, the monthly meetings are held on a rotating basis at Bradford and Caln meeting houses. In 1801, Bradford Friends helped pay for an addition to Caln Meeting House – as they had done for London Grove a decade before – so that quarterly meetings could be held at that location.

The division of meetings (and the establishment of a monthly meeting at Bradford) may have prompted the construction of the unusual partitioned spaces to the rear of the meeting house. Their purpose is unknown. They may have been created to allow space for separate monthly business meetings, such as committee meetings. Or they may have been created to make the space conform to the size of the meeting. The Friends believed that a certain familiarity or sense of community was conducive to the meeting for worship, wherein they sat silently “waiting upon the lord.” The rear partition could be closed to create a more intimate space for use by a smaller group, such as the preparative meeting, and opened to accommodate the larger monthly meetings.³⁰ When the rear partitions are closed, the windows to the center of them allow natural light to enter the room from the exterior windows in the south facade. Local legend has it that these two-bench-deep spaces were used to seat slaves and/or Native Americans. These individuals might have been invited to attend, but perhaps not participate in, the meeting for worship. There is, however, no documentation to substantiate this claim. One other suggestion is that these spaces were used by mothers with young (nursing) children who might otherwise disrupt the meeting.³¹

Other early improvements reported by the preparative meeting minutes include the construction of a frame stable building in 1802. The buildings measured 18' x 30' and had an “overshoot” of 6'. A stone horse block was erected to the west side of the meeting house.³² And in 1824, sheds

³⁰ The concept of maintaining an intimate space with regard to English meeting houses was suggested by Historian David M. Butler. Butler stated: “During the eighteenth century....a good deal of flexibility in the capacity of the room was gained by the use of shutters and an extreme example can be seen at Penrith (Meeting House) where the main meeting room was extended by four distinct spaces, two of which could be added or isolated by use of the shutters. From the early days Friends appear to have been aware of the need to make the space suit the size of the gathering, as a hall too large for the numbers of worshipers may have a dampening effect upon their sense of community.” David M. Butler, ii. Robert L. Smith has suggested that “Quakers are unique in their appreciation of the spiritual power of *group* silence.” Smith added, “The premise of Quaker Meeting is that no one person sees the entire truth. The group search after truth is more comprehensive and more exciting than the search of one individual,” suggesting that familiarity or intimacy is more conducive to meetings. Robert Lawrence Smith, *A Quaker Book of Wisdom* (New York: Eagle Brook, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1998), 11 & 21.

³¹ This plausible explanation was given by a current member of meeting, Mr. Mose Cornwell, in an interview with the author, August 11, 1998. Mennonite meeting houses generally include an ante room or cloak room for women that is said to have been used by young mothers as well.

³² Bradford Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 28th day 4th moth 1803.

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for the accommodation of horses and carriages were erected on the meeting house grounds.³³ With the exception of the horse block, none of these structures stand today.

English Precedent and the Design of Bradford Friends Meeting

The seemingly unconventional plan of Bradford Meeting House more closely paralleled that of English meeting houses than the emerging American Friends forms. Bradford's plan includes a front-to-back arrangement of meeting rooms. A larger room with a facing bench is at one end, partitioned off from a secondary apartment used for (women's) business meetings. The only other extant meeting house of this type in the Delaware Valley is Chichester, erected in Boothwyn, Pennsylvania, in 1769. Although this meeting house plan rarely is seen in America today, there is considerable precedent for it in England.³⁴ The plan was conducive to the English meeting program. The colonial Friends adhered to this program, and built some early meeting house with a similar plan. Not all took this form, however. There were significant variations in the manner in which this program was manifested in the American meeting houses. While the (original) interior plan of Bradford was like the typical English meeting house, the exterior differs significantly from English prototypes. Among other things, English meeting houses generally lacked the symmetry indicative of the American building forms. Bradford's exterior resembles the single-celled, three-bay wide, central entry meeting house form prevalent in rural areas during the colonial period. Bradford's overall design is thus a melding of English and early colonial-period American meeting house forms.

