

RADNOR FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE  
SW Corner of Sproul and Conestoga Roads  
Ithan  
Delaware County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6226

HABS  
PA-6226

WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
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1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### RADNOR FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

HABS NO. PA-6226

**Location:** Southwest Corner of Sproul and Conestoga roads, Ithan, Delaware County, Pennsylvania.

**Present Owner:** Trustees for the Radnor Meeting of the Society of Friends

**Present Use:** Meeting House for religious worship of the Society of Friends

**Significance:** Constructed largely in 1718, Radnor is one of the oldest standing meeting houses in the Delaware Valley. Its form captures patterns of American Friends Meeting House development that are extant in perhaps no other structure. As was typical of many of the meeting houses of the early settlement period, Radnor began as a single-celled structure. The eastern addition to the main building of a supplemental room is reflective of the early attempts by the Society of Friends in America to develop a building form that best facilitated their unique form of worship and separate men's and women's business meetings. Motivated principally by the Friends regard for the status of women within the meeting, Radnor's telescoping form also constitutes the beginning of the evolution to the symmetrical, two-cell doubled type that became the standard for Friends Meeting House design by the late-eighteenth century.

The builders of Radnor Meeting House were among the first generation of Quaker converts. Like other Welsh settlers to this area, they hoped to establish their own barony within the newly formed Pennsylvania Colony. Radnor Friends established a meeting for worship here in 1683. Elements of the meeting house they built, such as its steeply pitched roof, are indicative of the Medieval English building traditions that the Welsh Friends brought with them from their homeland.

Historian: Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS Historian, 1997.

### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1718-22. The date stone in the east gable end of the main block reads "Radnor Annod 1718." The date stone indicates the year that the meeting house was begun (and in this case, put into use). The minutes for the Radnor Monthly Meeting indicated that the building actually was not completed for a few years, however. The intention to erect a more permanent meeting house (possibly replacing an original log

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structure erected ca. 1693) was first mentioned in the minutes for November of 1717.<sup>1</sup> There are no references to its actual construction. On the 13th November, 1718, it is noted that the meeting house is not yet ready, but by the March 12, 1719, the minutes record a monthly meeting being held there.

Confused by references to ongoing construction, many have assumed that the addition of the second meeting room was begun soon thereafter, in 1721. It is more likely, however, that these references are to the completion of the main block rather than the addition, and that the Radnor Friends were meeting in a house that was not wholly completed. The entries, such as the one recorded on the 8th day, 4th month 1721, appear largely in the form of requests for financial assistance in order to “finish” their meeting house. Similar requests appear in the Radnor Monthly Meeting minutes through 1724. The date for the construction of the addition is unknown, but it may not have occurred until the later eighteenth century.

2. Architect: There was presumably no architect for Radnor Meeting House. Although there may have been a master builder who influenced its design, as was then the practice, such an individual has not been identified. As was customary among Friends, the design was developed by a committee of members of the larger Radnor Monthly Meeting (including Merion and Old Haverford meetings) designated for that purpose. According to the minutes, “Some friends of those appointed to assist Radnor Friends in ye contrivance of a new meeting house there bring acct yt. They have accordingly mett and given ym their thoughts as to ye bigness and form thereof to wch (which) Radnor frds then there present seemed generally to agree with.”<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the minutes only state that the building committee made their report, but their findings are not conveyed therein.

3. Owners: The land on which the meeting house rests has been the property of the Radnor Friends from the time of their arrival to the newly established colony, beginning in 1683. It was part of a larger tract granted by William Penn to the Welsh Quakers, in 1681. The Welsh were intent on establishing their own barony, or self-ruling state, with the Pennsylvania Colony. The Radnor Meeting House was built on a 1 acre lot, part of the Jerman family’s farm. The lot, however, was not legally conveyed to the trustees of Radnor Meeting until the 16th of December 1735, when a quitclaim deed was issued from Margaret Jerman and family. As stated in the deed, the acre was given, “for the

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<sup>1</sup> *A note on dates:* except where quoted and in the formal references, the report translates the “Scriptural” (ie. 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. Within the text of the report, the pre-1752 dates have been converted to their modern equivalents. However, no attempt has been made to confirm the modernization of dates derived from secondary sources.

<sup>2</sup> Radnor Monthly Meeting, Minutes, 14th day of the 9th month 1717.

