

WEST GROVE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
153 East Harmony Road
West Grove
Chester County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6228

HABS
PA-6228

WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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WEST GROVE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

HABS NO. PA-6228

Location: 153 East Harmony Road, West Grove, Chester County, Pennsylvania

Owner: Trustees for the West Grove Meeting of the Society of Friends

Present Use: Meeting house for religious worship and general use by the West Grove and Western Quarterly Meetings of the Society of Friends

Significance: Erected in 1903, West Grove Meeting House is an example of a meeting house type that became common within the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting during the early twentieth century. Friends held an organized meeting for worship at West Grove starting in 1786 and the present building replaced one that had stood on the exact same location since 1787. While the earlier meeting house at this site essentially replicated a form employed by Friends elsewhere since the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the 1903 structure represented a design solution being tested at the turn of the century after nearly a century of heterogeneity in meeting house architecture. Here schooling, social gathering and Quarterly Meeting were accommodated in a single construction phase rather than being housed in an addition or separate building as in years past. Now, too, the partition used to separate men's and women's meetings for business was omitted, though joint business meetings did not actually begin at West Grove until 1919.

Built to accommodate Western Quarterly Meeting, West Grove arose during a wave of quarterly meeting house construction that, by 1911, had also reached Concord, Caln and Haddonfield Quarters. The innovations apparent in West Grove also surfaced in these buildings to greater or lesser degrees. Yet West Grove is significant for the continuity as well as the change it embodied. In accordance with traditional Quaker building practice, the structure was designed and constructed by meeting members, and incorporated many materials salvaged from the structure it replaced.

Historian: Aaron V. Wunsch & Catherine C. Lavoie

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1903-04. At a West Grove Preparative Meeting held on April 30, 1903, the building committee was authorized to remove the old meeting house erected in 1787 and proceed with the construction of the new house. Their final financial report was made on November 29, 1904, indicating the completion of the meeting house.

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2. Architect/designer: As was generally the practice among Friends, the design for the meeting house was derived from the combined efforts of master builder and meeting members. Meeting member Truman C. Moore, actually constructed the meeting house, and as an experienced builder he likely played an integral role in building design.

Initially, two "Improvement Committees" were formed, one for the men and one for the women. Although originally tasked with determining the extent of the repairs required to improve upon the old house, the decision eventually was made to build anew. The two groups were combined to form the Meeting House Committee. Truman C. Moore, Alfred F. Conard, Mark Hughes, S. Morris, Jones William B. Harvey, Harry E. Moore, Harry E. Cooper, Priscilla H. Hughes, Anna P. Haines, Elizabeth Hoopes, Jane C.B. Jones, and Margaretta J. Moore were authorized to proceed with plans for new construction.¹ Visits were made to other area meeting houses to examine their designs, presumably with the idea that they would adopt features of those structures that were conducive to the needs of their own meeting.²

Much of the building material came from the previous house which was carefully dismantled for that purpose. This factor may have played into the design as well; various components of the old structure were worked into the new. Most notably, the foundation for the old meeting house was utilized.³ Reused timbers have resulted in a fairly unusual configuration of the roof's structural system, supporting two separate cross-gable roof sections (one each for the quarterly and preparative meeting rooms) with a hip in the roof of the main section.

3. Owners: The land upon which the meeting house rests has been the property of the West Grove Friends since 1787. About that time, William Jackson gave two acres of his farmland to his fellow Friends who were already in the process of erecting a meeting house upon it. Purchased from Jackson at the same time was 6-1/2 acres. A deed dated April 20, 1787 conveyed the entire parcel of 8-1/2 acres and 33 perches to Joseph Preston, John Jackson, Mordecai Mitchener, Jr., and Lewis Pusey as trustees. The

¹ Although records regarding building committees are not always extant, this is the only case of the inclusion of women that these authors have found.

² There were, however, few models for the structure erected at West Grove in 1903, which was one of the first meeting houses to provide space for the larger functions of the Society previously undertaken in separate structures. Perhaps the only other meeting house to do so prior to West Grove was the West Philadelphia (Hicksite) Meeting House erected in 1901 on Lancaster Avenue and 35th Street. Among the primary functions of this complex was the need to provide for a school. Also, some stylistic similarities exist between West Grove and Media-Providence Meeting House, built in 1875. The latter was expanded through additions, however, rather than planned as a single unified structure.

³ West Grove Preparative Meeting, Report of the Building Committee, 11 mo. 29, 1904 (Miscellaneous Papers, 1902-1910), 2.

declaration that follows states that the purchase was made on behalf of West Grove Meeting.⁴

On December 29, 1794, 1-1/2 acres and 9 perches were purchased, again taken from William Jackson's plantation, for the use of a Friends school, presumably then erected. The entire parcel was surveyed and plotted in 1896.⁵

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The meeting house was erected by builder Truman C. Moore, in conjunction with the building committee for the West Grove Preparative Meeting. Truman Moore, described as "a builder of wide experience," was himself a member of the meeting. He, in fact, sat on the building committee for the new meeting house, and was referred to as the "general manager" of the building project. The meeting had first-hand knowledge of Moore's abilities as a builder. He appears in the meeting minutes on a number of occasions with reference to making necessary repairs to the old meeting house and ancillary structures, from as early as 1874.⁶ Members of the meeting also lent their assistance in the construction process.

