

CHICHESTER FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE  
611 Meetinghouse Road  
Boothwyn  
Delaware County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6225

HABS  
PA 6225

WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS  
PHOTOGRAPHS

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

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### CHICHESTER FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

HABS NO. PA-6225

- Location: 611 Meetinghouse Road, Upper Chichester Township, Delaware County, Pennsylvania
- Present Owner: Concord Monthly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends
- Present Use: Meeting House used semi-annually for religious worship
- Significance: Chichester Meeting House is a well-preserved and unusual example of eighteenth-century Quaker meeting-house architecture in the Delaware Valley. Erected between 1769 and 1771, the building follows a plan with few contemporary counterparts. Most extant American meeting-house designs of the period place the main entrance(s) and elevated seating area known as the facing bench on the long walls. At Chichester, both features are located in the gable ends. Again rejecting convention, Chichester's designers partitioned the building in such a way as to exclude the facing bench from one of the two meeting rooms. This layout may reflect the influence of local domestic architecture. It may as easily represent an interpretation of English meeting-house design or testify to the relative status of Chichester's men's and women's meetings for business. In any case, the building's configuration deserves further study.
- Chichester Meeting House also exhibits distinctive features of a smaller scale. These include: a decorative water table that highlights corners and doors, a corner fireplace, an early iron stove, and a secondary, waist-high partition door. Outside, a combined barn and horse shed is an interesting variant of once-common amenity on Delaware Valley meeting-house sites. The land on which these buildings stand has belonged to Friends for over three centuries. For two hundred and forty years, Chichester Meeting House has accommodated their religious worship.
- Historian: Aaron Wunsch, HABS Historian, 1997, 1999

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: 1769-1771. The main evidence establishing the time-frame of Chichester Meeting House's construction appears in three contemporary sources. These are: 1) the building's date stone, mounted in the west gable and bearing the inscription "R

+ D 1769"; 2) the minutes of Concord Monthly Meeting; and 3) the minutes of Chester [Concord] Quarterly Meeting.<sup>1</sup> The minutes suggest that construction began in 1769, slowed or ceased for lack of funds in 1770, and was complete by 1771.

2. Architect: Not known. No original records directly attribute the design of Chichester Meeting House to an individual or ad hoc group. Built prior to the advent of the architectural profession in America, the structure probably was designed by meeting members and erected by local craftsmen who also may have belonged to the meeting; this pattern is well established for other Friends meeting houses of the era. During the late 1760s, Chichester Meeting's most active member was Richard Dutton.<sup>2</sup> Historians have suggested that the initials in the meeting-house date stone are his, but any involvement he may have had in the building's creation remains unconfirmed. Concord Monthly and Chester Quarterly meetings both formed committees to advise Chichester Friends about building their meeting house. While such bodies sometimes provided design directions, it is not clear that they did so here.

3. Original and Subsequent Owners: Chichester Friends began holding meeting property in trust in 1688. At that time, James Browne deeded two acres to his fellow Friends "in behalf & for the only use of the people of god called Quakers in the township of Chichester & County of Chester."<sup>3</sup> By 1705, the tract had grown to seven acres.<sup>4</sup> One acre and one hundred and fifty three perches were added in 1772 but appear to have been

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<sup>1</sup>Concord Monthly Meeting, Men's Minutes, 4 January 1769 to 6 June 1770, microfilm copy, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA (source cited hereafter as CMM Minutes and repository as FHL); Chester [Concord] Quarterly Meeting, Men's Minutes, 13 February 1769 to 11 February 1771, microfilm copy, FHL (cited hereafter as CQM Minutes).

*A note on dates:* except in quotations, this report translates the "Scriptural" (i.e., numerical) names of months favored by Friends into the more common pagan names. According to the Julian calendar in use before 1752, the year began in March. Again, with the exception of quotations, I have converted pre-1752 dates to their modern equivalents. However, I have made no attempt confirm the modernization of dates derived from secondary sources.

<sup>2</sup>See below, pp. 11-12.

<sup>3</sup>Deed, James Browne to William Clayton, Sr., Phillip Roman, Robert Pile, Jacob Chandler, Joseph Bushell and John Kingsman, 4 December 1688, as transcribed in CMM Minutes, same date.

<sup>4</sup>Isaac Taylor, "Draught of [Chichester] Meeting House Land," 28 May 1705, MS; and Declaration of Trust, Phillip Roman, John Kingsman and William Clayton to Chichester Monthly Meeting, 17 June 1705; both documents in Concord Monthly Meeting, Miscellaneous Property Records, FHL. The land shown here seems to include the two acres James Browne donated in 1688. However, Browne's deed to Chichester Meeting must have been void by 1705. In that year, James Swaffer bought Browne's 100-acre tract, including the meeting-house land. Swaffer then granted his fellow Friends the seven acres shown in the survey. See Benjamin H. Smith, *Atlas of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: H. B. Ashmead, 1880), pl. 17.

sold in 1821.<sup>5</sup> The present owner, Concord Monthly Meeting (Hicksite), took title to the property in 1914.<sup>6</sup>

4. Builders, suppliers: See above, Section 2.

5. Original Plans and Construction: No original plans of Chichester Meeting House survive, but financial records and early photographs suggest the structure has changed little. It is built of local fieldstone, nearly square in plan and covered by a gable roof. The north, south and west walls each are punctuated by a central door flanked by two evenly spaced windows. The east wall features a pair of evenly spaced windows and a batten door in the gable. Inside, a wood partition divides the building into two meeting spaces of unequal size. The smaller, west room contains a corner fireplace and a single fixed bench that runs along the north and west walls. A central aisle divides moveable benches in this room and continues into the next room through a door in the partition. The east room is the primary meeting space. On the east wall are located two rows of elevated seats known as facing benches. Near the center of the room stands an iron stove.<sup>7</sup>

6. Changes and Additions: Most changes made to Chichester Meeting House have served to increase human comfort. They include the installation and replacement of stoves,<sup>8</sup> the construction of a privy at the southeast corner, and the addition of a shed-

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<sup>5</sup>*Inventory of Church Archives: Society of Friends in Pennsylvania*, compiled by the Pennsylvania Historical Survey, Division of Community Service Programs, Work Projects Administration (Philadelphia: Friends Historical Association, 1941), 181; Declaration of Trust, John Ford, William Eyre, Benjamin Reynolds, Jacob Dingee, Richard Dutton, John Grubb and Chichester Preparative Meeting, 15 January 1772, filed with Chichester Preparative Meeting, Miscellaneous Deeds and Papers, FHL (Grubb supplied the land); Chichester Preparative Meeting, Trustees Minutes, 23 August, 27 December, 1821, FHL (cited hereafter as CPM Trustees Minutes).

<sup>6</sup>Jack Eckert, *Guide to the Records of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting* (Philadelphia: Records Committee of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1989), 49; *Inventory of Church Archives*, 240.

<sup>7</sup>The earliest known views of Chichester Meeting House are on file at the Delaware County Historical Society in Broomall, PA (repository cited hereafter as DCHS). One, labeled "about 1860," shows the building and graveyard from the southwest. The other shows the site from the northwest and matches an 1871 photograph by Gilbert Cope in Collection 912, Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, PA.

<sup>8</sup>The meeting-house summer beam is located off center, as if to accommodate a central chimney for a stove. This suggests that stove installation was at least considered in the original design. Meeting records mention work on an existing stove in 1787 and, three years later, Caleb Eyre purchased a stove and stove door for a total of £3.10.0. See Chichester Preparative Meeting, Account Book, 15 March 1787, ? January 1790, in Chichester Preparative Meeting, Miscellaneous Financial Records, FHL (cited hereafter as CPM Account Book).

Beyond this point, the history of Chichester's stoves is murky. The meeting had begun to operate a local school by 1790. While most school-related expenditures were itemized as such, the 1790 stove may have been

roofed porch to the south wall. Meeting records supply no firm dates for these projects. Some loss of original building fabric may have accompanied periodic roof repairs, made in 1807, 1861, 1907; the most comprehensive occurred in 1861, at which time the ceiling was also replaced.<sup>9</sup> By 1916, the southeast chimney had been demolished and, sometime later, the central chimney was extended downward from the attic to the floor. Also after 1916, the north door was restored or replaced.<sup>10</sup> A line of filled floor mortises strongly suggests that a bottom row of facing benches has been removed. No plumbing or electric wiring has ever been installed.