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benefit and behoof of the Poor of the People called Quakers....to erect or maintain one or more Meeting Houses or for burial of the dead...or any other use.”<sup>3</sup> The meeting house property was increased by 5 acres and 17.8 perches on the 2nd of June 1794, with land purchased from Evan and Jane Lewis. According to that deed, the purchase was made for “the Use, benefit & Behoof of the people called Quakers [...] to erect one or more houses for the benefit or accommodation of a school or for such use as the members [...] shall direct.”<sup>4</sup> The property has been reduced somewhat over the years due to changes in the surrounding roadways, and the sale of a small portion of ground that was the site of Public School #2.

4. Builders, suppliers: The Radnor Friends Meeting House was built by the members of the meeting, with the assistance of members of the larger monthly meeting. The Friends of that era essentially constituted a closed society, particularly the recently immigrated Welsh, and so it is unlikely that they sought outside help with their building effort. Traditionally their meeting houses were of their own design and construction, with members contributing according to their abilities. Individual members of the meeting, generally elders, were appointed to oversee the various phases of construction, acting as a general contractor would today. Whenever possible, capable members would undertake the actual construction. Funds towards building the meeting house were raised through subscriptions from its members, and solicited from members of the larger monthly and/or quarterly meeting when insufficient, as was usually the case.

The extant minutes for the Radnor Monthly Meeting indicate that David Morris, David Lewis, Edd Rees, Robert Jones, Richard Hayes, and Samuel Lewis, were appointed by the monthly meeting to assist “in ye contrivance of ye building.”<sup>5</sup> These same men may have served on the building committee that oversaw the construction of the meeting house. Edd Rees and Robert Jones, who were Friends from the Merion Meeting, previously had served on the building committee for their own meeting house. The actual builders are not known. Ellis Pugh, a stone mason by trade, was a member of Radnor Meeting at the time of construction of the meeting house and could have contributed his skills. And although their participation has not been documented, individual members of the Haverford/Radnor Monthly Meeting are referred to a carpenter, including David Kinsey, David Maurice, Edd Jones and John Jones.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Chester County Land Records, Deed K:334; as cited in Cummins, pg. 321.

<sup>4</sup> Delaware County Land Records, Deed B:315; as cited in Cummins, p. 321.

<sup>5</sup> Radnor Monthly Meeting, Minutes, 3rd day of the 9th month 1717.

<sup>6</sup> Henry Graham Ashmead, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Company, 1884), 687. Charles Browning, *Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1912), various genealogical entries. Although available sources indicate that these Friends belonged to either Haverford or Merion Meetings.

5. Original Plans and Construction: Radnor Meeting House originally consisted of the current single-cell, three-bay-by-three-bay main block. The interior was probably a single, unpartitioned room used for joint meeting for worship and, perhaps, business.

6. Changes and Additions: The addition of a second room to the main building may have begun as soon as 1721. It is more likely, however, that it was erected at a later undetermined date. As indicated by the minutes, assistance was requested at various times from 1721 through 1724 to *finish* their meeting house. This suggests that if, in fact, the second room is that early, it was part of the original plan and that the meeting house was not considered complete until the “addition” was built. Other sources suggest that the addition was not made until the late eighteenth century.

When the addition was made, the east wall of the 1718 meeting house was removed and a wood partition was erected to separate it from the new meeting room. The date stone, originally located in the east gable end of the main block, was retained and remounted in the new, wood frame gable end of that structure that was above the roof line of the addition. Initially home to the women’s meeting and school room, the added section currently is used as a multi-purpose social room and library. The latter use resulted in the removal the elevated facing benches once located along the rear (north) wall (and corresponded to those in the original west room). This change, in turn, resulted in the lowering of the rear doorway that was located at the level of the uppermost bench.

The partition was repositioned. Although it is unclear whether it last was moved from or back to its original place, it currently is located where the east end wall of the 1718 meeting house once stood. The partition previously was approximately seven feet to the west, as indicated by markings on the floor. Sometime between 1957 and 1976 (conflicting dates in National Register and time line) it was moved to its present spot. The western location divided the room into two equal parts, a position that does not conform to the stepped roof line, nor to the old program, and therefore probably is not its original location. A window to the north rear of the room was filled in to accommodate the partition, as it currently is positioned.