According to the Building Fund account books, the "masonry work"-- presumably the laying of the supplementary stone foundation--was done by H.S. McLeirman, with stone supplied by Thomas F. Cavanagh. The brick walls were erected by William F. Johnson, with the bricks coming from West Grove Brick Company. Adrian Moore was the project's carpenter. The lumber came from S.R. Chambers & Brothers, with the inside finishes such as the doors coming from C.B. Cole & Son Company. William H. Reburn was responsible for the plaster work, and Edward Porter for the slate roof.

5. Original plans and construction: Although the original plans are no longer extant, historic photographs and a 1930s description of the building depict a structure virtually identical to the one seen today. According to the description, "In the east end of the building is the large meeting room with a seating capacity of about four hundred. This room is used for Quarterly Meetings and special occasions. In the west end is a smaller meeting room used for midweek and First day meetings. Over this room is a second story

⁴ William B. Harvey, "West Grove Friends' Meeting House 1789-1939," (unpublished paper presented at the 150th anniversary celebration of West Grove Meeting), 2. and Western Quarterly Meeting (O), Miscellaneous Deeds (including West Grove Preparative Meetings, 10 items), FHL, RG2 Oversize.

⁵ Ibid., "Plot of West Grove Preparative Meeting Property, surveyed and plotted in 1896, by M.M. Hollingsworth." The map shows the location of the meeting and school houses, but was intended to show boundary lines. It is accompanied by a list of expenses entailed in walling the graveyard, suggesting that the survey was undertaken for that purpose.

⁶ West Grove Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 5mo. 28 1874; 1mo. 3 1878; 5mo. 30 1901.

for a lunch room for Quarterly Meeting and for a sewing room.”⁷ Thus, the building was designed to include two meeting rooms, one for the accommodation of the Western Quarterly Meeting, and the other, for the West Grove Preparative Meeting. And although separate men’s and women’s business meetings were held until 1919, there is no evidence that either the preparative or the quarterly meeting rooms were ever partitioned to create separate apartments. Further indication that the kitchen and upstairs room were part of the original design is a 1905 reference to providing lunch during the quarterly meeting.⁸

6. Alterations and additions: Few alterations appear to have been made to the meeting house, beyond occasional upgrades to the mechanical systems. Previously connected to the borough’s water system, running water was brought to the meeting house in January of 1908. The initial payment for electric lights is made in July of 1930, although payments are being made for gas *and* electricity in June of 1932 (indicating either a combined lighting system, or gas heat and electric lighting). A fire that occurred during April of 1975 did, however, cause “excessive” damage to the interior, which required reconstruction.

B. Historical Context:

Brief History of the West Grove Meeting and its Early Meeting House

The West Grove Friends Meeting was established in 1786, under the care of New Garden Monthly Meeting. It began in the late spring of that year after twenty-eight male and female heads of households from the New Garden Meeting requested permission to hold “a meeting twice a week for Divine worship” located “westward of this [New Garden] meeting.”⁹ Included among them were members of the Jackson, Michner, Pusey, and Preston families.¹⁰ A contingent of New Garden Meeting evidently was interested in forming a meeting closer to home. It would ease the burden upon the New Garden Meeting House to accommodate a growing population, and was the typical way in which new meetings were formed. And so a committee of men and women Friends from the New Garden Meeting was appointed take into “solid consideration”

⁷ “West Grove Churches. Society of Friends. West Grove Meeting (Orthodox). History of the Meeting,” Chester County Historical Society Files (summary and bibliographic information; date unknown, but most recent reference dates to the 1930s.)

⁸ West Grove Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 11mo. 2, 1905.

⁹ New Garden Monthly Meeting Minutes, 4mo. 1 1786; as cited in William B. Harvey, “West Grove Friends’ Meeting House, 1789-1939, Chester County Historical Society Files & West Grove Preparative Meeting, Misc. Papers, Friends Historical Library.

¹⁰ T. Chalkey Matlack. [“Brief Historical Sketches Concerning Friends Meeting Houses of the Past and Present with Special Reference to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting”] MS (Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, PA), Book 3, 41.

their request, and proceed “as Truth may point out.”¹¹ The request was granted with the proviso that they “procure a good title to a suitable piece of ground to build a meeting house on.”¹² The minutes indicate some difficulty in locating a meeting site, due largely to the inability to come to consensus over the necessity of erecting a meeting house. Some felt that a trial meeting was in order. The former group prevailed. William Jackson gave over to the meeting, two acres of his “Harmony Grove” farm upon which to build a meeting house. To this, the meeting added six-and-a-half more acres it had purchased from Jackson. Title was conveyed to the trustees for the meeting in May of 1787, by which time the West Grove Friends had “built and nearly finished, a good brick house.”¹³ West Grove continued from that time as an indulged meeting under the care--and watchful eye--of members of New Garden Meeting until March of 1789, when it was officially granted preparative meeting status.¹⁴

