

SADSBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
(Christiana Mennonite Church)
Penn Ave. at Pine St.
Christiana
Lancaster County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6673

HABS
PA
36-CHRISA,
1-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
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Location: Penn Avenue at Pine Street, Christiana, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner,

Occupant,

& Use: The trustees of the Christiana Mennonite Church own the building, which is used by the Mennonite congregation as a place for worship.

Significance: Weary of maintenance issues and costs and, perhaps, of the inconvenient location of their meeting house, at the turn of the twentieth century the Sadsbury Friends decided to move their meeting place into town. They proceeded to build a meeting house in Christiana, which would replace the 1747 meeting house located on Simmontown Road by 1902.¹ The structure they designed and erected, however, is a departure from the traditionally-planned Quaker meeting house-type as it had developed in the Delaware Valley during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Instead the meeting house in Christiana has a full church-like plan, complete with a narthex or entrance hall, a central aisle, and a pulpit.² The absence of a partition and the facing benches is particularly noticeable. Thus, the Sadsbury Friends' meeting house in Christiana represents a change in how the meetings for worship and for business occurred.

Within two decades, however, it appears that the Friends regretted their choice. In January of 1920, they resolved to have all the "overseers, elders, and others at the head of [the] meeting sit facing the meeting." They elected to do so because of the added "dignity, strength, and inspiration" such an arrangement would bring to the meeting.³ Thus, the Friends reinstated at least one of the traditions surrounding their meeting format and returned to seating the leaders on benches facing the meeting, although there is no evidence that a tiered stand was built to accommodate them. Moreover when celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of their meeting's establishment, the Sadsbury Friends went back to their eighteenth-century meeting house for the occasion. Similarly, when the Sadsbury meeting was revived in the 1970s, the Friends returned to the old structure, with its familiar stand and partition, rather than the church-like meeting house in town.

Description: The Sadsbury Friends Meeting House is a masonry building constructed of rubble stone and quartz. It stands one and one-half stories over a basement and is covered by a gable

¹See HABS No. PA-6651.

²Comments based upon 1998 field survey by Catherine C. Lavoie and Aaron Wunsch.

³Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Joint Minutes 1917-1925, 1 mo 4th 1920, p. 22.

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roof. With its gable front facing south, the meeting house measures approximately 38' x 64' and is three bays by five bays with a central entrance in the facade. There is another entrance tucked under the porte cochere that is located to the south end of the west elevation (fig. 1). Also, a modern handicap- accessible entry has been added to the west elevation by converting one of the window openings into a doorway. The fenestration consists of round arched windows and doorways; the original windows are glazed with two-over-two light double hung sash with an additional two lights in the round arch sash above (fig. 2). There is a round gable window in the north elevation that corresponds to the position of the date stone in the front facade. The date stone records when the meeting was established, in 1725, and when the structure was raised, in 1901. Two exterior chimneys suggest the interior is heated; these are located to the northern end of the east and west elevations.

History:⁴ In August of 1901 the Friends of Sadsbury Preparative Meeting chose to build a new meeting house in Christiana and so they purchased the "triangular" lot from William Brinton. They paid \$400.00 for the property. They also placed a ceiling of \$4800.00 on the new meeting house enterprise, including the anticipated costs of paving, shedding, and finishing "ready to occupy."⁵ Regardless of the imposed spending limit, the Sadsbury Friends needed financial assistance. Therefore, they requested that the Monthly Meeting put in for monies on their behalf from the Samuel T. Jeans Fund. As a result, the distribution committee of that organization granted up to \$1700.00 for the Christiana project.⁶ In addition to the initial Jeans Fund gift, the Sadsbury Friends mortgaged their Christiana property for \$1000.00 in hopes of alleviating some of the indebtedness caused by the construction work. The Monthly Meeting returned to the Jeans Fund and asked for another \$500.00 to offset the rising expenses of the project. Despite lingering financial matters, the completed meeting house was open for worship in December of 1902.⁷

In 1903, the Monthly Meeting of Sadsbury Friends again sought support from the Jeans Fund, hoping for more assistance with the architectural endeavor in Christiana. In response the Jeans Fund allocated \$500.00 to help pay for the meeting house. Also at this time, a committee

⁴Lancaster County Court Records, Deed Book R, vol. 16, p. 52; Lancaster County Court Records, Deed Book M, vol. 64, pp. 708-709

⁵Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 8 mo 28th 1901, p. 80; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 10 mo 1st 1901, pp. 81-82; Lancaster County Court Records, Deed Book R, vol. 16, p. 52. The deed of sale from William P. Brinton to the Friends was dated September 17, 1901 and recorded January 16, 1902.

⁶Samuel T. Jeans Fund, Minutes 1900-1914, 8 mo 6th 1901 & 5 mo 12th 1902, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, pp. 22, 35; see also, Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 12 mo 31st 1902, p. 89.