## B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

### **Early History of the Development of Radnor Meeting House**

Radnor was among the early Welsh settlements of Friends “living over the Schuylkill river”<sup>7</sup> from the city of Philadelphia. In 1681, a group of Friends from North Wales petitioned William Penn for lands in his new colony of Pennsylvania, hoping to establish their own Welsh “Barony.”

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<sup>7</sup> Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Minutes, 4th day 1st mo. 1683/84.

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What has become known as the “Welsh Tract” originally consisted of 30,000 acres. The tract was conveyed to seven land companies headed by individuals who acted as agents for the sale and distribution of the property to the various settlers. Of these land companies, the first to lay claim to their lands were Friends from Merionethshire, Wales who arrived in the colony in August 1682 and established the Merion Meeting. They were followed by the Friends from Haverford and Radnorshire. The Radnorshire group settled the lands purchased by Richard Davies, establishing an indulged meeting at Radnor in 1683. Davies, a gentlemen and prominent Quaker from Welshpool, created the seventh and last company through his purchase of 5,000 acres. Like many of the fourteen original Radnorshire subscribers, Davies himself did not emigrate to America, but instead sold his subscription to other settlers.

The first Radnorshire Friends to arrive were the David James family, who came with the Merionethshire party in 1682. Two Radnorshire families, who accompanied William Penn on his first trip to the colony, arrived shortly thereafter. A number of others presented certificates to the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting in 1683. Included was John Jerman, in whose home the Radnor Friends would hold their first meetings for worship. The meeting house later was built upon his farm. Among the other subscribers to make the voyage were David Kinsey (carpenter), John Evans (gent), Ellis Jones (weaver), Margaret James (spinster), Richard Miles (weaver) and David Meredith (weaver).<sup>8</sup> Other early immigrants included Samuel and James Miles, Edward and Stephen Evans, and David Powell, and their families. The Radnorshire “Charter Party” set sail for the colony in 1698, supposedly spurred on by the endorsement of Hugh Roberts, one of the great ministers of Merion Meeting, who returned to Wales for a visit in 1697.<sup>9</sup> A map produced in 1693, when the town of Radnor was laid out officially, indicates that there were eighteen families living in Radnor at that time, most of whom were Quaker.<sup>10</sup>

The Radnor Preparative Meeting was set up by the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting in 1683. According to historian Charles Browning, “When there was a sufficient number of Welsh Friends in Radnor Town, David Meredith formed and completed the organization of the Radnor Preparative Meeting, and it took the place of the Schuylkill Preparative Meeting in the Haverford Monthly Meeting. Through his efforts, it is presumed, the Radnor Meeting House was erected.”<sup>11</sup> Browning made reference to a log meeting house that supposedly was constructed at

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<sup>8</sup> F. Noble, “Radnorshire Settlers in the Foundation of Pennsylvania,” reprinted from the Radnorshire Society Transactions, vol XXIX, Date ?, 1-17 (FHL).

<sup>9</sup> Noble, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Katherine H. Cummin, *A Rare and Pleasing Thing: Radnor Demography (1798) and Development* (Philadelphia: Olwswick Press, 1977), 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Browning, 583. In his book *Welsh Settlement*, Browning quotes from a letter written at the time by Friend Holmes.

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Radnor ca. 1693; this was possibly the first public meeting house erected by the Welsh Friends.<sup>12</sup> In 1694, the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting granted the Welsh Friends of Merion, Haverford, Radnor and Schuylkill meetings permission to form their own monthly meeting, generally referred to as Radnor Monthly Meeting (and alternatively, Haverford Monthly).<sup>13</sup>

Construction of the current meeting house first was considered during May of 1717, upon the encouragement of visiting English Friend Benjamin Holmes. The minutes state, "A letter from our frd Benjamin Holm To this meeting recomending To their consideration the Stirring up of frds In ye building of their Meeting House att Radnor and with desires yt we should be concerned for ye prosperity of trueth, was read In this meeting and approved of." On the 10th day of October, the Radnor Friends requested the assistance of the monthly meeting in building a new meeting house. In response, the monthly meeting appointed a committee consisting of David Moriss, David Lewis, Edd Rees and Robt Jones, Richd Hayes and Samll Lewis to "assist ym In ye contrivance of ye building." The committee was to meet on the 21th of October and to bring an acount of their finding to the next monthly meeting."<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, no record of the committees findings were recorded in the minutes. However, this entry is significant in that it documents the communal nature of the design and building process among the Friends; those appointed included members of Merion and Haverford meetings.