## B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### **Chichester Friends and Their Meeting Places, 1682-1771**

The part of Pennsylvania in which Chichester Meeting House stands was host to some of the earliest Quaker settlement in the Delaware Valley. Starting in the mid 1670s, Friends emigrated from England on such ships as the *Griffith*, the *Kent* and the *Shield*, landing on the eastern side of the Delaware River in New Jersey. Indians living in the area had been joined by Swedish and Dutch colonists in previous decades. England's takeover of New Netherland in 1664 laid the way for peaceful British settlement between the Hudson and Delaware Rivers, and because West Jersey was a Quaker colony, Friends felt particularly welcome there. As the towns of Salem and Burlington took root in West Jersey, their residents began examining land on the other side of the Delaware. Some made the crossing and decided not to return.<sup>11</sup>

By 1681, when William Penn assumed ownership of Pennsylvania, a number of Friends had made their homes in the colony. The first and most active appears to have been Robert Wade.

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bought for use in that building. Moreover, while the centrally located meeting-house stove does date from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, a stovepipe hole over the fireplaces suggests a *second* stove stood there. A similar hole in the central partition adds to the confusion.

<sup>9</sup>Chichester Preparative Meeting, Men's Minutes, 28 May, 31 December 1807, 28 January 1808, FHL (cited hereafter as CPM Minutes); CPM Account Book, miscellaneous receipts dated 1861, entry of 3 April 1862; Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (H), Sub-Committee Having Charge of the Income of the Samuel Jeanes Fund for Meeting House Purposes, Minutes, 13 September, 13 December 1907, FHL (cited hereafter as PYM Jeanes Fund).

<sup>10</sup>Two photographs dated 1916, DCHS. In these views, the southwest chimney is missing and a stovepipe occupies the location of the east room's present chimney. The photographs also show a four-panel door in the north wall. The present six-panel door is either a re-installed original or a twentieth-century attempt to match the south door.

<sup>11</sup>Amelia M. Gummere, "The Early Quakers in New Jersey" and Isaac Sharpless, "The Quakers in Pennsylvania," in Rufus M. Jones and others, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1966), 362-68, 419-22.

Landing at Salem in 1675, he moved across the river to the former Swedish outpost of Upland and began holding meeting for worship with others who shared his faith. Within a few years, Wade's meeting had grown to include residents of Marcus Hook, located just southwest of Upland on the Delaware. The group also obtained permission to conduct monthly meeting for business, giving it charge over members' marriage applications, their transfer to other meetings, and their general adherence to the principles of Quakerism. Upland Monthly Meeting held its first session on "ye 10 day of ye 11 month, 1681...at Robert Wad's house."<sup>12</sup>

As immigrants poured into Penn's colony during the 1680s, they transformed the character of older settlements along the Delaware. An important indicator of change was the abandonment of Swedish and Dutch geographical names in favor of English ones. By court order, Marcus Hook became Chichester in 1682.<sup>13</sup> Many of the area's inhabitants were Quakers. They conducted public affairs in Upland (renamed Chester in this era) and habitually traveled there for monthly meeting, but their growing population warranted its own meeting for worship. In 1682, Upland Monthly Meeting granted Chichester Friends this privilege.<sup>14</sup>

Quakers were also moving west of Chichester, settling in Aston, Bethel, Concord, Birmingham and beyond. To better oversee these communities, the region's quarterly meeting established a monthly meeting at Chichester in 1684. Within two years this body met also at Concord and, in later decades, assumed that name. But in the meantime, Chichester Monthly Meeting conferred special importance on the locale and meeting for worship with which it was first associated.<sup>15</sup>

The Quakers who arrived in Chichester during the 1680s had much in common with those who populated the rest of southeastern Pennsylvania. As Isaac Sharpless has observed,

The large majority of the settlers were Englishmen, mostly yeomen. They had bought their lands of Penn from rough maps before leaving England, at the very

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<sup>12</sup>As quoted in Gilbert Cope and J. Smith Futhey, *History of Chester County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 230. See also Sharpless, 439-40; George Smith, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Henry B. Ashmead, 1862), 103-04; *Inventory of Church Archives*, 176. Upland Monthly Meeting changed its name to Chester Monthly meeting in 1711.

<sup>13</sup>George Smith, 136.

<sup>14</sup>George Smith, 137, 148; Cope and Futhey, *History of Chester County*, 231.

<sup>15</sup>Henry Graham Ashmead, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts & Co., 1884), 450. Chichester Monthly Meeting initially encompassed a broad territory that stretched across "Aston, Bethel, Birmingham, Concord, Thornbury, and Westtown, and beyond the limits of these townships, west and north, indefinitely" (Ashmead). It met at Chichester until 1686, circulated between Chichester and Concord until 1729, then settled at Concord. At that time, the name was changed to Concord Monthly Meeting. See George Smith, 158; *Inventory of Church Archives*, 179-80.

moderate price which he asked... The meeting-houses a few miles apart through the settled country were the first concern after the necessities of living were provided for, and the machinery of the church was easily constructed after the George Fox model.<sup>16</sup>

In 1686, Chichester Monthly Meeting decided to take up a subscription for a meeting house. Following Quaker custom, Friends in the area had been meeting for worship in each other's houses, but the responsibility of hosting monthly meeting may have prompted them to seek more formal accommodation. Thus,

At a monthly meeting held at Chichester the 11th of the 11th mo. 1685 [January 1686], It was proposed and Agreed to build a meeting house upon a parcel of land granted by James Browne as by a deed may further appeare & Sometime afterward it was agreed by friends to form a buriell-ground upon the Said Land Joining to the meeting house...<sup>17</sup>

Twenty six members contributed to the cause. Most were local land-holders and some, such as James Browne, John Kingsman, Thomas Withers and William Cloud, owned over three hundred acres.<sup>18</sup> Together with the others, they raised thirty-six pounds and four shillings - a sum sufficient for constructing a small, solid building. Its design is not recorded, but some indication may appear in the minutes of nearby Upland Monthly Meeting. In 1687, Upland Friends noted their intent to build a meeting house measuring twenty-four-feet-square in plan and standing ten feet high. The structure that eventually emerged from this scheme was made of stone, covered by a gable roof, and heated by fireplace.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps Chichester's builders adopted similar proportions and features.

Uncertainty also surrounds the date on which the first Chichester meeting house was completed. James Browne, a native of Northamptonshire, England, officially granted two acres to his co-religionists in 1688.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, the deed noted that Browne's land was already "in the Tennour & Occupation...of the people of god called Quakers in the township of Chichester" at

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<sup>16</sup>Sharpless, 440-41. See also Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960), 118-19.

<sup>17</sup>CMM Minutes.

<sup>18</sup>Benjamin Smith, *Atlas of Delaware County*, pl. 17; "List of Land-Holders, 1689" as reprinted in Cope and Futhey, *History of Chester County*, 31-32.

<sup>19</sup>Walter F. Price, "Friends' Meeting Houses at Chester, Pennsylvania," *Bulletin of the Friends Historical Association* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1932): 66-67; George Smith, 188 and facing illustration.