The new meeting house was a single-story brick structure erected in the doubled or two-cell form that had become the standard for meeting house design in the Delaware Valley. It allowed for equally sized apartments for men’s and women’s business meetings, separated by a wood partition that was lowered following the meeting for worship. Historic views depict a very staid structure devoid of even the elements such as pent roofs and doorway hoods deemed, by virtue of their repetitive use, to be in keeping with the Quaker “plain-style.” The six-bay-by-two-bay edifice had a side-gable roof with interior chimneys at either end. Also located at either end were small, single-story, roughcast (brick?) appendages, presumably men’s and women’s privies. The east end later received a large, overhanging porch addition, remarkably similar to that which appears on the current meeting house. A rare interior view of the meeting house shows the open partition and the tiered facing benches typical of the era.¹⁵

West Grove continued to be a part of New Garden Monthly Meeting. By the late nineteenth century, monthly meetings were being held at either the New Garden or West Grove meeting houses. By August of 1895, all monthly meetings were being held at West Grove.¹⁶ The

¹¹ Ibid., 5mo. 6 1786.

¹² Ibid., 6mo. 3 1786.

¹³ Ibid., 5mo. 5 1787.

¹⁴ 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), 122.

¹⁵ Old West Grove Meeting House, interior from southeast corner, n.d. Marked “...Fans on Overseers’ Bench show where Grandmother [Abi M.] Whitson sat.” Friends Meeting House Collection, West Grove Meeting (Orthodox) File, Chester County Historical Society.

¹⁶ New Garden Monthly Meeting, Minutes, 8 mo. 23 1895; as cited in Wm. B. Harvey, “West Grove Friends Meeting House,” 3.

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Western Quarterly Meeting, established in 1758 by a division of Chester Quarterly Meeting, met at London Grove Meeting House until 1827. After this time, quarterly meetings were held on an alternating basis at London Grove, West Grove, and New Garden until 1903, when West Grove built a new meeting house to better accommodate them.¹⁷ During the schism of 1827 that divided the Friends of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting into Hicksite and Orthodox factions, West Grove was one of the few rural meetings to favor the Orthodox viewpoint. Although the split centered around issues of Quaker belief, authority, and practice, socioeconomic forces were at work as well. Orthodox Friends generally represented the wealthier, urban-dwelling merchants and entrepreneurs, while the Hicksites tended to be the more humble, agrarian Friends. The Hicksite minority at West Grove erected their own meeting house in 1831, referred to as New West Grove Meeting House.¹⁸

The original meeting house underwent fairly extensive renovations between 1858 and 1860. It was agreed that repairs or alterations be made to the floor, windows, shutters, doors, partition and roof. A cellar was to be dug out, primarily to store wood for the stove, and the roof was raised to more adequately ventilate the meeting house. The exterior walls of the privies were to be plastered. A bookcase installed to accommodate the meeting's library. Finally, a platform "for getting in and out of carriages" was erected. The latter is likely a reference to the stone retaining wall that sits to the front and east side of the current meeting house. The meeting agreed to pursue these changes but with "due regard to the simplicity and plainness of our profession."¹⁹ The repairs were completed by November of 1860.²⁰ The east end porch was added in 1884 to provide "protection in wet weather."²¹

Other improvements included the wood enclosure around the burying ground and a "block of granite for markers."²² The grave markers indicate a change with regard to Friends testimony

¹⁷ *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), 121.

¹⁸ The 1831 New West Grove Meeting House still stands, although the meeting was laid down and a new meeting house built on Prospect Avenue in 1901. The 1831 meeting house is located on the south side of State Road, just west of Guernsey Road (about ½ mile west of Prospect Avenue/Wickerton Road). It is no longer used and is in deteriorating condition.

¹⁹ West Grove Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 4mo. 29 1858.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 mo. 29 1860. While the total cost was then calculated at \$1,029.93; it was later reassessed at \$1,129.93.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7mo. 3 1884.

²² *Ibid.*, 12mo. 1 1870.

against such demonstrations of pride. In fact, an 1850 minute book entry indicates that some members were referred to the Monthly Meeting after the committee in charge of the grave yard reported observing “several stones of the nature on monuments, which the Discipline forbids.”²³ In 1871, it was decided that the “old saddle horse sheds” should be removed and carriage sheds erected in their place. The sheds flanking the meeting house required repairs in 1874; among those appointed to see to the repairs was Truman Moore, who would later serve as master builder for the construction of the 1903 meeting house.²⁴ In 1886, the wall fronting the meeting house was rebuilt with “thick and heavy stones,” and the shed to the east was erected.²⁵

In 1901, a committee appointed to investigate possible improvements to the heating and ventilation systems incidentally revealed major flaws in the existing meeting house. According to their report, the roof would soon require major repairs, and the installation of a much-needed furnace would necessitate enlarging the existing chimneys. Looking towards the inevitable construction of a new meeting house, the committee added that the current structure “may not be large enough to accommodate the Quarterly Meetings” which were by that time being held there on a rotating basis.²⁶ No immediate action was taken, however, and the Friends stalled for nearly a year. In July of 1902, men’s and women’s meeting house improvement committees were formed.