Construction of the meeting house must have begun soon after the building committee made their report, because it was ready for use by the end of 1718. On the 13th of November the minutes note that "the next monthly meeting to be kept at Haverford Meeting House their meeting house at Radnor being not ready." According to the minutes, the first monthly meeting held at Radnor Meeting House occurred on the 12th of March 1719.<sup>15</sup> Evidence suggests, however, that the structure was not yet completed. The monthly meeting minutes for June 8, 1721 state, "Radnor Friends made a motion to this (monthly) meeting for assistance to *finish* their meeting house and its desired that the friends of the several parts belonging to this meeting do contribute what they think meet for so comendable a work and yt Daniel Humphrey for Haverford (Preparative Meeting) and Robert Jones for Merion (Preparative Meeting) do forward ye same."

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<sup>12</sup> Although Browning stated that the Radnor Friends did not have their own meeting house until 1717, the historical record reveals otherwise. As early as 1698 the, Radnor Monthly Minutes mention "Att our Monthly meeting held att Radnor meeting house" (9th day of the 4th month 1698). A meeting house may have stood by that time in nearby Haverford, also part of the Welsh settlement and the Radnor Monthly Meeting. Discussed during the 11th month of 1697 is the "repair or rebuilding of ye meeting house at Haverford."

<sup>13</sup> Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Minutes, 4th day 1st mo, 1683/84.

<sup>14</sup> This letter was evidently read during two consecutive Monthly Meetings; on the 3rd day of the 9th month and on the 8th day of the 10 month 1717.

<sup>15</sup> Radnor Monthly Meeting, Minutes, 12th day of the 1st month 1719.

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Secondary sources cite the above reference as evidence for the addition of the second meeting room at that time. It is likely that this assumption is based on a lack of further records regarding meeting house construction in the minutes. I argue, instead, that this is largely a factor of the conspicuous absence of references to the material world that is indicative of all Friends' meetings. It also may be attributed to the fact that the monthly minutes for various periods are missing, and none of the preparative minutes are extant for Radnor. Most likely the completion of the main block of the meeting house was delayed due to lack of funds. This is evidenced by notations such as the one dated the 13th of December 1722, which states that the Radnor Friends shall have the remainder of Hannah Salter's legacy (endowment) "towards finishing their meeting house."<sup>16</sup> A year later the Radnor Friends are still in need of funds to pay off expenses incurred in the construction of the meeting house. At the Radnor Monthly Meeting held on the 5th of January 1723, a discussion takes place regarding the allocation of contributions made to the Quarterly Meeting for its general use, and the feasibility of using those funds towards the work "to build a new meeting house at Radnor wch is not all paid." Finally, in the latter part of 1724 the minutes again indicate that funds would be made available to the Radnor Friends "towards *finishing* their meeting house."<sup>17</sup> This is the last mention of the efforts to build and/or finance the construction of the Radnor Meeting House.

Other sources date the addition to the late eighteenth century. One such source states that the addition to the original meeting house was made in the late eighteenth century for use as a schoolroom.<sup>18</sup> Another source gives 1788 as the date for the construction of the east end of the meeting house.<sup>19</sup> If the addition was, in fact, made to accommodate a school room, the 1794 deed may be a clue as to the construction date of the addition. The deed conveyed more property to the original one-acre plot in order to erect a school.<sup>20</sup> Although it is uncertain whether this is reference to the addition or a separate structure, it lends credence to the later date for this section. The notion of the addition being used as a school is supported by references to the Radnor Library Company's use of the Radnor schoolroom to house its collection. Founded in 1809, they supposedly used this room until 1839, when the library was moved to the Radnor Public School

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 13th day of the 10th month 1722.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 12th day of the 9th month. It is stated, "Robt Jones is appointed to sign an order to Rees Thomas to receive from Philada Meeting the remaining part of Hanah Salters Legacies for the use of Radnor friends towards finishing their meeting house."

<sup>18</sup> Cummin, 196, 319-20. Cummin's source for this information, however, is not given.

<sup>19</sup> Dorothy G. Harris, "History of Radnor Meeting," unpublished paper, 1971. The date appears in a time line appended to this report. However, the Radnor Monthly Minutes for that year, as well as years prior and subsequent, make no mention of such construction. Again, the author's source for this information is not given.