⁷Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 7 mo 30th 1902, p. 86; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 11 mo 26th 1902, p. 88; Sadsbury Friends Monthly Meeting, Minutes 12 mo 7th 1901, p. 213.

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of Friends, appointed by the Preparative Meeting, reported that the leveling, grading, sowing of grass seed, planting trees, and trimming were done.⁸

With the exterior work finished at the site, mid-year accounting produced a number of new bills. The funds spent amounted to \$11.81 for fire insurance taxes on new buildings, \$16.75 for the grading about the new house, \$10.28 for mason work, \$20.86 for lumber \$20.86, and \$6.25 for lime.⁹ By the end of the year, the treasurer's figures accounted for \$2200.00 from the Jeans Fund, for \$2792.51 from the committee of contributors, for \$1000.00 from Whitson on the mortgage, making \$5992.51 altogether. Costs, according to the receipts at hand, reached \$6232.51, which left a balance due on the building of \$240.00. As a result of this deficiency, the Sadsbury Friends solicited another \$400.00 from the Jeans Fund to pay off their debt and to assist with finishing the basement.¹⁰

In the following year, the Monthly Meeting asked for an additional \$300.00 from the Jeans Fund for the Friends' Christiana property. This request was approved.¹¹ Also in 1904, the treasurer for the Christiana building reported an income of \$6398.01 (\$2500.00 from the Jeans Fund), as well as accounting for bills that came to \$6297.71. The expenses included the cost of the lot, water, and insurance among other items. The finishing was completed in July.¹² By 1906, the Friends had sold off some of their land "situated east of the road along the meadow" to raise money to pay the mortgage.¹³

Returning to the Jeans Fund in 1907, the Sadsbury Friends asked for \$400.00 so that they could erect an iron fence around the meeting house and grounds; this proposal, however, was put

⁸Samuel T. Jeans Fund, Minutes 1900-1914, 3 mo 13th 1903, 4 mo 14th 1903, & 5 mo 11th 1903, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, pp. 50-51, 54; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 1 mo 28th 1903, pp. 90-92.

⁹ Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 7 mo 1st 1903, p. 94.

¹⁰Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 11 mo 1903, p. 98.

¹¹Samuel T. Jeans Fund, Minutes 1900-1914, 3 mo 18th 1904, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, pp. 66, 70.

¹²Sadsbury Friends Monthly Meeting, Minutes 3 mo 9th 1904, p. 231; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 3 mo 2nd 1904, p. 101; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 6 mo 29th 1904, p. 105; Sadsbury Preparative Meeting, Minutes 7 mo 1904, p. 106.

¹³Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 12 mo 27th 1905, p. 118; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 1 mo 21st 1906, p. 119; Minutes 2 mo 28th 1906, p. 120; Minutes 5 mo 2nd 1906, p. 122.

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on hold.¹⁴ Other projects carried out by the Friends, in 1906 and 1907, included investigating the costs of electric fixtures and the subsequent installation of electric lights as well as discussing the possibility of putting in a cement walk in front of the meeting house. In 1910, the Jeans Fund agreed to support the fencing project. The distribution committee then allocated \$300.00 to Sadsbury Monthly Meeting for “repairs” to its property in Christiana. This money actually was for the fence.¹⁵ By 1912, the Friends had made other improvements to their Christiana meeting house.¹⁶

Matters of maintenance occupied the Sadsbury Friends during the 1920s. The Preparative Minutes record a request for \$125.00 in 1921. The Friends needed this sum in order to have the exterior of the building painted; the Jeans Fund provided the required cash. Four years later, the Friends repaired the dining room wall boards and hardware. At this time, the Friends decided to augment the appearance of their meeting house by adding “plate glass windows to the front doors.”¹⁷ Periodically the Friends received, and paid, the bills presented for cleaning the meeting house. These typically were \$2.00 a piece.¹⁸

At its Christiana site, however, the number of Friends attending the Sadsbury meetings decreased. The Monthly Meeting of the Sadsbury Friends was transferred to Bradford in 1907, who in turn laid down the Sadsbury Preparative Meeting in 1919. The remaining Sadsbury Friends joined the Caln Preparative Meeting at that time. The Sadsbury Friends completed all

¹⁴Samuel T. Jeans Fund, Minutes 1900-1914, 3 mo 15th 1907 - 12 mo 18th 1908, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, pp. 114, 117, 118, 123, 124, 135.

¹⁵Samuel T. Jeans Fund, Minutes 1900-1914, 10 mo 10th 1910, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, p. 162; Sadsbury Friends Monthly Meeting, Minutes 10 mo 5th 1910, p. 328; Sadsbury Friends Monthly Meeting, Minutes 11 mo 9th 1910, pp. 329-330; Sadsbury Friends Monthly Meeting, Minutes 2 mo 6th 1907, p. 278; Sadsbury Friends Monthly Meeting, Minutes 3 mo 6th 1907, p. 279; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 6 mo 2nd 1909, p. 148; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 9 mo 28th 1910, p. 160.

