

WALL HOUSE
100 Wall Park Drive
Elkins Park
Montgomery County
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-6056

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46-ELKPA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WALL HOUSE

HABS NO. PA-6056

Location: 100 Wall Park Drive, Elkins Park, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Significance: The first meeting of the Society of Friends in America took place in the Wall House. Originally built in 1682 with substantial additions added through the years, the structure is one of the oldest surviving buildings in the eastern section of Montgomery County and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Description: The Town of Cheltenham has converted the Wall House and two related structures into a house museum. The buildings sit near the bottom of a gradual hill which runs down from the east to a creek approximately one hundred yards west. An asphalt driveway travels from the east along the rear of the house. The front of the house has a moderate-sized yard, and a public park is located east of the driveway.

The Wall House is a rectangular stone single-family dwelling which has been altered and expanded many times since its original erection in 1682. The two-and-a-half-story, four-bay-by-three-bay main block faces west and has a wood entry porch. Located in the second bay from the north is the recessed main entrance; it features panelled reveals and a panel door. Windows are six-over-six-light sash and have panelled shutters, simple architrave surrounds, and wood sills. Wood shingles cover the gable roof, which has two gable dormers and an interior chimney in front of the roof ridge at its south end. Stucco covers the south exterior, while the differences in the west and east elevations documents a nineteenth century renovation. The eastern (rear) exterior wall shows the original 1805 random stones; in the Victorian period the western side was erected of ashlar masonry.

This block was built in the same location as the original house. That two-room, one-and-one-half-story stone structure was torn down in 1715, after new owners had constructed a two-and-a-half-story, two-bay-by-one-bay random stone addition to the north. This addition, which still stands, was extended to the east in 1735. On its north end is a shed porch, below which is a plastered wall and the exterior of a beehive oven illustrates some of the changes which have occurred at the site. The addition, whose roof ridge line is lower than that of the main block, has a gabled dormer.

Over the past five years the interior of the house has been renovated to show conditions during various periods. To the south of the off-center entrance hall is a double parlor whose two fireplaces and ceiling indicate it was originally two rooms. North of the entryway a short flight of stairs lead down to the dining

room, which occupies the west side of the 1735 addition. A door from the dining room leads east into the kitchen.

A three-flight stairway leads to the second floor, then continues to the third floor. Each of the second floor rooms has a six-panel door and stepped architrave doorway surrounds. Most rooms have chair rails and deep wood window sills. The northern section of the third floor has been converted to a modern apartment, though it is presently unoccupied.

A spring house and the garage can be found to the west of the main building. The spring house is a small windowless gable-front structure whose batten door faces east. The building is plaster-covered stone painted white, and has a wood-shingle roof. The south-facing garage was originally built in as a carriage house; it includes a smaller addition on its east end. Along the main elevation are three sets of double doors, each with decorative half-timbering and nine-light fixed windows. This stucco-covered stone structure has been converted to an information center.

History: The Wall House was constructed in 1682 on land granted by William Penn to Richard Wall of Hasfield near Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England. Richard Wall designed and built the house, which became the site of the first meeting of the Society of Friends. This meeting occurred in 1683 and was held at the Wall House until 1702 when a permanent meeting house, Abington Friends Meeting, was built in Jenkintown.

The monthly meeting of the Society of Friends was the religious, social, and economic center of the community in this period. As all residents of the area were Friends, no other form of government was necessary. Thus, the Wall House was the important meeting area of the town. In 1688, the first protest against slavery, drawn up by a Germantown Quaker, Frances Daniel Pastorius, was made public at the monthly meeting at the Wall House.

The Wall House has been occupied as a residency since its construction in 1682. The decedents of Richard Wall occupied the house until 1847. During that time the granddaughter of Richard Wall, Sarah, married George Shoemaker. The area around the house became known as Shoemakertown due to the important community position of George Shoemaker and also to the size of the Shoemaker family. This name was used until 1889 when the area was renamed "Ogontz". In 1847 the property was sold to Charles Bosler, where it remained until it was purchased by the Township in 1932. Charles Bosler's son, Joseph, was also a prominent citizen in the community, serving as the U.S. Treasurer in Philadelphia. The house and its related structures are now a museum owned by the Township of Cheltenham.

Sources: Richard Kelly and Mark Blake. "National Register
Nomination: Wall House," 1979. The nomination is
located in the History Division, National Park
Service.

Historian: Terra Klugh, HABS, 1995.