Construction of the 1903 West Grove Friends Meeting House

As the cost of needed repairs to the 1787 meeting house began to mount, other alternatives were suggested. Members of the mens’ improvement committee were approached by some “interested Friends” in favor of erecting a *new* meeting house and willing to subsidize the cost.²⁷ Constructing a new meeting house would provide for the better accommodation of both the preparative and the larger quarterly meetings, and so the men’s committee made that recommendation. Although the women’s committee had basically come to the same conclusion, two of its members dissented, leaving the decision to the men.²⁸ Recast as the Meeting House Committee, the group included Truman C. Moore, Alfred F. Conard, Mark Hughes, S. Morris, Jones William B. Harvey, Harry E. Moore, Harry E. Cooper, Priscilla H. Hughes, Anna P.

²³ Ibid., 1 mo. 31 1850.

²⁴ Ibid., 4mo. 27 1871; 11mo. 27 1873; 5 mo. 28 1874; & 1mo. 3 1878.

²⁵ Ibid., 7mo. 29 1886.

²⁶ Ibid., 8mo. 1 1901.

²⁷ Ibid., 8mo. 28 1902.

²⁸ Ibid., 10mo. 2 1902. In actuality, two women on the committee dissented, and so the decision to build a new meeting house was deferred to the mens committee.

Haines, Elizabeth Hoopes, Jane C.B. Jones and Margaretta J. Moore. Thus, in April of 1903, the committee was authorized by the preparative meeting to proceed with plans for the construction of a new meeting. Their first task was the development of a design. In so doing, the committee made visits to other area meeting houses to examine their designs, presumably with the intention of adopting features conducive to their own needs.

There were few models, if any, for the innovative design of West Grove's 1903 meeting house. If any one meeting house did provide a model, however, it was the Concord Quarterly Meetings' house in Media. The main block was built in 1875 to house both the Media Preparative and Chester Monthly meetings. It was originally a four-bay-by-three-bay, gable-front meeting house. In 1885, it received a cross-gable addition to provide an apartment to accommodate the Concord Quarterly Meeting. The similarities between the enlarged Media-Providence Meeting House and West Grove's new meeting house include its dual meeting room plan, cross-gable roof, round-arched windows, and other Victorian-era inspired details. No other meeting house then standing came close to West Grove's design and layout.²⁹ And it is also worth noting, however, that the West Grove Friends built as one structure what had evolved at Media over the course of a decade. Thus, the West Grove Friends likely designed their building without the benefit of a precedent.

West Grove is significant for the continuity as well as the change it embodied. In accordance with traditional Quaker building practices, the structure was designed and built by meeting members, and incorporated many materials salvaged from the structure it replaced. The design was determined by the meeting, perhaps in consultation with the members of the larger quarterly meeting, as well as with a Quaker master builder, Truman C. Moore. According to the records of West Grove Preparative Meeting, the plans went through numerous changes before a final design was agreed upon. This undoubtedly occurred in an effort to obtain the solid consensus of the meeting. As would be expected, the West Grove Friends took into account "durability in construction, plainness, [and] good ventilation" when developing plans for the new meeting house.³⁰ Indicative of Quaker practice, capable members lent their particular skills towards the building's execution. Construction of West Grove Meeting House was undertaken by skilled craftsmen who were members of the meeting, most notably, the builder, Truman Moore, who

²⁹ The meeting house, now known as Media-Providence, has been renovated and the west wing erected to house the quarterly meeting remodeled for use by the school. Its original plan is no longer apparent, and therefore it is unclear whether any others included the kitchen facilities that became a standard of the all-in-one-plan) The other new Quarterly meeting house was erected in Coatsville in 1911 for the Caln Quarterly Meeting. Its exterior appearance is quite different. It has a single front entry covered by a portico, colonial revival detailing, and a porte cochere at the east side entrance. It too has since been altered for reuse, although a 1911 article in the *Westonian* offers some description (Editorial Notes, 9). The interior included a partition that divided the house into two parts, "only one of which will be used on ordinary occasions," presumably referring to the preparative versus the quarterly meetings. The basement included a large room used for a lunchroom.

³⁰ West Grove Preparative Meeting, Report of the Building Committee, 11mo 29, 1904; 2.

brought with him many years of experience in the building trades. But in addition to the tremendous contributions of Friend Moore, a “comparatively large amount of gratuitous labor” was forthcoming from other members of meeting.³¹ The account book also notes numerous instances in which reimbursement was made to individuals who had personally seen to the acquisition of needed parts, again speaking to the communal nature of the building process. In some cases, subscriptions were rendered in the form of materials or other contributions.³² As was the practice, the funds needed to finance the construction of the meeting house were raised through subscriptions from meeting members. And, as in this case, members of the larger quarterly meeting would also be expected to contribute to the cost of constructing a building that was erected to accommodate their meetings.

