

WEST PHILADELPHIA FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
3500 Lancaster Ave. at 35th St.
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6664

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
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WEST PHILADELPHIA FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

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- Location: 3500 Lancaster Avenue, at 35th Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania.
- Significance: In the nineteenth century, Friends of the middle and upper socio-economic classes left the Center City Philadelphia area and moved out toward the city's suburbs. While the wealthier Friends chose places along the mainline, such as Germantown or Haverford, the middling sorts stopped in West Philadelphia. The first meeting house on the site was erected in 1851; the present meeting house-school complex was built in 1901 for the use of the Hicksite Friends.
- Description: The meeting house is a two-story entity made of bricks laid up in Flemish bond; some glazed headers are noticeable throughout the coursing. It has a watertable fashioned out of limestone and rests on a rough-cut stone foundation. There are jack arches over the windows and entryway. Typical windows are glazed with six-over-six lights placed in double-hung sash. Connected to the meeting house by way of a two-story high and three-bay wide hyphen is the school building, also constructed of brick masonry. Inside, the meeting room included the traditional features of a Quaker meeting space, like the gallery and facing benches.
- Historical Notes: Adhering to the Hicksite interpretation of the Quaker doctrine, the West Philadelphia Friends looked to the Yearly Meeting at Race Street for guidance. Under the care of the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, an Indulged Meeting was established in 1837 and the following year some discussion was made regarding the construction of a meeting house. No work was undertaken and so the West Philadelphia Friends met in a structure at the corner of 32nd and Ludlow Streets. In 1851, the Friends moved into their own building, which was two stories high and made of gray stone. Two years later they established the West Philadelphia Friends School, which met in the basement of the meeting house. In 1873, the Friends built a school building that adjoined to the east side of the meeting house. In 1901, they decided to rebuild both structures and the present meeting house-school complex was raised. The buildings continue to be used by the community, only no longer as the site of Friends' teachings because the West Philadelphia Friends Meeting was laid down.
- Sources: Inventory of Church Archives (/) Society of Friends in Pennsylvania. Friends' Historical Association for the WPA, November 1941.