<sup>20</sup>See footnote 3. On Browne, see Cope and Futhey, *History of Chester County*, 488.

the time of sale. Six meeting members and their heirs were named de facto trustees; any who should "fall from the belief of the Truth" were to be replaced. While the property may well have included the building for which funds had been gathered in 1686, the earliest known source confirming the existence of such a building dates from 1699. In that year, Walter Martin donated land for an Episcopal church and graveyard in Chichester. Stipulating that Friends be excluded from the premises, he noted: "The Quakers already have a meeting house of their own in said township."<sup>21</sup>

Despite the growing diversity of the local populace and occasional displays of religious rivalry, Friends maintained a strong presence in Chichester at the opening of the eighteenth century. In 1700, their ranks included enough seasoned members to prepare business for the monthly meeting.<sup>22</sup> This new responsibility made Chichester a "preparative" meeting, one of several set up at the time, and may have encouraged the congregation to acquire more property. By 1705, the meeting-house tract had swelled to seven acres. The land, which apparently included James Browne's original gift, lay along Aston Road (now Meetinghouse Road) at the center of Chichester Township. The road conveniently bisected the township, forming an important link between Aston to the north and the growing colony of Delaware to the south. Many Friends lived near the route; their farms flanked the meeting-house property.<sup>23</sup>

In the same era, Chichester Township began functioning as two distinct administrative and geographical units. Although Upper and Lower Chichester were not officially declared separate townships until mid century, the division apparently aided certain sectors of the local economy.<sup>24</sup> Lower Chichester encompassed a densely settled area known as Marcus Hook - the only part of the territory to retain the old name. By the early 1700s, this town rivaled neighboring Chester. Each claimed roughly one hundred houses, a market place, and a port on the Delaware. Passing through Marcus Hook at mid century, Swedish naturalist Peter Kalm observed, "they build here every year a number of small ships for sale, and from an iron work which lies higher up in the country, they carry iron bars to this place and ship them."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>As cited in John T. Faris, *Old Churches and Meeting Houses in and Around Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1926), 93.

<sup>22</sup>The monthly meeting appointed three men and three women to prepare Chichester's business; see CMM Minutes, 9 September 1700. On the purpose and proliferation of preparative meetings, see Sharpless, 534-35.

<sup>23</sup>See footnote 4.

<sup>24</sup>Charles Palmer and Lucile Shenk, eds., *A History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: National Historical Association, 1932), 1: 116.

<sup>25</sup>As quoted in John W. Jordan, *A History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania, and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1914), 1: 187, 288.

Upper Chichester retained its rural character but farms were shrinking. Few contained over 150 acres by 1765.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, westward migration or waning faith were taking their toll on the Quaker community. Situated in Upper Chichester, the Friends meeting house continued to accommodate First-day (Sunday) worship on a regular basis but weekday attendance began to decline. In November, 1766, the pattern came to the attention of Chester Quarterly Meeting. When the problem persisted, the quarterly meeting began sending a committee to investigate. That committee's report, issued in August, 1768, stated sternly:

We have continued to visit Chichester meeting as we have found the way to open, and endeavoured from time to time in the ability afforded to stir them up to more diligence in attending religious Meetings, but with Sorrow may say we have not beheld much amendment in that respect; and we are unitedly of the judgement that in their present Situation they are not able to hold preparative meetings to the honour of the cause of Truth without assistance.<sup>27</sup>

The mid eighteenth century was a period of rigorous reform in Delaware Valley Quakerism. In reaction to the increasingly "worldly" lifestyles of some urban Friends and to cultural rifts caused by the French and Indian War, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting took several steps to ensure tighter adherence to the Society's principles. Oversight committees like that assigned to Chichester also investigated the practices of monthly and quarterly meetings; the newly revised "queries" which revealed Chichester's laxity were applied throughout the region.<sup>28</sup> In Chichester's case, the ordeal had just begun. Once the first committee reported its findings, the quarterly meeting assembled another group to sit in on Chichester's preparative meetings. In November, a second unfavorable report echoed the earlier one and hinted that the privilege of preparing business could be revoked. Then came an unexpected hardship. On January 4, 1769, Chichester Friends announced at monthly meeting that their meeting house had burned down.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>"Chester County 18<sup>th</sup> Pence Rate, 1765," *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 3, vol. 11 (Harrisburg: William Stanley Ray, 1897), 14-15.

<sup>27</sup>CQM Minutes, 8 August 1768.

<sup>28</sup>Arthur J. Mekeel, "The Founding Years, 1681-1789," in *Friends in the Delaware Valley: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 1681-1981*, ed. John M. Moore (Haverford [PA]: Friends Historical Association, 1981), 38-43.

<sup>29</sup>CMM Minutes, 4 January, 1769. Cope and Futhey, *History of Chester County*, 232, claim the fire occurred on 4 December 1768. While surviving minutes corroborate this general time-frame, they do not specify this date.

The building destroyed by fire was old, possibly dating from the 1680s.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, it would be difficult to replace. Chichester Friends had little money to spare for new construction and could not have picked a less opportune time to seek charity from other meetings. Following standard protocol, they asked their monthly meeting for “advice and assistance respecting the Building of a new Meeting House.”<sup>31</sup> The monthly body impaneled William Peters, Joseph Gibbons, Micaiah Speakman, John Brinton, John Townsend, John Carter, William Sale and Samuel Painter to consider the request, and granted Chichester Friends permission to meet temporarily in a rented building. An unusually complex deliberative process then began to unfold. Apparently wary of Chichester Meeting’s precarious status, the monthly committee decided to seek advice from the quarterly meeting before acting on Chichester’s request. Still unsure whether to continue Chichester’s preparative privileges, Chester Quarterly formed a new committee to simultaneously consider both questions. This group included Nathan Yarnall, Nathaniel Squibb, James Barton, William Horne, William Fell, Amos Yarnall, Benjamin Hough and Daniel Byrnes.<sup>32</sup>

Collective decision-making is a hallmark of the Society of Friends. Decisions regarding Delaware Valley meeting house construction had been handled by committee throughout the eighteenth century and sometimes yielded detailed advice on design. Yet there is little evidence to suggest Chichester received this sort of direction from either the quarterly or monthly meetings. Surviving minutes record only these meetings’ continued efforts to make Chichester Friends adhere to the behavioral code or “discipline” of the Society. Any architectural ramifications their efforts may have had must be inferred from the building itself.

By March of 1769, the monthly and quarterly committees had visited Chichester to discuss the issues at hand. The record of their interaction states obliquely:

The Friends on the Case of Chichester meeting Respecting their Building a Meeting House report that a Committee from the Quarterly meeting appointed for that Service Together with themselves Attended [meeting at Chichester] and administered their advice and assistance therein Which we are Informed was to Good Satisfaction and Intended to be put in practice.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Harold Wickliffe Rose asserts that the building destroyed in 1768 was the second one on the site; see his *The Colonial Houses of Worship in America* (New York: Hastings House, 1963), 353. I have found no documentary evidence to support this claim.

<sup>31</sup>CMM Minutes, 4 January, 1769.

<sup>32</sup>CMM Minutes, 8 January 1769; CQM Minutes, 13 February 1769.

<sup>33</sup>CMM Minutes, 8 March 1769.

Whatever the nature of this consultation, it apparently opened the way for construction. On 3 March, William Swaffer re-surveyed the tract "Whereon Chichester Friends are about Rebuilding a meeting House."<sup>34</sup> The date on which work began is not recorded, but the building's exterior bears the numerals 1769 in three places, indicating that walls were in place by the end of the year.

Throughout the year, Chester Quarterly Meeting considered disciplinary action against Chichester. Despite improved attendance, the threat of losing preparative status lingered on. Meanwhile, money which Chichester Friends had raised to cover their building costs ran out. This put Concord Monthly Meeting in the awkward position of asking if interest from a fund maintained by the quarter might be applied toward construction at Chichester. The quarterly meeting flatly reject this proposal in February, 1770. Three months later, Concord Monthly made another appeal, noting that "upwards of Seventy pounds is wanting." Relenting, the quarterly meeting forwarded the request to its constituent monthly meetings. Money trickled in, first from Chester, Darby, Concord, and Wilmington, then from Goshen, and finally from Uwchlan; their contributions amounted to just over sixty-five pounds by February, 1771. Chichester Friends would have a complete meeting house. They also managed to avoid further scrutiny from visiting committees, suggesting the new building was put to better use than the old.<sup>35</sup>

### **Chichester Meeting House in Architectural Context**

Like other Friends meeting houses of the period, Chichester's has a distinctly domestic appearance. Since the birth of their sect in the mid seventeenth century, Quakers have met for worship in each others houses and eloquently defended the practice by citing primitive Christian precedent. "Dost thou call the steeple-house the Church?" George Fox asked rhetorically; "The Church is the people whom God has purchased with his blood, and not the house."<sup>36</sup> The belief that religious architecture and other trappings of material life lack sacred meaning is a basic tenet of Quakerism. Therefore, even when Friends began erecting structures specifically to accommodate religious worship, these buildings were not considered churches but mere shelters

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<sup>34</sup>William Swaffer, "A Draught of Chichester Meeting House Land, 7 ½ acres 1769," 3 March 1769, MS, photocopy in the collection of Ruthellen Pyle Davis. I have not been able to locate the original document but Ms. Davis believes it is filed at FHL. The acreage given here may reflect a correction of the 1705 survey rather than the acquisition of more land.