Quaker thrift also played a role in the design of the new meeting house. Much of the building material came from the previous house, which was carefully dismantled and its parts saved for reuse, resulting in a “decided advantage financially.”³³ The utilization of old building materials was a common Quaker practice and was largely a function of economy. The recycling of materials from the previous meeting house minimizing the need for additional and costly materials. At Frankford, for example, two walls of the meeting house are built of the bricks from the former house, while the old material was supplemented by rubble stone to create the remaining walls.³⁴ Moreover, awkward patches in the stonework of some meeting houses have been discovered to be the result of salvaging efforts. Such was the case at Kennett Square where parts of two walls of the smaller, original house were retained and expanded upon. A similar effort was made at Bradford, where the lower portion of two walls were saved to begin the walls around the cemetery.³⁵ Old horse sheds have been readapted for a multitude of uses including classrooms at Radnor and Plymouth meeting locations, and caretaker residences at Buckingham.³⁶ Thus, salvaged materials often found new life in another structure or were otherwise put to good use. When meeting houses or other associated buildings were so poorly deteriorated as to prohibit reuse, they could be used to fuel the wood stove at the next first day’s meeting. At West Grove, framing timbers and the foundation were among the most significant

³¹ Ibid., 3. The names of those providing labor gratis, and their specific contributions, unfortunately do not appear in the account books or elsewhere for obvious reasons.

³² West Grove Preparative Meeting, Building Committee account book, treasurer Pennock Cooper; an entry in the account book for November 13, 1903 indicates that donations towards construction cost were not limited to cash. As stated, “To cash from sale of picture contributed by W.W. Dewes.”

³³ West Grove Preparative Meeting, Report of the Building Committee, 2.

³⁴ See, “Frankford Preparative Friends Meeting House, HABS NO. PA-6652.”

³⁵ See, “Marshallton-Bradford Friends Meeting House, HABS NO. PA-1105.”

³⁶ See, “Radnor Friends Meeting House, HABS NO. PA-6226,” and “Buckingham Friends Meeting House, HABS NO. PA-6224.

elements of the old meeting house to be utilized. The recycling of the old timbers in the framing of the roof may explain its somewhat unusual configuration and structural support system, as well as the need to buttress the rear elevation of the quarterly meeting room section. Although it required further excavation to provide increased basement space, the foundation of the original house was utilized as well.³⁷ The stone coping to the front of the house, and even portions of porch appear from historic photographs to be identical to that of the old meeting house, suggesting that they too were salvaged.

On April 30, 1903, the building committee was authorized to begin dismantling the old meeting house, which had been erected in 1787.³⁸ While the new meeting house was under construction, preparative meetings were held in the schoolhouse on the property, and monthly meetings at New Garden.³⁹ The limited accommodations provided by the schoolhouse also forced a joint meeting of men's and women's business.⁴⁰ Work already had been undertaken to expand the cellar under the 1787 meeting house; it was completed by the early fall of 1902.⁴¹ In March of 1903 Truman Moore received funds to begin work on the new structure. In July, the foundation was ready. The report of the building committee states that "by the mid-summer of 1903, the foundation walls surrounding as it were the old house were ready for the superstructure in which is much material from that structure."⁴² Work continued throughout the summer to raise the walls of the meeting house.⁴³ By late September the doorways and window frames begin to appear within the walls.⁴⁴ By late October, as the exterior shell of the meeting house was taking shape, construction began on the roof. The roof likely was completed by mid-December.⁴⁵ As

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p.1.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 7mo. 3 1903.

⁴¹ West Grove Preparative Meeting, Building Committee account book, treasurer Pennock Cooper, 9mo. 1 1902. Truman Moore is paid for "digging cellar."

⁴² West Grove Preparative Meeting, report of the Building Committee, p. 2.

⁴³ Ibid., during July, H. McLeirnan receives payment for masonry work, Thomas Cavanagh for stone, and William Johnston for brick laying. Payments to these and other individuals continue throughout the summer. Also-William B. Harvey, p. 5. Harvey claims, "By mid-summer 1903 the foundation walls were laid, ready for the superstructure."

⁴⁴ Ibid., this information is based upon payments made for items such as door sills, and to Adrian Moore and Charles T. Moore are paid for carpentry work.

⁴⁵ Ibid., in October Edward Porter is paid for an initial delivery of slate; the last of these payments are made in mid-December.

the winter set in, work moved inside to include plastering, window installation, and other finishes.⁴⁶ Payments in January indicate that additional interior finish work such painting and hardware installation began. And by the end of January, final payments are made to the bricklayer and the painter, as well as to the stone and interior finishes suppliers, and water pipes are purchased. The plaster work continued into the spring, as did the hanging of interior doors and the installation of the gutters. By April, the carpenter received his final payment. During May and June, the site was graded and a wall and cement walk were installed. In mid-July, payment was made for “cleaning the new house,” presumably making it ready for use. The last financial report was made on November 29, 1904, indicating the completion of the meeting house and payment of all debts associated with its construction. The total cost of construction amounted to \$6,117.65.⁴⁷