<sup>20</sup> Although the minutes for the Radnor Monthly Meeting on the 12th day of the 7th month 1791 make reference to the school at Radnor Meeting. It is important to note that the original deed was issued eighteen years after the meeting house was begun.

(School House #2).<sup>21</sup> Most likely, the addition served as a multi-functional room. The facing benches, however, attest to its used as the women's meeting room.<sup>22</sup> It was probably used to accommodate meetings of the larger Radnor Monthly Meeting as well.

### **Radnor and the Evolution of the American Friends Meeting House**

The Radnor Meeting House is highly significant because it is probably the only extant structure of its type in the Delaware Valley. It represents a crucial phase in the evolution from the early single-cell structure to the two-cell or doubled edifice that came to define Friends Meeting House design in America. Radnor Meeting House consists of an early settlement period, single-cell structure with a smaller section that was added to house the school room and women's meeting for business. This telescoping form was indicative of the meeting houses of the early to mid eighteenth century. The additions were smaller than the main block, reflecting the English Quaker program whereby the entire meeting met in a single room for meeting for worship and the women removed themselves to a separate room in order to conduct their meeting for business. Thus, the women's meeting room needed only to be approximately one-half the size of the larger meeting room. The American Friends later deviated from that program, meeting on separate sides of a partition for business *and* worship. Men and women now sat on separate sides of a single room for worship, and then the partition was closed for separate men's and women's business. This programmatic change necessitated equally sized apartments; hence, the development of the two-celled *doubled* meeting house.

The latter structure is a purely American form. Religious persecution, and their own beliefs regarding the suitability of "steeple houses" to Quaker worship, prevented the members of the Society of Friends from creating a building type specifically for use as a meeting house prior to the 1689 Act of Toleration. They choose instead to meet in the out-of-doors, or in houses or farm buildings adapted for meeting, often continuing to do even when free to worship openly. Unfettered by the persecution experienced by their English counterparts, the Friends who immigrated to the American colonies explored various possibilities, developing building forms that best facilitated both meetings for worship and separate men's and women's business meetings.

Merion Meeting House--erected by Welsh Friends of the same monthly meeting sometime between 1695 and 1715--is the earliest extant meeting house in the region. Its near cruciform plan is unusual for a Friends meeting house, more closely resembling a rural parish church. Its

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<sup>21</sup> Cummin, 319-20.

<sup>22</sup> Entries in financial records show that in January of 1841 repairs were made to the stove in the "women's apartment" and money was paid for "labour and materials for gallery (facing benches) steps. Radnor Monthly Meeting, Finances, Treasurer's Books 1837-54. It at least provides an indication that one apartment was being used as the women's meeting at that time.

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design may be attributed to the fact that the early immigrating Friends lacked prescribed standards for meeting house design. For this reason, Merion Meeting House marks the beginning in the time line of American meeting house development. More typical was the pattern of meeting house development demonstrated by Radnor, that of a single-cell, three-bay structure with a diminutive two-cell addition.<sup>23</sup> While there are other three-bay meeting houses with two-bay additions still standing in the Delaware Valley, Radnor is the only one extant with the once-familiar telescoping form. What is significant about Radnor (and those built like it) is that the women's meeting section is treated architecturally as a separate structure. References to a form structure of its type (Plymouth Meeting House) actually refer to the smaller women's section as "the *little* meeting house."<sup>24</sup> In later forms, the roof line of the smaller section meets that of the original portion, and there is more continuity in the building elements within the two sections. The sections thus are separate but similar parts of a whole building (under one roof). The late eighteenth-century *doubled* prototype is significant because it treats both sections as equal, identical parts.