<sup>35</sup>CQM Minutes, 8 May, 14 August 1769, 1770, passim, 11 February 1771; CMM Minutes, 6 June 1770. The donations were as follows: Chester £11.17.9; Darby £9.10.6; Concord £14.0.0; Wilmington £15.0.0; Goshen £7.11.3; Uwchlan £7.12.6.

<sup>36</sup>*The Journal of George Fox* (1952 ed.) as quoted in O. S. Chedburn, "Theology and Architecture in the Tradition of the Meeting House," *Friends Quarterly* 20 no. 2 (April 1977): 62. See also George Whitehead, *A Serious Account in XXXV Evident Reasons, (to All Who Desire Satisfaction) Why the People of the Lord, Called Quakers, Cannot Go to Worship at Those Places Called Churches and Chappels* (London: Robert Wilson, 1661).

for the "living Temple." Almost invariably, early Friends' meeting houses retained some of their predecessors' domestic character.<sup>37</sup>

While Chichester Friends acknowledged this transatlantic tradition, the design they adopted in 1769 was also a product of its place. Chichester Meeting House stands within the original limits of Chester County, an area well endowed with eighteenth-century hall-parlor houses.<sup>38</sup> In some respects, the meeting house resembles these neighbors: they too display the simple, asymmetrical, two-room configuration inherited from English vernacular building traditions of the previous century. A common regional variant is the so-called Quaker plan. Of broadly European origin, it features "two or three rooms and a corner fireplace," again, like the meeting house. By the late 1760s, elite domestic architecture in Chester County sometimes incorporated the Quaker plan while tending toward Georgian formality. Chichester Meeting House is too small to reflect this trend in overall layout. Yet the building bears comparison to the larger Taylor-Parke house, located on the East Branch of the Brandywine Creek.

Erected by Quaker farmer and statesman Abiah Taylor II in 1768, the Taylor-Parke House is a substantial two-story farmhouse with a gabled roof and end chimneys. As Arlene Horvath has noted, "the house represents an intersection of the Quaker plan and the central-passage double-pile Georgian configuration."<sup>39</sup> Chichester Meeting House is almost square in plan. While the building's room arrangement echoes the Quaker plan, the exterior is a study in Georgian symmetry. Central doors divide two evenly spaced windows on all walls but the rear, where smaller windows maintain the overall regularity.

Like the Taylor-Parke House, the meeting house demonstrates how local interpretations of the Quaker simplicity testimony left room for refinement.<sup>40</sup> Both structures are built of native fieldstone dressed at the corners to form rough quoins. The meeting house lacks Taylor-Parke's coursed ashlar facade but makes up for it with flat-arched door and window openings and an unusually decorative water table. Chichester's woodwork is fairly typical of mid-eighteenth-century meeting house construction. Doors and shutters have raised panels on one side and are flush on the other; plain pine wainscoting runs around the interior and the partition is unadorned.

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<sup>37</sup>Elbert Russell, *The History of Quakerism* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1942), 95; Hubert Lidbetter, *The Friends Meeting House* (York: William Sessions Ltd. - Ebor Press, 1961), 4-6.

<sup>38</sup>My discussion of eighteenth-century domestic architecture in Chester County is based on Arlene Horvath, "Vernacular Expression in Quaker Chester County, Pennsylvania: The Taylor-Parke House and Its Maker," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, II, ed. Camille Wells (Columbia [MO]: University of Missouri Press, 1986), 150-160. See also Margaret Berwind Schiffer, *Survey of Chester County, Pennsylvania, Architecture* ([PA]: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1976).

<sup>39</sup>Horvath, 156.

<sup>40</sup>Horvath, 157-59; Tolles, 73-88.

Yet both meeting house and dwelling boast twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash windows - a considerable luxury at the time. If Chichester was not the most refined meeting house of its day, it still met the unofficial standard of so much Quaker material culture: "of the best Sort, but Plain."<sup>41</sup>

A small but suggestive connection between Chichester Meeting House and local domestic architecture is the use of a lettered datestone. Centered in the building's west gable is a semicircular tablet enframed by compass stones. It bears the inscription "R + D 1769." Datestones appear on houses throughout Chester and Delaware Counties, and sometimes include the initials of the buildings' sponsors. A well-know example is the house of prominent Quakers David and Grace Lloyd in Chester.<sup>42</sup> While no such firm link between inscription and historical figure exists for Chichester Meeting House, historians have long speculated that the initials are those of prosperous farmer Richard Dutton.<sup>43</sup> There is considerable basis for this claim.

A native of Middletown, Pennsylvania, Dutton moved to Chichester after 1750 and became an active member of the Friends Meeting. By the mid 1760s he was serving as an overseer and was sent as a representative to both monthly and quarterly meetings.<sup>44</sup> On one hand, he would have been a strong advocate of Chichester Friends' interests after their meeting house burned. On the other hand, as one of the township's wealthier residents, he could easily have helped finance the rebuilding project. More evidence supporting Dutton's connection to the meeting house comes from a "comfortable and substantial stone house" he built in Aston before moving to Chichester.<sup>45</sup> This building also features a west-gable datestone, displaying the letters R D and M D along with the date 1749. The latter initials are those of Richard's wife Mary, born Mary Martin. Like her husband, she was highly involved in Chichester Friends' affairs, and while she is not acknowledged in the meeting-house datestone, the figures "M D 1769" do appear, carefully carved, to left of that building's front door.

This less conspicuous epigraph is not alone. A thorough inspection reveals at least three other sets of initials, one accompanied by the construction date, concentrated around the north and

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<sup>41</sup>John Reynell to Daniel Flexney, 25 November 1738, as quoted in Tolles, 88. On the application of this principle to meeting house design, see David M. Butler, "The Making of Meeting Houses," *Friends' Quarterly* (July 1980): 321.

<sup>42</sup>John Hill Martin, *Chester and Its Vicinity, in Pennsylvania; with Genealogical Sketches of Some Old Families* (Philadelphia: William H. Pile & Sons, 1877), 81.

<sup>43</sup>Gilbert Cope, *Genealogy of the Dutton Family of Pennsylvania* (West Chester [PA]: F. S. Hickman, 1871), 46; Ashmead, 451.

<sup>44</sup>"Chester County 18<sup>th</sup> Pence Rate, 1769," *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 3, 11 (Harrisburg: William Stanley Ray, 1897), 547-48; CMM Minutes, 1766.

<sup>45</sup>Cope, *Dutton Family*, 46.

west doors.<sup>46</sup> Richard Dutton, if the initials are his, was the only meeting member to receive a plaque, but other Friends apparently considered their own or each others' connection to the building worthy of less formal commemoration. Acknowledgment of one member's contribution above others' may seem inconsistent with the egalitarian emphasis of Quakerism.<sup>47</sup> Such individualized tribute also belies the collective process of design, construction and sponsorship that almost certainly brought Chichester Meeting House into being.<sup>48</sup> Yet backers of the building campaign were desperate for funds. Although no surviving documents confirm the theory, it seems likely that Chichester Friends gladly gave special credit to Dutton while finding subtler ways of recording their own role in or support of the project.

Chichester Meeting House's exterior resemblance to domestic architecture of the Brandywine region is probably more important than the interior similarities. While approximating the Quaker Plan, Chichester's internal layout is also related to the Anglo-American tradition of Friends' meeting house design - a tradition in which the building holds an unusual place. The point requires some context. By the 1760s, the ground-plans of many Delaware Valley meeting houses were beginning to assume a new form. Whereas earlier such buildings tended to be almost square in plan, with wall-length ratios of 3:4 or 4:5, those erected in the decade and a half preceding the Revolution were often both larger and more rectangular, displaying ratios of 3:5 or 1:2.<sup>49</sup> The development is especially clear in meeting houses at Exeter (1759) and Buckingham (1768). It was also apparent in many older structures that conformed to the pattern through additions. One obvious result of the trend was better accommodation for increasing membership. Yet meeting house growth had another ramification: it tended to create fully articulated spaces for women's business meetings.