Most colonial era American meeting houses had a plan that was conducive to the English pattern of meetings whereby men and women met together for worship and separated for business. This pattern called for one larger room that could accommodate the entire population for worship. Because a facing bench was used primarily for oversight during worship, it was absent from the women's business meeting room. The more common early American version is exemplified by Philadelphia's Second Bank Meeting House of 1702. Meeting houses such as Second Bank were square shaped with hipped roofs, and were generally two-stories in height to include a gallery. They also had two "front" facades that corresponded to the separate men's and women's meeting rooms. Because of the hipped roof, these facades appear as nearly identical. Bradford and Chichester both had *three* facades with central entryways. The English meeting houses are generally asymmetrical, with the window and door placement reflecting the disproportionate size of the men's and women's meeting rooms. On the other hand, the fenestration of both Second Bank and Bradford meeting houses is balanced perfectly. They appear as a single-celled structure, belying their unbalanced interior division. The most significant difference with regard to the interior of the American and English types was the location of the facing bench. In the

³³ Ibid., 30th day 5th month 1824.

³⁴ See, David M. Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses of the Lake Counties* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1978).

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former, the benches generally were placed the length, rather than the depth of the building, thus maximizing communication or oversight by the ministers, elders and overseers whom occupied it and the general membership.

Bradford's design became antiquated soon after it was completed. Interestingly enough, both Bradford and Chichester were among the last Friends' meeting houses in the Delaware Valley to be built upon an English meeting plan. They were erected in 1768 and 1769 respectively, at the same time that the prototypical American meeting house form was emerging.³⁵ Chichester has maintained its original plan. The partition at Bradford, however, was moved from its original east-to-west orientation to run north-to south. The new location thereby created equally sized men's and women's apartments, both containing a facing bench. The reconfiguration of the partition conforms to a change in American Friends program whereby men and women met to either side of a partition for worship and business, closing the partition during the latter meetings. By the eighteenth century, American program was manifested in a new building form that became a prototype for meeting house design.³⁶ This prototype consisted of a two-celled, doubled structure with identical, equally sized apartments to accommodate separate men's and women's business meetings. The prototype appeared in 1769, a year after the completion of Bradford Meeting House.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Bradford's design melds early colonial American, and English meeting house forms. It combines a plan derived from English patterns of meeting with the single-cell form indicative of the rural meeting houses of the colonial era. Bradford was built on the cusp of the evolution from the less-patterned early settlement period structures to the prototypical doubled form that became the standard for meeting house design. Yet, the original plan of Bradford still adhered to English program. The progression of Bradford's design demonstrates the significance of contemporary trends in meeting program and building design that were indicative of this somewhat experimental period in meeting house development. As an example of this, Bradford possesses what appears to be two front facades. The intention was probably to provide

³⁵ It was built on the cusp of the evolution from the less-patterned early settlement era structures to the prototypical doubled meeting house form, the first of which was completed the same year as Bradford. Buckingham Meeting House (1768) in Lahaska, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, was probably the first meeting house in the Delaware Valley to be built as a two-cell, doubled type, with dual entries for men and women. This "doubled" plan, with equally sized men's and women's meeting rooms, would become the standard form for Friends Meeting House design for nearly a century.

³⁶ Probably the first meeting house in this region built as the doubled prototype was Buckingham Meeting House in Lahaska, Pennsylvania in 1768.

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separate entryways into the men's and women's apartments (as originally partitioned). Once the partition was realigned to conform to changes in program, a paired entry was created to the south front. The current side-by-side doorways are separated by a partition mounted on the rail that divides them. The doors permit access into the separate apartments.³⁷

Like most Friends Meeting Houses, Bradford's vernacular styling is in keeping with Quaker conventions with regard to meeting house design and construction. These include the incorporation of regional building traits and indigenous building materials, and simplicity in design. Friends meeting houses generally are far more domestic than ecclesiastic in appearance, and Bradford's single-cell form provides a good example. Although it is vernacular in design, the stonework is particularly refined. It includes decorative galleting, indicating it was the work of a skilled mason.

2. Condition of fabric: Bradford Meeting House appears to be well maintained and in good condition. Both the exterior and interior are in pristine condition. The meeting house has received no additions, renovations, or modern upgrades such as central heating, plumbing or electricity.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: Bradford is a single-story, three-bay-by-three-bay structure nearly square in shape, measuring 38' x 45'. It has a gable front roof, and an entry to the center of each elevation (filled in at the north elevation). The meeting house appears to have two "fronts." There is a paired-door entry on the south front, and a single-door entry covered by an unsupported hood on the east. Porches were added along the west and south elevations. Remnants of the old foundations of a privy/shed building can be seen to the north and northwest corner of the meeting house.

2. Foundations: The foundations are of rubble stonework, with no demarcation between it and the walls of the meeting house.