While Radnor Meeting House is the only telescoping form extant, there are a number of similar structures remaining in the Delaware Valley. Others that consist of a single-cell, three-bay structure with a two bay addition include: Old Haverford (1701/1800), Frankford Preparative (1775/ca.1811), New Garden (1743/1790), Birmingham (1763/1818) and Concord (1728/1788) meeting houses in Pennsylvania; and Evesham or Mt. Laurel (1762), and Woodbury (1715/1783) in New Jersey. Many of the earliest meeting houses in the region were replaced by more progressive designs (conducive to American Friends program) during the early to mid nineteenth century. Thus, as a rare survivor, Radnor Meeting House forms a vital link in the evolution of the American Friends Meeting House as a building form.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Radnor Friends Meeting House combines Medieval English building traditions with regionally inspired domestic architectural forms to create a simple, single-cell meeting house, that was later enlarged by a telescoping addition. The single-cell form is indicative of the structures erected during the period of early settlement. The later addition was also part of a larger pattern of development. It allowed the meetings to increase the capacity of the meeting house while better accommodating a separate women's business meeting. The later additions also constitute

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<sup>23</sup> While no other examples exist today, documentary evidence is available in a number of cases include Plymouth (prior to the fire of 1868) and early meeting houses at Buckingham, PA.; Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey.

<sup>24</sup> It is also referred to as the "small house by the meeting house." Plymouth Preparative Meeting, Minutes, 4th day of the 9th month 1806, and 7th day 11 month 1801.

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the beginning of the evolution to the symmetrical, two-cell, doubled type that became the standard for Friends Meeting House design by the late eighteenth century.

More domestic and utilitarian than ecclesiastic in form, the meeting house is simple in design and void of ornamentation. The windows are elevated and the building is oriented south to provide optimal lighting conditions. The steeply pitched roof (and perhaps its somewhat unusual structural system) are indicative of Welsh building traditions that were transferred to the Pennsylvania Colony by the Welsh Friends responsible for its construction.

2. Condition of Fabric: The meeting house appears to be well maintained and in good condition. The exterior is pristine, including its original (recently restored) eighteenth-century windows. General maintenance and modernization, however, produced changes to the interior. Minor stresses to the structural system have resulted from the installation of modern heating systems. The eastern meeting room, once the women's meeting and school room, currently is a multi-purpose social room and library. The new use prompted the removal the elevated facing benches located along the rear (north) wall; these corresponded to those still located in the west room.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The (western) main block, measuring 42' x 30', is a single-story, three-bay-by-three-bay stone structure with a steeply pitched gable roof. To its east side is a lower, nearly square-shaped, single-story, two-bay-by-two-bay, low-pitched gable roofed addition measuring 28' x 30'. A single-story, rectangularly shaped, gable-front privy (now utility shed) is adjoined by a porch to the northeast corner of the addition. At the north end of the east wall of the privy is a stone mounting block. The beginning of a stone wall that surrounds the north rear and west side of the meeting house lot and burying ground also converges at this point.

2. Foundations: The building rests on a stone foundation of roughly coursed rubble work. There is no water table or other ornamental stonework. The floor of the eastern section rests on log joists laid on stone footings.<sup>25</sup>

3. Walls: The walls are of roughly coursed rubble work stone that is slightly more random in the later, eastern section. A seam in the stonework between the main block and the eastern addition is clearly evident from the south (front) facade and at the base of the north (rear) facade. The only exception to the stone construction of the walls appears in the east gable end of the main block where the original stone wall was taken down to

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<sup>25</sup> Edward Sharpless, interview.

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accommodate the addition. A partial wall of vertically laid wood siding was constructed in the gap between the roof of the addition and the taller main block. There is a date stone in the east gable end of the main block which reads: "RadNOr ANNOD 1718 \* ." This stone apparently was removed from the original east end stone wall when it was taken down to accommodate the addition. The gable end is now made of wood frame siding. The date stone is set into this wall and supported by wood posts located in the attic. There is no date stone for the addition.

4. Structural system, framing: The meeting house is of load-bearing masonry construction. The roof is steeply pitched with the rafters pegged at the top. There is no ridge pole. Pegged cross members form a truss. The principal rafters do not sit directly on the sill. Instead, the sill has been fitted with notches angled to receive the them. In this way, the cross beams take the load of the steeply pitched roof. Four large, hand-hewn girts or summer beams run north-south, with joists between, running perpendicular. At both the south front and north rear a shorter set of joists run perpendicular to the those of the larger structural system, to allow for an overhanging roof. The roof structure in the eastern section is different from that of the original structure. There is a single summer beam, that runs perpendicular to the four in the main block. The joists are larger and are spaced further apart (and, again, are set perpendicular to those of the main block). This section does not have the unique structural system that the main block has to support the steep, overhanging roof.