Separate business meetings for women had been a priority of George Fox, the founder of Quakerism. Intended to give women a stronger voice within the Society, the concept received grudging acceptance in England; Americans adopted it more consistently but still not wholeheartedly.<sup>50</sup> The mid-eighteenth-century shift in meeting-house design suggests a renewed

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<sup>46</sup>The letters "C + R" appear to left of the west door, while "H H" or "M M" appear to the right. Right of the north door is the inscription "W E yy 1769," conceivably referring to William Eyre, a trustee of the meeting house property by 1772.

<sup>47</sup>In fact, an even balder announcement of individual sponsorship is attached to the 1711 Eaglesfield Meeting House in England. See David M. Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses of the Lake Counties* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1978), 57.

<sup>48</sup>While no detailed account of Chichester Meeting House's design and construction survives, the collective, committee-based process that typified meeting-house making is lucidly described in Benjamin Ferris, "A Sketch of the Proceedings [1817]," *Delaware History* 13, no. 1 (April 1968): 71-79.

<sup>49</sup>Figures based on data gathered during Historic American Building Survey study, 1996-1999.

<sup>50</sup>Russell, 131-33, 216-17.

attention to the issue. As contemporary reform movements placed greater emphasis on the Society's founding principles, Delaware Valley Friends expressed increasing willingness to acknowledge the women's meeting architecturally.<sup>51</sup> The "typical" Friends meeting house of the late colonial and early national periods is five to six bays long and two to three bays deep. Inside, it is divided almost equally by a shuttered partition that separated male and female congregants but remained open during meeting for worship. When the partition was closed for the conduct of business, doors at either end of building and two on the front allowed the space to function as two separate and near-equal cells.

Chichester Friends were few in number, and their meeting house was isolated from this trend. Although the building contains distinct spaces for transacting men's and women's business, the latter function receives no obvious exterior expression. From the outside, Chichester recalls earlier Delaware Valley meeting houses such as Radnor (1717) - structures which may originally have enclosed a single, undivided room. The basic three-by-three bay shell used at Radnor was convenient for small meetings, and Friends continued to adapt it to their needs throughout the century.<sup>52</sup> But inside, Chichester's architectural program stands apart from all of these iterations, at least in their current form. In certain key respects, Chichester comes close to being a composite of two basic English types identified by David Butler. One is the "'cottage,' entered on the long side wall." The other is the "'chapel,' entered under the gable."

Inside, both kinds of meeting houses have facing benches on the far end wall. They often have...a separate room for the women's business meeting. This room is generally divided off by shutters, giving it about one third or one quarter of the whole floor area...[It] was not intended for ordinary meetings for worship and seldom had a fixed facing seat. It was however often the only heated room in the building, at least up to the early nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup>

Like the chapel-type, Chichester has a prominent front door located in the gable end and opposite the facing bench. This is the only double door in the building, and its importance is underscored by its street-side orientation and position beneath the datestone. Like the cottage-type, Chichester has a door in the long side wall - two, in fact. Had the building been accessible only

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<sup>51</sup>Damon Tvaryanas, "The New Jersey Quaker Meeting House: A Typology and Inventory" (MS thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1993), 25-29, 51-52, 91-92.

<sup>52</sup>Chichester's exterior is, in fact, quite similar to those of near-contemporaries Birmingham (1763) and Bradford (1767), both located in Chester County.

<sup>53</sup>David M. Butler, "Quaker Meeting Houses in America and England: Impressions and Comparisons," *Quaker History* 79, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 94.

by one such door, its plan would almost match that of Sikeside (1736) and several other cottage-type meeting houses in England's Lake Counties.<sup>54</sup>

Both English types fostered a limited and predictable pattern of usage. As Butler continues:

In England, from the earliest times, men and women entered one room by one door, to sit for worship each on their side of that room. When the time for business came the women would rise and move away to their separate room behind the shutters... Thus the shutters were not opened in a systematic way, rather only when the whole space was needed for larger occasions.<sup>55</sup>

Chichester Meeting House was capable of functioning in this way. Congregants of both sexes could have entered through the wide front door and walked along the central aisle that connected the meeting rooms. They might have settled on opposite sides of the larger room which, as in England, was the only one with facing benches. And finally, when it came time to prepare business, the women might have retreated to the smaller room with the fireplace, a room separated from its neighbor by a partition with few moving parts.<sup>56</sup> Yet only the last part of this theory stands up under scrutiny. For one thing, the spatial ratio of Chichester's meeting rooms is closer to 1:1 than to 1:3 or 1:4. While the west room likely housed the women's business meeting, it seems too large to have served this purpose alone.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the presence of side doors suggests the building was used in the American manner, for it allowed men and women to enter separately. Either way, several features indicate women Friends worshiped in the south half of the building. This side is near the fireplace, and it is served by an extra partition door that presumably came in handy during the shift from worship to business.

Did the controversy surrounding Chichester's right to hold preparative meeting affect the form or location of the partition? Possibly. A partition is the primary architectural requirement for holding separate-sex business meetings, the norm by the 1760s. At Chichester, the feature is more simply built than most. It is also positioned so as to cause minimal damage if removed. Were the quarterly meeting to have suspended Chichester's preparative privileges, the partition could be extracted without wasting elaborate craftsmanship or scarring the facing bench. But perhaps more complex factors underlie the building's internal layout.

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<sup>54</sup>Butler, *Lake Counties*, 8, 11-13, 18, 85, 118. Despite these similarities, few English meeting houses employ plans as square as Chichester's.

<sup>55</sup>Butler, "America and England," 98.

<sup>56</sup>In eighteenth-century English meeting houses, the fireplace is associated almost exclusively with the women's meeting room (Butler, *Lake Counties*, iv). Oral history suggests this was also the case at Chichester (Ruthellen Pyle Davis, telephone interview by the author, 24 July 1999).

<sup>57</sup>1760s or 1770s membership lists for Chichester could settle this question but none appear to survive.

In England, the partition usually runs parallel to the facing benches, excluding them from the women's business-meeting space. In America, the general pattern is the opposite: the partition bisects the raised benches, giving both sexes equal access during worship *and* business. The practical consequences of this difference may have been fairly small. On both continents, respected male and female Friends occupied the benches during meeting for worship: "Here sat those Friends who most frequently and acceptably ministered; in front of them were the elders who were charged with right to conduct the meeting."<sup>58</sup> During meeting for business, the facing benches' role was ostensibly less significant. The clerk who kept minutes on these occasions often sat there, but the desk he or she used could be located elsewhere in the meeting space.<sup>59</sup>

However, on a symbolic level, the facing bench was not so easily sidestepped. While scholars have long emphasized the bench's "purely" utilitarian function, newer studies have balanced this perspective by noting the feature's historic role in the contested terrain of Quaker politics, culture and religion.<sup>60</sup> The facing bench was not a pulpit. Nonetheless, it conferred considerable authority on those with access to it. During meeting for worship their words rang out from on high, sometimes amplified by a sounding board omitted elsewhere in the building. If labeling the American pattern more egalitarian is facile, it is equally dangerous to dismiss Chichester's deviation from the pattern as inconsequential. Only a handful of American Friends opted to employ the architectural program used at Chichester. Bradford (1767, Marshallton, PA), the extant Delaware Valley meeting house whose plan apparently came closest to Chichester's, was altered to conform with American convention within fifteen years of completion.<sup>61</sup> Such statistics are suggestive. But in order to fully interpret them, researchers would need to systematically compare a broad sample of meeting house designs to the historical standing of their respective men's and women's business meetings.