3. Walls: The walls are constructed of rubble stonework in-filled with decorative galleting, particularly in the area surrounding the windows. There is a drip molding over the pent in the gable ends. The stonework to the center of the north rear elevation has been patched, indicating the location of a former doorway. Iron hooks, like those that support the current porches, suggest the location of a former porch roof and floor (or

³⁷ It is also interesting to note that Old Kennett, the meeting from which Bradford was established, was another one of the few early meeting houses to possess the paired entryway. In both cases, this paired doorway was the means by which the meeting house was retrofitted to form the equivalent to the paired doorways of the doubled meeting house.

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other type of enclosure). A number of stones have initials or other markings carved into them, such as one located at the southeast corner that reads: "A Baily 1779."

4. Structural system, framing: The building is of load-bearing masonry construction. It has an unusual double truss roof structure that combines a W-truss within that of a larger queen post system. There are three sets of W-trusses, resting on hewn summer beams. The rafters are pegged at the roof ridge and beveled against the sill plate. They rest against purlins which also serve to support the tops of the two smaller trusses. The rafters do not rest on the outer members of the trusses but are completely separate from them. The dual trusses are joined together structurally by a collar beam.

5. Porches, stoops: A broad, shed-roof porch, supported by chamfered posts, runs the length of the south elevation. It continues around to the west side, where it joins with an earlier porch. Iron hooks mounted into the stonework support the porch roof. An unsupported hood covers the east side entryway, and there are three stone steps leading to the door. At the west elevation there is a stone step with wood step/platform atop it.

6. Chimneys: There is a brick center chimney that provides a flue for the two stoves, one to the center of each interior apartment. The chimney replaces flues built into the walls of the north and south gable ends. These can still be seen from the attic.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are doorways at the center of the south, east and west elevations, with evidence of a former doorway at the north. The principal entry is currently the paired doorway located at the south, gable-front elevation. The two four-panel doors are separated by a narrow rail. Each has a wrought-iron Suffolk latch. The doorway has a stepped architrave surround with mitered joints and a wood sill (not original).³⁸ The doorway in the east facade includes double, three-panel doors, also with Suffolk latches. It has a plain surround with butt joints held with pegs, and a narrow, mitered architrave trim. The sill is made of wood. The doorway in the west facade has the same surround as that of the east, but the opening has been reduced to accommodate a new door that includes glass lights in the upper panels. It has a Suffolk latch, too. A former doorway in the north elevation is indicated by the filled-in stonework. There is a batten door in

³⁸ Pieces of the plain, original moldings are found in the attic. The replacement of the surround for this doorway only suggests that the opening may not be original, and perhaps was enlarged to accommodate wider doors when the partition was later positioned here. At the very least, this suggests that this doorway was upgraded in status (as well as design), becoming the principal entry.

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the gable end at this elevation; it is located to the left of center to provide space for the internal flue.

b. Windows and shutters: The six-over-six-light sash windows are probably not original. They each have a simple, wood surround with a quarter-round molding along the outer edge. There are new wood sills (that appear as a false front). The windows have paneled shutters.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The meeting house has a low-pitched, gable-front roof covered with composition shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves: There is no cornice or overhanging eave. There is a pent in the gable ends.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The interior is divided by retractable wood partitions into two principle apartments. There are small, shallow partitioned rooms to either side of the entryway along the south wall. The facing benches are along the north rear wall. The benches are arranged in the traditional manner, to either side of the partition. There is a central aisle to either side of the partition, and a cross aisle on axis with the side doors. There are stoves in the cross aisle, one in each apartment.

2. Stairways: Access to the attic is provided by a steep, narrow, ladder stair, located in the northeast corner of the meeting house on the uppermost facing bench. There is a trap door in the floor.

3. Flooring: The original random-width, unfinished flooring is extant, complete with ruts created by the burning embers from the 1788 fire.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are of plaster painted white, with unfinished wood wainscoting.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The exterior doors are recessed and have plain reveals and simple wood surrounds. The interior doors that open into the south front vestibule have horizontal panels and lift-latch hardware.

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b. Windows: The windows are recessed with plain reveals, and some have wood surrounds.

6. Benches: The facing benches are located along the north rear wall. They consist of two tiers with three rows of benches. Winder steps at both ends provide access to each tier of benches. There is a fixed bench along both the east and west side walls. All other benches are moveable, but currently look towards the facing benches.