5. Porches, stoops: The principal entryway, located to the center of the south front facade of the main (western) block is covered by a shed roof porch supported by chamfered posts set on a wood plinth with a stone block to prevent rot. A low-pitched hipped roof porch is located to the north rear of the east side wall of the addition. It covers one window and extends past the end wall and continues around to the rear wall to form a breezeway connecting the meeting house with the privy to the rear. This porch is supported by chamfered posts resting on a low, concrete plinth and has a brick floor. There is no porch at the south front entry of the east addition; two steps lead to the entryway.

6. Chimneys: Most likely, this building was not heated at first. Therefore, there probably were no chimneys built at the time of construction. Stoves were added in both sections, resulting in the placement of a chimney at the center of the roof in each section. Currently, the main block has a brick stack with a terra cotta chimney pot above. There is a terra cotta pipe replacement in the new section.

7. Openings:

A. Doorways and doors: The principal entry is located in the center of the south (front) elevation of the main block. There is a second doorway in the center of the west side elevation. The eastern addition has corresponding doorways to the

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south front and north rear. With the exception of the north rear, all the doorways have round-arched lintels that are more finely articulated in the main block. The lintel above the principal entry currently is covered by the porch. The doorway has a plain wood surround with a bead along the inner edge, and a bead and groove along the wall. The door is wide, with six flush panels. The doorway at the west elevation is like that to the south, but the surround has a heavier, hand-hewn look to it. It has a beveled edge and rests on a beveled plinth. This door also has six flush panels. The doorway at the south front of the addition is similar to that of the main block, but the surround rests on a plinth with a molding atop it. The door has four panels with a heavy bead molding around each panel. The doorway at the north rear of the addition originally was elevated to provide entry onto the raised facing benches inside. It later was lowered to ground level when the facing benches were removed. The wood surround has a bead along the outer edge. The six-panel door has graffiti carved into it and thumb-latch hardware. A single stone forms the sill.

b. Windows and shutters: The meeting house retains its original early eighteenth-century windows, that recently underwent restoration. The typical window is a ten-over-fifteen-light sash with a plain wood surround and wood sill. Of particular note is the fact that the windows in the main block are elevated to avoid distractions from the outside and to create optimal lighting conditions. The window sill is at the same height as the upper rail of the six-panel doors. The three symmetrically placed windows at the north rear wall of the main block are located just under the eaves. The windows at the south front elevation of the main block have round-arched lintels, matching that of the doorway they flank. Elsewhere, there are no lintels. The window surrounds in the addition have a simple molding applied to the outer edge. There is an eight-over-eight-light sash window at the north rear wall. A second window, to the other side of the rear doorway, was filled in when the partition was moved to its current location. The shutters, constructed of tongue-and-groove boards fastened with battens, are held back with simple, scrolled shutter stays. Batten doors in the west gable end of the main block and the east gable end of the addition provide the only access to the attic spaces.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main block has a steeply pitched gable roof, indicative of Medieval English vernacular architecture. Probably originally covered with wood shingles, it now is covered with cedar shakes. The addition has a low-pitched gable roof that also is covered with cedar shakes.

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b. Cornice, eaves: There is a simple boxed return cornice with a cyma-recta profile. There is no frieze, and no overhang in the roof at the gable ends, only a simple applied molding.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The interior of the main block consists of a single room that is entered from the center of the south front and the west side of the building. There is a tiered platform along the north rear wall. A wood partition separates this room from the addition to the east, but a doorway at the south end of the partition provides access into that room. The center sections of the partition can be raised to provide visual accessibility. The addition, likewise, consists of a single room, with corresponding entrances to the front and rear. (See HABS drawings for floor plans).

2. Stairways: There are no interior stairways; the only access to the attic spaces in each section is through exterior batten doors in the gable end walls.

3. Flooring: There is a new wood floor in the main block. The original wood floor remains in the eastern addition.

4. Walls and ceiling finish: The walls are of plaster that is painted white. There is plain, unfinished, random-width wainscoting along the north rear wall and the rear portion of the west wall (the area occupied by the facing benches). The ceiling is also plastered, with modern vents and hanging light fixtures. A wood post was added for the support of the ceiling in the main block. The date "1853" is carved into it.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The doorways are recessed slightly, to account for the thick stone walls. They have plain, plastered reveals. As mentioned, the doors are original (with the exception of the south door in the addition). They have six flush panels, with narrow stiles and a wide lock rail.

b. Windows: Like the doorways, the windows are recessed. There are plain reveals and splayed sills. A plain wood surround is butted against the sill. The windows themselves have narrow rails and muntins, with a fixed top sash and moveable bottom sash.