The placement of Chichester's facing bench against the building's short wall presents a similar dilemma. Here is another English trait, again lending itself to speculation. The disposition of a small, elevated seating area along the minor axis of any Protestant house of worship could be interpreted as a nod toward parish church architecture. Yet eighteenth-century Friends were generally careful to avoid such allusions. This leaves the meaning of the arrangement more ambiguous. On one hand, it might signify authoritarian leanings: the right to open, monitor and conclude meeting, held by elders and recorded ministers, was concentrated in the hands of a few. On the other hand, the same arrangement could seem democratic: most Friends sat together in the

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<sup>58</sup>Butler, *Lake Counties*, ii.

<sup>59</sup>A clerk's desk is located at the back of Downingtown Meeting House (1806, Downingtown, PA).

<sup>60</sup>Contrast Lidbetter, 26, with Susan Garfinkel, "Letting in 'the World': (Re)interpretive Tensions in the Quaker Meeting House," in *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, ed. Elizabeth C. Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995): 78-79.

<sup>61</sup>Catherine Lavoie, "Bradford Meeting House," Historic American Buildings Survey No. PA-1105.

"body" of the meeting, speaking when inspired and placing routine administrative duties in the hands of "weighty" members. Both interpretations probably oversimplify; neither allows for different understandings across time and place.

In the end, inferring peculiarities of custom or belief from Chichester's distinctive layout is a difficult proposition. Historians have noted the degree to which traveling ministers ensured cultural continuity between English and American Friends during eighteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Maybe a Friend visiting England was inspired by meeting house design there and, upon return, offered ideas to one of the committees charged with overseeing Chichester's construction. Maybe there was a more local influence: the example of the Quaker plan. And maybe differences in the weight which men and women Friends carried in the planning process also came into play. Unfortunately, all of Chichester's eighteenth-century minutes have been lost. The best hope of answering these questions is in studying records of the few meetings known to have adopted similar schemes.<sup>63</sup>

### **Chichester Meeting House and Its Surroundings, 1771 to Present**

Once Chichester Friends finished the difficult task of building a new meeting house, they began looking for ways to improve the site. In 1772, they added one acre and 153 perches of land to the meeting-house tract, extending the graveyard southward.<sup>64</sup> For the living, several additions increased physical comfort. After 1783, members arriving by horse could dismount upon a stone "horse block," erected near the mouth of the entrance road.<sup>65</sup> Within the meeting house, a new stove appears to have been installed in 1790.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Tolles, 3-4, 14, 18-19, 31-33; Russell, 199-200.

<sup>63</sup>In the context of surviving eighteenth-century Delaware Valley meeting-house architecture, Chichester's most distinctive characteristics are: 1) a gabled facade, 2) a facing bench and partition arranged in parallel, and 3) a facing bench located on the short wall of the building. The original design of Bradford Meeting House in Marshallton, PA (1767) probably included all of the above, but the partition location has changed. Some of these features appear at Merion (1695, 1715), Downingtown (1806) and many meetinghouses built or remodeled after 1850 in apparent conformance with a trend toward more mainstream Protestant church architecture (for example, Middletown in Lima, PA, 1770, 1888).

The question of what constitutes the facade or front of a meetinghouse is open to interpretation. My working definition is: the wall facing the street *and* opposite the facing bench. Merion, Bradford and Appoquinimink (1785) are the only surviving pre-1800 meeting houses in the 1996-99 HABS study that may be considered gable-fronted by this definition. However Plymouth (1708), Woodbury (1715), New Garden (1743) and Birmingham (1763) conceivably met the definition prior to remodeling.

<sup>64</sup>See footnote 5.

<sup>65</sup>CPM Account Book, ? March 1783.

<sup>66</sup>See footnote 8.

A long-term financial burden that began in the same era was the operation of a local school. In the spring of 1784, eleven Friends in Upper Chichester Township assumed ownership and management of an existing school. The institution occupied a house and small lot on the main road between Concord and Marcus Hook, some distance from the meeting-house tract.<sup>67</sup> Friends took title to the property with the understanding that they would maintain it "for the general use of the said Inhabitants [of Upper Chichester] who will comply with the Regulations which they the said People [Friends] shall adopt."<sup>68</sup> Concord Monthly Meeting probably sanctioned this undertaking and may even have retained the deed. But upkeep and repairs fell to Chichester Preparative Meeting which repeatedly installed new window glass.

In the early nineteenth century, Chichester Friends again turned their attention to the meeting house and grounds. Like most other meetings in the region, Chichester provided a stable for members' horses. This structure was either dilapidated or otherwise inadequate by late 1804, prompting the preparative meeting to form a committee on the matter: Jonathan Dutton, Caleb Eyre and Jo[seph] Talbot, Jr. were charged with overseeing the new construction. The project stalled for a time, perhaps over a disagreement about the building's proper size and location. These issues were taken up by another committee in May, 1806, and work moved forward.<sup>69</sup> The result must have formed at least part of the rambling shed-and-barn combination now standing northeast of the meeting house. Other buildings needed work too. Between 1806 and 1808, the school house received some expensive improvements and the meeting house was re-roofed. A new fence was also placed around the graveyard.<sup>70</sup>

While these efforts generally fell in the category of maintenance, the next two decades brought larger changes. For reasons not given in meeting records, Chichester Friends decided to build a house on their property in the late 1810s. A minute of 21 January 1819 states:

Joseph Talbot Nathan Larkin Jonathan Dutton Jnr. George Martin Jr. & Nathan Pennell, Trustees, are directed to borrow three hundred Dollars on the property they hold in trust for this meeting and to pay the same over into the hands of the

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<sup>67</sup>Deed, Jacob Dingee to Charles Dingee, Nathan Pennell, William Boothe, George Martin, Jacob Hewes and Joseph Townsend, 21 July 1784, in Concord Monthly Meeting, Miscellaneous Property Records, FHL. The exact site of the property is unclear from this source and is probably not the one mentioned in Ashmead, 452.

<sup>68</sup>Declaration of Agreement, Christopher Dingee and Friends of Upper Chichester Township, 21 April 1784, in Concord Monthly Meeting, Miscellaneous Property Records, FHL.

<sup>69</sup>CPM Minutes, 29 November 1804, 29 May 1806, 29 January 1807; CPM Account Book, 26 March, 30 April, 3 May 1807.

<sup>70</sup>CPM Minutes, 29 January, 28 May, 31 December 1807, 28 January 1808; CPM Account Book, 29 July 1806, 15 January 1807, 7 September 1808.

building Committee to defray the expenses of the hous [sic] erected on the meeting ground.<sup>71</sup>

This structure is almost certainly the two-story, rubble-stone building located north of the entrance road. It now accommodates the site's caretaker and probably served that purpose historically. Perhaps in an effort to pay off construction costs, the meeting opted to sell the small lot it had added to the graveyard in 1772. Jeremiah Brown took title to the land in 1821.<sup>72</sup>

The days when meeting members could make unanimous decisions about the handling of property were numbered. The Separation of 1827 divided Hicksite and Orthodox Friends throughout the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, and Chichester was no exception. Following the usual pattern for rural meetings, Chichester's Hicksite Friends held onto the meeting property. However, the Orthodox group included several "weighty" members who, along with dissidents from Concord, organized a preparative meeting of their own. One strong supporter of this process was Salkeld Larkin. In late 1829, he donated over an acre of land to the newly formed congregation and two years later they erected a meeting house on the premises. The building was roughly the size of its 1760s predecessor and similar in outward appearance. Built of rubble stone, it may be the gabled shell still standing at the corner of Larkin Road and Chichester Avenue. Nearby, the Orthodox Friends erected a stone school house in 1834.<sup>73</sup>

The split left Chichester's Hicksite contingent seriously weakened, and the group did not regain its vitality over the following decades. In 1884, historian Henry Ashmead observed:

In the last half-century the attendance on religious worship in the venerable meeting-house has been growing less and less; still, it is said Jonathan Larkin often would be the only person who would attend regularly Fifth-day meeting, and the hour allotted to worship would be passed by the one person present in the silent communion with his God.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>CPM Trustees Minutes.

<sup>72</sup>See footnote 5.

<sup>73</sup>Ashmead, 451-52; *Inventory of Church Archives*, 181. An early view of the meeting house, located in Collection 912, Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, PA, shows a structure similar to the one currently on the site. However, this building measures 25' x 32' 5" in plan. Asmead gives roughly these dimensions for the school house while stating that the meeting house measured 32' x 40'.