¹⁶Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 1 mo 30th 1907, p. 129; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 2 mo 27th 1907, p. 130; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 10 mo 31st 1906, p. 126; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 11 mo 28th 1906, p. 127; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 6 mo 2nd 1909, p. 148; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 10 mo 30th 1912, p. 171.

¹⁷Sadsbury Friends Preparative Minutes, Joint Minutes 1917-1925, 4 mo 3rd 1921, p. 33; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Joint Minutes 1917-1925, 7 mo 2nd 1922, pp. 45-46; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Minutes 10 mo 1st 1922, p. 49; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Minutes, Joint Minutes 1917-1925, 5 mo 3rd 1925, p. 103; Sadsbury Friends Preparative Minutes, Joint Minutes 1917-1925, 7 mo 5th 1925, pp. 107-108.

¹⁸See, for example, Sadsbury Friends Preparative Meeting, Joint Minutes 1917-1925, 4 mo 3rd 1922, p. 43.

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the details for discontinuance by July 1925.¹⁹ The meeting house, however, was not sold until 1973. At that time, the Trustees of the Christiana Mennonite Church bought it.²⁰

Sources: The primary sources called upon for this site were the records of Lancaster County Court, the minutes from the meetings of the Sadsbury Friends, and the records of the Samuel T. Jeans Fund. The WPA-era survey, Inventory of Church Archives, was also used. Please see HABS No. PA-6651 for more complete bibliography and for information about the Sadsbury Friends.

Historian: Virginia B. Price, Fall 2000; field survey by Catherine C. Lavoie and Aaron Wunsch, 1998.

¹⁹Sam Bradley, "Sadsbury Meeting (/) est. 1724," brochure, n.d., Sadsbury Friends Meeting House, near Christiana, Pennsylvania; Inventory of Church Archives (/) Society of Friends in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA: Prepared by the Pennsylvania Historical Survey (/) Division of Community Service Programs (/) Works Progress Administration, 1941), pp. 162-163; Sadsbury Preparative Meeting, Joint Minutes 1917-1925, 7 mo 5th 1925, p. 109.

²⁰Lancaster County Court Records, Deed Book M, vol. 64, pp. 708-709.

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Figure 1. Perspective view of the south (front) elevation looking from the southwest. Photo by Catherine C. Lavoie and Aaron Wunsch, HABS, 1998.

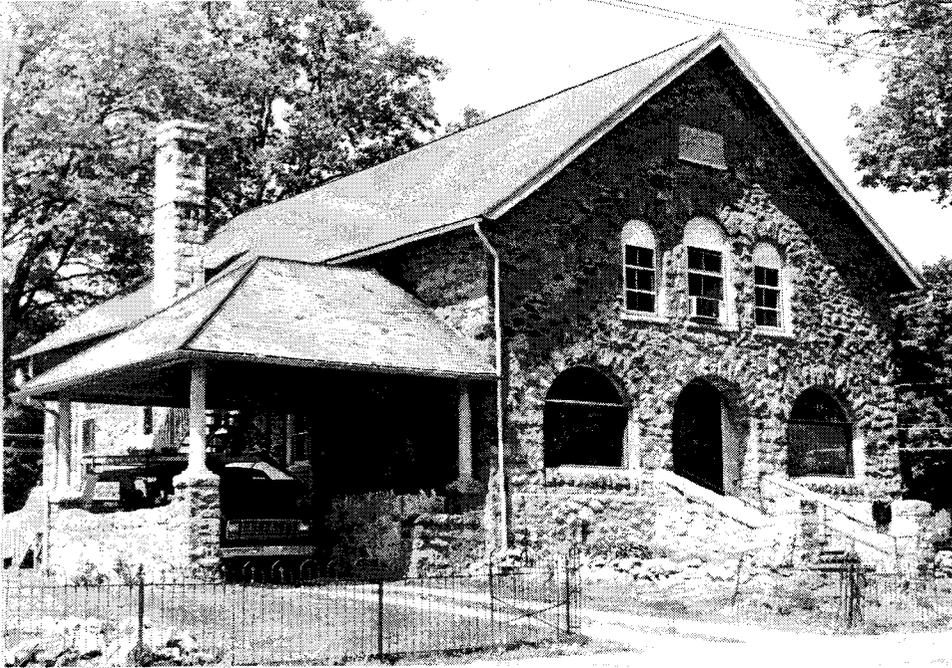


Figure 2. Perspective view of the north elevation looking from the northeast. Photo by Catherine C. Lavoie and Aaron Wunsch, HABS, 1998.