West Grove Meeting House & Changes in twentieth Century Meeting House Design

Built to accommodate the Western Quarterly Meeting, West Grove was erected during a wave of quarterly meeting house construction that, by 1911, had also reached Concord (Media-Providence Meeting House), Caln (Coatsville Meeting House), and Haddonfield Quarters (Moorestown Meeting House). The motivation behind their construction was the replacement of deteriorating meeting houses, and ones that had become outmoded by the standards set by the modern era in Quaker history. West Grove’s 1903 Meeting House is an example of a meeting house type that became common within the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting during the early twentieth century. The meeting house that the West Grove Friends were replacing had essentially replicated a form employed by Friends elsewhere since the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Thus, the 1903 structure represented a design solution being tested at the turn of the century after fifty years of heterogeneity in meeting house architecture. Here schooling, social gathering and Quarterly Meeting were accommodated in a single construction phase rather than being housed in an addition or separate building as in years past.

Many changes from more traditional meeting houses were apparent in the design of West Grove. The Orthodox versus Hicksite schism of 1827 was the first major event that began the infusion of mainstream culture that would continue into the twentieth century. Although the Friends would again find common ground, the infusion of mainstream religious culture ultimately resulted in stripping away much of Quaker distinctiveness, including revisions to the discipline and the

⁴⁶ Ibid., this activity is evidenced by payments for plastering made to J. Reburn, throughout the months of October and November. In December, “window finish” and glass are received, as are “inside finish from Cole’s,” and heat fixtures.

⁴⁷ West Grove preparative Meeting, Report of the Building Committee, p. 4.

program.⁴⁸ These changes were now manifesting themselves in the construction of new meeting houses, as well as through the alteration of old ones. A de-emphasis of the role of ministers, and of separate men's and women's business meetings, eventually eliminated the need for many of the familiar elements of the Friends' meeting house. Most significant were the loss of the partition and the facing benches. Although separate business meetings were not eliminated officially by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting until the 1920s, by the late nineteenth century many meetings voluntarily suspend them. At West Grove, the Friends debated whether to include the partition that traditionally was used to separate men's and women's meetings for business. Such a partition was featured in the 1787 meeting house, and its inclusion in the new was favored by older members. Younger more progressive Friends were seriously opposed.⁴⁹ In the end, it was omitted from the design, even though joint business meetings did not begin at West Grove until 1919.⁵⁰ Facing benches were likewise effected, due to the diminishing role of the ministers, elders and overseers. They were slowly dismantled, tier by tier, and finally removed altogether. The facing bench design at West Grove marks the beginning of this trend. In the Quarterly Meeting room, the facing bench was reduced from the usual three rows of tiered benches to only two. In the preparative meeting room, the facing benches were eliminated altogether.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The meeting house is a large brick structure which accommodates quarterly and preparative meeting rooms, as well as a kitchen, lunchroom and restrooms under a single roof. The configuration is that of a simple rectangular structure. However, elements such as the cross gable roofs, a front pavilion, multiple entrances, and the symmetry of the building belie this fact, and made a clear visual distinction between the two interior sections. Although somewhat staid, the meeting house includes detailing reminiscent of the Victorian era, including a multifaceted cross-gable roof line, shingled gable front, and wrap-around porch with a gable front. The porch hides the fact that the principle meeting room is lit by a span of windows that nearly runs the height of the wall. The windows are of divided-light sash with plain glass, but combined with the two-story height of the room, what they help to create is a more church-like interior space. Traditional meeting house designs, on the contrary,

⁴⁸ For more information on this subject, see Catherine Lavoie, Germantown Friends Meeting House, HABS NO. PA- 6654.

⁴⁹ William B. Harvey, "West Grove Friends' Meeting House, 1789-1939," 5.

⁵⁰ West Grove Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 1mo. 27 1919. As stated in the minutes, "The West Grove Preparative Mtg. of Women Friends closed their book 10th mo. 30th 1919, and in the future men and women Friends will hold their meetings jointly."

more closely resemble domestic architecture.⁵¹

2. Condition of fabric: The meeting house is well maintained and in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: West Grove Meeting House is a two-story, seven-bay-long by three-bay-wide rectangularly shaped structure with a pavilion front entryway. The main block measures approximately 85' x 45', with the entire structuring measuring approximately 100.' The ceiling height in the quarterly meeting room is approximately 22' in height, and almost 13' in the preparative meeting room. The total height of the building is roughly 33.'

2. Foundations: The foundations are made of stone, with rough-cut stones appearing just above ground level.

3. Walls: The walls are of running-bond brick. The exception is the gable front in the central pavilion section which is sheathed in slate shingles, with the uppermost rows cut in a fish-scale pattern.

4. Structural systems, framing: The walls are of brick masonry, although the running bond pattern suggests that structural support is enhanced by timber framing. The roof of the main section is hipped, while a cross-gable forms the roof of the preparative meeting section. The two roofs are joined in an unusual fashion, and the framing in general includes a combination of hewn timbers, odd sections of lumber and tie rods for added support. The rafters at the juncture of the two sections are elongated on the east side to extend from the roof ridge to a sill plate in the main section, which is located on a lower plane. Missing the cross-bracing member needed to create a truss, the rafters are supported by a number of knee braces. To the west side, the rafters extend to a plate, and the actual roof extends from it.