7. Partition: A paneled wood partition divides the interior into two apartments. It runs north-south, between the paired front doors. The partition consists of seven sections of panels. Within each section, the top and bottom panels are fixed, and those to the center are retractable. The partition is stepped to the north end to accommodate the raised facing benches. There is an additional section near the cross aisle to accommodate a doorway between the two apartments. A similar arrangement appears to the south front of the meeting house. There are three sections of panels to either side of the central entryway, with glass lights in the center section.

8. Mechanical systems:

a. Heating: The meeting house is heated by wood stoves, one to either side of the partition. Stoves probably were used to heat the meeting house from the start. An entry in the preparative meeting minutes from the 9th December 1773 noted that the meeting had hired a caretaker whose duties include making fires and keeping the stove pipes clean. Notations in the back of the minute book indicated that subscriptions were paid to have fires lit back to 1769. It was a defective stove pipe that caused the fire of 1788. The original stoves were replaced in 1800 as indicated by an entry in the minutes designating an individual “to provide two stoves for this house at the expense of this meeting” and to “dispose of the old one to the best advantage, and provide wood for the ensuing winter.”³⁹ These stoves have since been replaced as well. The current stoves bear the mark: “Pat’d 1877, ORR Painter & Co., Reading, PA.”

b. Lighting: The interior is lit principally by natural lighting. There is no electricity. Oil lamps were probably used to light the meeting house when needed.

c. Plumbing: The meeting house is still without plumbing. The minutes make note of a well to be dug “on the meeting house ground for the conveniency of

³⁹ Bradford Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 4th day 9th month 1800.

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Friends.”⁴⁰ On the 4th October 1787, Curtis Buffington produced his account for the digging and walling of the well.

D. Site:

1. Historic landscape design: The current meeting house is probably the third on the property. None of the meeting houses were erected at the exact same location. The first was located on the edge of a neighboring farm, and the second at one corner of the burying ground. Over the course of its history, the meeting house property has included numerous horse sheds, a stable(s), and a school house. The unpaved driveway approaches the meeting house from the east. It runs along the south side of the meeting house, and continues past the caretaker’s house (on the south side of the drive) to houses located to the west rear.
2. Cemetery: The cemetery is located to the south and east of the meeting house, just across the drive. It is surrounded by stone walls covered with a plaster finish.
3. Outbuildings: Evidence of a former privy, and a privy/shed combination are found to the northwest corner and the north rear of the meeting house. Carriage/horse sheds once flanked the meeting house, along the north rear property line. A school house was once located on the property. The only extant structure associated with the meeting house is a caretaker’s house located to the southwest. It is a two-story, gable-fronted structure constructed of stuccoed stone. It is three bays across and two bays deep, and has a single-story addition to the rear.
4. Mounting block: A mounting or upping block for the mounting and dismounting of horses is located along the drive to the southeast of the meeting house. It is a large stone-constructed block with steps to both sides.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

A. Early Views:

“Friends Meeting House (built 1765), Marshallton, PA, Postcard view (undated), Photographic Collection, Meeting Houses, FHL 110/B71/016.

Bradford Friends Meeting House (undated), Photographic Collection, Meeting Houses, FHL 110/B71/009.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9th day 12th month 1784.

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Goode, Ned (photographer). Bradford Friends Meeting House, Views of interior looking south, north and northwest, 1 July 1958, FHL 110/B71.

Moore, JRB Collection. Views of Bradford Friends Meeting House, east elevation and perspective view looking northeast (undated), FHL 110/B71/004.

B. Interviews:

Cornwell, Mose; member of Bradford Meeting. Interview with author, Bradford Friends Meeting House, August 11, 1998.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The documentation of the Bradford Friends Meeting House was undertaken during the summer of 1998 as part of a larger program to record the Friends Meeting Houses of the Delaware Valley. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), E. Blaine Cliver, Chief of HABS/HAER; Paul Dolinsky, Chief HABS; funding was made possible through a congressional appropriation for documentation in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The project was planned and administered by HABS historians Aaron V. Wunsch and Catherine C. Lavoie; and architect Robert R. Arzola. The project Historians were Aaron V. Wunsch and Catherine C. Lavoie; this report was written by Catherine Lavoie. Large format photography was undertaken by HABS photographer Jack E. Boucher. Special thanks to Rick Shatley and Mr. Mose Cornwell for all their help and encouragement.