The Orthodox contingent is frequently identified as Upper Chichester Meeting - a confusing distinction since both groups met in Upper Chichester.

<sup>74</sup>Ashmead, 451.

While Larkin struggled to keep Chichester Meeting alive in spirit, he apparently tended to the institution's physical needs. Around 1839, a John Larkin managed the account for a major overhaul of the stable and sheds. Ten years later, Jonathan Larkin facilitated the construction of a stone wall along one side of the graveyard and, in the early 1860s, a J. C. Larkin was involved in the rehabilitation of the meeting house. Receipts for work on the latter building suggest prolonged neglect. Roof replacement was routine enough, but ceiling replacement was not.<sup>75</sup> During these repairs, Friends may also have decided to install some new amenities. The earliest known photographs of the meeting house, taken at this time, show the building with its present porch and privy. Elsewhere within the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, such conveniences often date from the mid nineteenth century.<sup>76</sup>

To the north, Chichester Orthodox or "Upper Chichester" Meeting faced severe difficulties in the post-Civil-War era. Membership dwindled, and in 1883 the meeting was officially laid down. Concord Monthly Meeting (O) took title to the extinct group's property for several years but eventually granted it to Salkeld Larkin's heirs in keeping with the terms of his will.<sup>77</sup> Chichester Hicksite Friends barely staved off a similar fate. They continued to meet throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, maintaining their historic building with assistance from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (H).<sup>78</sup> Then, in 1914, the group lost its long-cherished right to hold preparative meeting. For all administrative purposes, this act transferred Chichester Hicksite Meeting and its property to the care of Concord Monthly Meeting (O).<sup>79</sup> However, "circular meetings" kept the 1769 meeting house in use, filling it with worshipers twice a year. These gatherings continue to the present day. Accompanied by occasional surges of historical and genealogical interest, they are the last vestiges of a tradition that began on the same site three centuries ago.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>CPM Account Book, ca. 1839 loose leaf (mentioning meeting's debt to John Larkin for "work done at stable and sheds"), 13 October 1849 (first entry in account for building grave wall), misc. 1861 receipts for work on meeting house, 3 April 1862 (mentioning meeting's debt to J. C. Larkin for "roofing the meeting house and repairs at the dwelling house").

<sup>76</sup>See footnote 7.

<sup>77</sup>Ashmead, 452; *Inventory of Church Archives*, 181; Eckert, 49.

<sup>78</sup>PYM Jeanes Fund Minutes, 4, 14 December 1900, 13 September, 13 December 1907, 11 May 1908.

<sup>79</sup>See footnote 6.

<sup>80</sup>T. Chalkey Matlack, "Brief Historical Sketches Concerning Friends Meeting Houses of the Past and Present with Special Reference to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1938" TMs, p. 291, FHL; Anna Worrell, "Friends' Meetings in Upper Chichester," [*Marple-Newtown News?*], 15 November 1951, clippings file, DCHS; "Chichester Friends Meeting [House]," prepared by Pennsylvania Register of Historic Sites and Landmarks, National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, 1972; Ruthellen Pyle Davis, "Chichester Friends Meeting, [1986]" TMs, FHL.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A . General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: From the exterior, Chichester does not immediately stand apart from other Quaker meeting houses erected in the Delaware Valley prior to the Revolution. At the time of the building's construction, some meetings such as Buckingham (1768) were adopting larger, grander designs that reflected the greater size and economic status of those groups. Chichester, on the other hand, outwardly continues an older tradition of adapting a one-story, three-by-three-bay shell: Friends at Radnor(1717), Birmingham (1763) and Bradford (1767) used the same basic module. Like these buildings, Chichester has a domestic character that is neither ostentatious nor entirely Spartan. One notable touch of refinement is Chichester's stepped water table.

On the inside, however, the building departs from regional convention. While front doors and facing benches appear on the long walls of most area meeting houses, Chichester's designers placed these features in the gable ends. And while other meeting houses are generally configured to give men and women equal access to the facing bench during meeting for business, Chichester's partition runs parallel to the bench, precluding this possibility. Several factors may account for these differences. The influences of local domestic architecture, English meeting house precedent, and male versus female input in the design process should all be examined more closely. In any case, Chichester Meeting House attests to the variety and complexity inherent in local interpretations of a superficially standardized architectural form.

2. Condition of the fabric: Building fabric is in excellent condition.

### B. Description of exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Chichester Meeting House is almost square in plan. It measures approximately 33' 5" north-south by 38' 5" east-west, not including a 12' x 9' 6" privy at the south end of the east wall. The building is one story high. It stands 24' 3" at the ridge and 12' 1" at the eave, giving it a somewhat squat appearance. Pairs of evenly spaced windows punctuate all four walls. On the north, south and west sides, these windows are divided by a central door.

2. Foundations: The foundations are of coursed hornblende rubble. A water table runs around the building and steps up at corners and doorways, emphasizing these areas.

3. Walls: The walls consist of coursed hornblende rubble that is brown and gray in color and squared at the corners to form rough quoins. The south wall is capped in brick, but this feature is concealed by the cornice and visible only in the attic. Flat arches surmount

doors and windows on all walls except the rear. Just above the west door is the truncated end of a wooden beam, a feature shown projecting from the facade in nineteenth-century photographs. A datestone capped by compass stones is mounted in the west gable and bears the inscription "R + D 1769." Similar, less formal epigraphs appear elsewhere on the building. The figures "C + R" and "M D 1769" are inscribed on the left side of the west doorway and "M M" or "H H" on the right. "W E yy 1769" is carved to the right of the north doorway.

4. Structural system, framing: Masonry walls and an off-center summer beam support a steam-sawn, timber-frame roof structure (see HABS drawing). Each roof truss consists of two rafters joined at the top by pegged half-lap joints and joined again, four feet below the ridge, by a dovetailed, half-lap-jointed collar beam. The rafter bases are rabbet-jointed to plates which, in turn, rest on ceiling joists. The outer ends of the joists rest directly on the walls and project slightly beyond them while the inner ends are tenoned into the summer beam. Brickwork along the top of the south wall may provide structural reinforcement.

5. Porches: A shed-roofed, shake-covered porch adjoins the south wall. It extends from the main south door to the door of the privy, is supported by four chamfered posts, and covers a brick walkway.

6. Chimneys: A brick chimney extends through the roof ridge, somewhat east of center; its lower half (below the ceiling) is a twentieth-century addition. A larger brick chimney originally rose from the southwest corner but was demolished no later than 1916.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Centrally located, flat-arched doorways pierce the north, south and west (front) walls. Their butt-jointed frames rest on stone sills and are adorned on the outside with light cyma moldings. The north and south doors each consist of a single leaf with six raised panels on the exterior and vertical, beaded flush boards on the interior. The front door is designed to resemble these when closed, but it is wider and built of two, separately hinged leaves, supposedly scarred by British bullets during the Revolution. All doors leading to the meeting space are nailed together. Double rows of closely spaced, wrought nail heads outline the panels from the back and, along with the doors' Norfolk latches and heavy strap hinges, create an almost fortified appearance (see HABS drawing). A single-ply four-panel door leads to the privy, and a batten door gives access to the attic through the east gable. Wood-frame screen doors have been added to the north and south doorways.

b. Windows and shutters: Pairs of identical, evenly spaced windows flank the north, south and west doors. The openings and frames are similar to those surrounding the doors, and contain double-hung, twelve-light sash. On the east wall, there are two evenly spaced windows of a different design. They lack flat arches, contain double-hung, eight-over-eight sash, and their sills correspond with the top of the facing benches. Pairs of three-panel shutters protect the west door and all windows but the east. The raised side of the shutter panels faces inward when closed, leaving the flush-mounted, beaded side to the elements.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: A shake-covered gable roof runs the length of the building, east to west.

b. Cornice, eaves: A simplified Doric cornice spans the north and south walls. Unadorned bargeboards trim the gables.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans: A wood partition divides the building into two meeting rooms of unequal size. The smaller, west room features a fireplace in the southwest corner and a single, fixed bench along the north and west walls. The east room includes a similar bench, affixed to the partition, and two rows of fixed "facing benches" on a tiered platform along the east wall. At the center of the room stands a cast iron stove. The building's north and south doors fall east of the partition, making the front door the only means of direct access to the west room. Inside, the two rooms communicate through a central and a southern doorway in the partition. A central aisle leads from the front door to the facing benches, separating rows of moveable benches on either side of the partition. The privy at the southeast corner is self-contained and accessible only from outdoors.