5. Porches, stoops: A porch covers all of the east side elevation and most of the south front, extending westward to cover the entryway into the preparative meeting room. The porch roof is of wood construction with exposed rafter ends, and is covered with composition shingles. An extension of the roof appears along the east side, increasing its capacity to shield members against inclement weather. The porch is supported by narrow, round iron columns and rests on a concrete pad with stone coping and a rubble stone foundation. Paving stones provide a walkway that extends from the west end of the porch along the remainder of the south front elevation and around to the kitchen door

⁵¹ This window treatment is uncommon, but not without precedent. Similar spans of windows appeared in the Germantown Friends Meeting house when it was erected in 1868.

near the end of the west side. Here, a single large stone forms a stoop.

6. Chimneys: There are two interior brick chimneys located along the roof ridge of the main section of the meeting house, one near each end. The chimney stacks are suspended in the attic upon specially designed supports so as to prevent the necessity of building a stack through the center of the meeting room that would create an obstruction.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There three exterior doorways into the meeting rooms, and one more each leading into the restroom and kitchen sections. Two doorways are located at the (south) front elevation. The principal entry is to the center of the quarterly meeting room section. Double doors, consisting of five horizontal panels each, are set within a narrow wood architrave trim topped with a low-arched member and a similarly fashioned brick lintel. The keystone of the lintel bears the dates "1903" and "1786:" dates for when the meeting was established and the current meeting house built. A monolithic slab of granite, beveled at the sides, provides a sill. The second entry leads into the preparative meeting room. It is similar to the principle entry but supports a single door. Single door entries are also found to the rear of the east side elevation leading into the quarterly meeting room, at the south facade of the northeast corner restroom section, and at the south facade of the kitchen wing located at the northwest corner of the structure.

b. Windows and shutters: The quarterly meeting room section is lit by eight-over-eight-light-sash windows on both the first and second stories, separated by a distance wide enough to accommodate the porch roof. The close proximity between the windows on both stories is most evident on the interior, where the effect is of a single continuous span. The first-story windows located under the porch area are longer than those on the second story, and have flat stone lintels and sill. The first-story windows found elsewhere have round-arched brick lintels, as do the windows in the second story. The windows in the front pavilion section differ. The front entry is flanked by smaller, four-over-four-light sash windows. In the second story, there is a long, horizontally placed ten-light fixed window with a round-arched brick lintel. And in the gable end, is a half-round fixed window with divided lights. In the gable end of the preparative meeting section is a louvered ventilator with a pointed-arch brick lintel composed of brick ends. The rear of the meeting house is lit by a single, large eight-over-eight-light sash window with a transom above; it is positioned to the center of the quarterly meeting room. All the windows have a wood surround with a narrow architrave along the outer edge.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main block--the quarterly meeting room--has a hipped roof that intersects with the gable-front roof of the preparative meeting section to the west. There is also a cross-gable pavilion to the center of the main block, where the front entry is located. The roof is covered with slate shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves: The gable-fronted section to the west has a boxed return cornice. The gable end of the front pavilion is framed by a pediment. There is a fairly broad overhang of the eaves, and a plain frieze board with a simple bead along the lower edge.

c. Dormers: There is a three-bay wall dormer along the west side wall.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: West Grove Meeting House is a rectangularly shaped structure with two small appendages. The first is a kitchen located to the rear of the west side elevation. The second is for restrooms and is located to the far east end of the north rear elevation. The main building consists of a large quarterly meeting room, with a smaller preparative meeting room adjoining it to the west. A stair hall runs the length of the rear elevation of the preparative meeting room. The quarterly meeting room is two-stories in height (with no gallery); there is a second floor over the preparative meeting room section only. There is a partial basement.

2. Stairways: The stair hall is located to the rear of the preparative meeting section. The stair consists of a partially enclosed, single run of stairs to the upper level, with a stairway to the basement underneath it.

3. Flooring: The floors are of dark-stained hardwood.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceiling are of plaster, painted white, but they lack the traditional wainscoting. There is a coved ceiling in the main meeting room with a medallion at the center.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: A dark-stained fluted trim surrounds the doorways, and the doors have five horizontal raised panels.

b. Windows: The windows have the same surround as the doorways, with a plain wood spandrel between the window on the first and second stories of the quarterly meeting room.

6. Benches: There is a facing bench in the quarterly meeting room only. It runs along most of the rear wall, with a step up onto the stand, and a passageway to the restroom to the east end, and a large platform to the west end. The facing benches consist of a single platform with benches along the rear wall and along the front of the platform. The facing bench is broken in the middle, where the single rear window is located, to accommodate a step. Other benches are movable and arranged looking towards the facing benches.