2. Flooring: The floor consists of unfinished, random-width planks running east-west.

3. Wall and ceiling finish: The ceiling and walls are plastered and painted white. Beaded flush-board wainscoting runs along all walls and steps up around the facing benches. Interior woodwork is unfinished pine [?].

4. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The exterior doors are described above. Their frames are located toward the walls' outer face, creating deep recesses within. These reveals are plastered and the frames are painted. The only interior doors are located in the partition (see below).

b. Windows: Like the exterior doors, the windows have deep, unadorned reveals.

5. Benches: Benches located in the general seating area or "body of the meeting" follow a consistent pattern. The back is open, with a single rail running along the top, and a single plank forming the seat. The ends feature curving arm rests with rolled corners - a profile that varies subtly among Delaware Valley meeting houses (see HABS drawings). Benches built into the north and west walls and the east side of the partition are backless; they rely on wainscoting and paneling to serve the purpose. Elevated "facing benches" at the east end of the building are affixed to a two-tiered platform. The uppermost facing bench runs continuously along the wall while the benches below are divided by a step. A line of filled floor mortises suggests a bottom row of facing benches has been removed.

6. Partition: The partition runs north-south, is joined to the walls and ceiling, and rests primarily on two posts that flank the center aisle. Six rectangular shutters, hinged at the top and divided by short posts, form the partition's horizontal mid section. Fixed flush-board paneling fills the upper and lower interstices. The posts flanking the aisle serve as jambs for a full-size, four-panel door. A narrower southern doorway accommodates a waist-high, four-panel door, while one of the horizontal shutters extends across the doorway's upper half. When doors and shutters are closed, their raised paneling faces east. The flush boarding is beaded in the same manner, leaving all surfaces on the western side of the partition unadorned (see HABS drawing). One of the northern shutters bears the name "John Talbot" in chalk. At least one meeting member went by this name in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but the signature's meaning in this context is unclear.<sup>81</sup> Partition hardware is diverse. The shutters are hung from HL hinges, the central door from strap hinges, and the half-door from butt hinges. Wrought iron stays prop the shutters open while wood stays keep them closed. A lift latch fastens the central door, and bolts along the north jamb provide structural reinforcement. A hole above the door marks the former location of a stovepipe.

7. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: Historically, a fireplace in the southwest corner and a stove in the east room have heated the meeting house. The fireplace flue has been sealed off but the stove remains in use. It consists of cast-iron panels bound together with various metal straps and rods, old and new. The lower section, including the door, forms a rectangular box, while the upper section tapers into a semi-pyramidal cap that joins the stovepipe. The

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<sup>81</sup>John Talbot was reprimanded for "Accomplishing his Marriage by a Priest" in 1768 (CMM Minutes, 5 October), but a man by the same name repeatedly held financial responsibilities in Chichester Meeting between 1790 and 1815 (CPM Account Book, CPM Minutes).

pipe's location has changed several times over the years. One former pipe hole suggests this or another stove once operated in front of the fireplace.<sup>82</sup>

b. Lighting: The meeting house has never been electrified. Candles or kerosene lamps may have been used historically, but no fittings for either light source appear on the walls.

c. Plumbing: No plumbing has ever been installed. The two-hole privy presently serves as a woodshed.

8. Original furnishings: Meeting-house furnishings include an early book cabinet and stretcher-table (bier). The latter supposedly pre-dates the building.<sup>83</sup>

#### D. Site:

1. Historic landscape design: The tract on which Chichester Meeting House stands encompasses approximately seven acres. Despite vague links in the early chain of title, it appears that Friends have met somewhere on this property since 1685. There are no above-ground traces of a meeting house predating the present one. The graveyard, however, is likely to contain the remains of the earliest meeting members. The lot currently demarcated for burial stretches south of the meeting house. Ringed by a picket fence until the mid nineteenth century, it is now enclosed by stone walls and an iron fence. Most gravestones are the uniform marble tablets that appeared on many Quaker meeting grounds during the nineteenth century. A mid-1930s survey listed some two hundred and thirty two marked graves here but, considering Friends' official disdain for such markers before 1800, the 1930s count probably represents a small fraction of the actual number of interments.<sup>84</sup>

Overall, programmatic changes to the grounds have been modest. West of the meeting house stands a stone "horse block," apparently the one built in 1783. Its proximity to the main road must have made it accessible to meeting members who wished to dismount before turning down the entrance drive. While horses received shelter at Chichester before 1800, much of the horse-shed-and-barn combination located north of the meeting house is likely to date from ca. 1806 and ca. 1839. On the other side of the entrance drive, the caretaker's house is almost certainly the structure for which Chichester Friends took out a \$300 construction loan in 1819. No major building activity has occurred on

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<sup>82</sup>See footnote 8.

<sup>83</sup>National Register Nomination Form.

<sup>84</sup>Worrell clipping.

the site since the Civil-War era. Instead, natural growth has set in. Nineteenth-century photographs show a stark landscape dotted with a few saplings. In the twentieth century those trees have grown lush, and dense evergreen shrubbery has been planted around the foundation of the meeting house.

2. Outbuildings: The stable and caretaker's house, mentioned above, are the only extant structures associated with the meeting house. The stuccoed-rubble caretaker's house is two-by-three bays wide, rectangular in plan, and covered by a gable roof. Prominent features include end chimneys, a front porch and a shed-roofed addition to the rear. Southeast of the house stands the stable. This unusual T-plan assemblage once consisted of a two-story, gable-roofed barn flanked by one-story horse sheds. The eastern shed has collapsed, but solid rubble-stone masonry and oak framing have kept the rest of the complex standing. Few Delaware Valley meeting-house sites are equipped with barns. In this case, the building may have been intended primarily for the caretaker's use.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Early Views (in chronological order):

Chichester Meeting House site from southwest, showing graveyard and caretaker's house, ca. 1860. Photograph file, Delaware County Historical Society, Broomall, PA.

Chichester Meeting House site from northwest, dated 1860 [apparently incorrectly, see below]. Photograph file, Delaware County Historical Society, Broomall, PA.

Same as view as above, 1871. Gilbert Cope, photographer. Collection 912, Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, PA.

Chichester Orthodox or "Upper Chichester" Meeting House, probably from northeast, n.d. but prior to conversion to residence. Watson W. Dewees, photographer. Collection 912, Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, PA.

Chichester Meeting House from northwest, 1916. Photograph file, Delaware County Historical Society, Broomall, PA.

Chichester Meeting House interior, from northeast corner, 1916. Photograph file, Delaware County Historical Society, Broomall, PA.

Chichester Meeting House site from south, 1941. Photograph file, Delaware County Historical Society, Broomall, PA.

B. Interviews:

Davis, Ruthellen Pyle (member of Concord Monthly Meeting with longstanding personal and familial connections to Chichester Meeting). Unrecorded telephone interview by the author, 24 July 1999.

Pfeiffer, Eric (present caretaker of Chichester Meeting House). Unrecorded telephone interview by the author, 27 July 1999.

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#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the Chichester Friends Meeting House was undertaken during the summer of 1997 as part of a larger project to document the Friends Meetings Houses of the Delaware Valley, by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), E. Blaine Cliver, Chief of HABS/HAER; Paul Dolinsky, Chief of HABS. Funding was made possible through a congressional appropriation for documentation in

Southeastern Pennsylvania. The project was planned and administered by HABS historians Catherine C. Lavoie and Aaron V. Wunsch; and architect Robert R. Arzola. Measured drawings were produced by architect Roger Miller, and architecture technicians Christy Bernard, Pamela Howell, Kevin J. Lam and Adam Maksay (US/ICOMOS). The project historians were Aaron V. Wunsch and Catherine C. Lavoie. Large Format Photography was undertaken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS photographer.