7. Partition: There is not now, nor was there ever, a partition in either the preparative or quarterly meeting rooms.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: The meeting house has central heating. Decorative iron registers appear on the floor of the quarterly meeting room.

b. Lighting: The meeting rooms are lit by electrical, pendant-like overhead lighting. The initial payment for electric lighting was made in July of 1930.⁵²

c. Plumbing: The meeting house is equipped with plumbing, including restroom and kitchen facilities, although arrangements for *running water* were not made until January of 1908.⁵³

D. Site:

1. Historic landscape design: The meeting house sits on the exact location of the earlier, 1786 meeting house. Elements such as the slight terracing and coping that appears to the front of the meeting house are remnants of the former structure's landscape design. Not long before the 1903 meeting house was constructed, Thomas M. Harvey had erected the current granite wall and step. This was actually a replacement of the "old unloading wall"--presumably used in lieu of a mounting block--that fronted the meeting house.⁵⁴ And like most Friends' meeting houses, West Grove faces the south. There is a burial ground to the north and northwest of the meeting house which is surrounded by a stone

⁵² West Grove Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 7mo. 31 1930.

⁵³ Ibid., 1mo. 2 1908.

⁵⁴ William B. Harvey, "West Grove Friends Meeting House, 1789-1939," 4.

wall. The southwest corner provided for the burial of African Americans. In 1929, a substantial iron fence was placed along the west side of the burying ground. To make it easier to mow the lawn, the foot stones were removed.⁵⁵

2. Outbuildings: An older school house structure is located to the east of the meeting house. It is a small, single-story, three-bay-by-two-bay brick structure with a gable roof. Land was acquired for the purpose of erecting a school house in December of 1794, although the current structure was erected in 1833.⁵⁶ The school house was used for worship and business meetings during the construction of the current meeting house. After it ceased being used as a school in the mid-1920s, it was used as a dwelling house.⁵⁷ It was remodeled in 1966, and used for a Friends Kindergarten, but was closed again in 1972.

An old carriage shed is located along the stone wall to the west of the meeting house. A similar carriage shed that flanked the meeting house to the east was removed in 1929, and the lumber sold. A row of evergreens was planted in its place.⁵⁸ There is a small gable-roofed shed to the rear of the meeting house, just outside the wall that surrounds the burying ground.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

Old West Grove Meeting House (1797) from south, 1886. Isaac G. Tyson, photographer. Collection 912, Quaker Collection, Haverford College, Haverford, PA.

Old West Grove Meeting House and east horse shed from southeast, 1889. [Gilbert] Cope, photographer. Friends Meeting House Collection, West Grove Meeting (Orthodox) File, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.

Old West Grove Meeting House and school from southwest, 1889. [Gilbert] Cope, photographer. Friends Meeting House Collection, West Grove Meeting (Orthodox) File, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 10mo. 3 1929 (including information regarding African-American burials).

⁵⁶ Margaret A. Warner, "West Grove Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends," (taken from minute books, personal interviews and other available historical data), May 1976, p.1.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

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- Old West Grove Meeting House and east horse shed from southeast, n.d. Marked "Elizabeth B. Conrow Collection." Photograph Collection 110/W448, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.
- Old West Grove Meeting House and horse sheds from southeast, n.d. Pennock Cooper, photographer. Friends Meeting House Collection, West Grove Meeting (Orthodox) File, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.
- Old West Grove Meeting House site from west, n.d. Watson W. Dewees, photographer. Photograph Collection 110/W448, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.
- Old West Grove Meeting House from southwest, n.d. Marked "J. R. B. Moore Collection." Photograph Collection 110/W448, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.
- Old West Grove Meeting House, interior from southeast corner, n.d. Marked "...Fans on Overseers' Bench show where Grandmother [Abi M.] Whitson sat." Friends Meeting House Collection, West Grove Meeting (Orthodox) File, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.
- West Grove Friends School from south, 1902. [Gilbert] Cope, photographer. Friends Meeting House Collection, West Grove Meeting (Orthodox) File, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.
- West Grove Meeting House and east horse shed from southeast, 1912. [Gilbert] Cope, photographer. Friends Meeting House Collection, West Grove Meeting (Orthodox) File, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.
- West Grove Meeting House from southwest, 1912. [Gilbert] Cope, photographer. Friends Meeting House Collection, West Grove Meeting (Orthodox) File, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.
- West Grove Meeting House from southeast, n.d. Friends Meeting House Collection, West Grove Meeting (Orthodox) File, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.
- West Grove Meeting House and burial ground from north, n.d. Marked "from the collection of E. E. Palmer." Photograph Collection 110/W448, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

West Grove Meeting House site, west horse shed, n.d. Photograph Collection 110/W448,
Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

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work of building the present West Grove Meeting House. Submitted to the
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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the West Grove Friends Meeting House was undertaken during the summer of 1997 as part of a larger project to record the Friends Meetings 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 of 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. Measured drawings were produced by architect Roger Miller, and architecture technicians: H. Christie Barnard, Pamela Howell, Kevin J. Lam and Adam Maksay (US ICOMOS). The project historians were Aaron V. Wunsch and Catherine C. Lavoie. Aaron Wunsch conducted the research and wrote the significance statement; the remainder of the report was written by Catherine Lavoie. Large-format Photography was undertaken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS photographer.