6. Decorative features and trim: In keeping with the Quaker tenant of simplicity, the meeting house is void of ornament, icons and other decorative features. The wainscoting is plain and without a finish. The only embellishment is the paneled partition that separates the interior of the meeting house into two rooms.

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7. Partition: The partition is made of unfinished wood with plain, recessed panels. It consists of four vertical sections of four sets of panels each. The bottom and uppermost sets of panels are fixed, while the two center panels are moveable. There is a doorway joining the two rooms in the southernmost section.

8. Hardware: The south front doorway in the main block has a wood box lock, and a wrought-iron latch.

9. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: The meeting house may not have been heated originally. Later, stoves were installed, one in each section. Flues for ventilating the stoves are located to the center of each room. In the early 1940s, a gas furnace was installed in the attic.

b. Lighting: Electricity was added sometime after 1930 when the meeting house was reopened after a hiatus of nearly fifty years.

D. Site:

1. Historic landscape design: The meeting house property includes approximately six acres bounded by Conestoga Road to the north and Sproul Road to the west. Stone walls separate the meeting house from the road,<sup>26</sup> creating a safe haven from the otherwise congested roadways and suburban sprawl that now surrounds it. The meeting house faces south, as is traditional, with its back to Conestoga Road and the drive onto the property. The former carriage shed is to the east of the meeting house, and there is now a parking lot behind it. The southern orientation of both the meeting house and horse shed suggests that access to the property may originally have been from the south, although no evidence of this is apparent today. Currently, large paving stones provide a path from the parking lot to the south front entry, although the western entry was probably prominent as well in earlier days. The burying ground lies to the west of the meeting house. Late nineteenth photographs indicate that a picket fence once separated it from the meeting house. A combination receiving vault and shed lies to the south.

2. Outbuildings: Directly to the northeast corner of the meeting house, now connected to it by a porch, is the former privy. It currently is used as a utility shed. The single-story, gable-roof, stone structure measures 7'-11" x 17'-8", although the south, front section is open onto the porch, with a partition wall closing off the rear. There are windows only to the west side. A mounting block rests against the east wall of the privy. The stone wall

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<sup>26</sup> Financial records indicate that payment was made to the "Mason who put up the wall" on the 9th day of the 9th month 1847. Radnor Monthly Meeting, Treasurer's Accounts, 1837-1865.

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that surrounds the meeting house and burying ground abuts the privy's northeast corner. The privy was converted into a meter and store room in 1951.

South of the meeting house is a small, gable-front, rectangularly shaped, stone structure that serves as a combination receiving tomb or vault and shed. The building, which measures approximately 12'-1" x 21'-1", is banked along the hillside, with the shed to the top and the tomb below. The vault is entered from the south where a doorway opens onto a set of steps that lead down to a single, earthen-floor room. The shed is entered from the west gable end. The thick stone walls are windowless. The entries have batten doors held by strap hinges. The actual date of the building is not known, but it was probably erected around 1870. Its construction was financed through subscription. As stated atop the list of subscribers, the vault was erected "for the purpose of depositing of the human bodies which shall die during the season of the Medical Lectures in the City of Philadelphia."<sup>27</sup>

The early nineteenth century wood-frame carriage shed, located to the southeast of the meeting house, was remodeled for use as a "first day" or Sunday school in 1947. A kitchen, restrooms and furnace were added in 1951. The structure received additions in 1957 and 1961.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. Early Views:

Cope, Gilbert. Perspective View of Radnor Meeting House, showing south front and east side; Photographic Files, General Meeting House File, Radnor (FHL, No. 1184), 1895.

Deweese, W.W. Collection. Radnor Meeting House; perspective views show south front & east side, and west end and north rear, and distant perspective of south front including a portion of the horse shed, Photographic Files, Meeting Houses, Radnor (FHL 110/R31), 1906.

Moore, J.B. Collection. Views of Radnor Meeting House, showing south front and west end & east end and west rear. Photographic Files, Meeting Houses, Radnor (FHL 110/R31), date unknown.

Views of Radnor Meeting House, showing south front, east end, west end and perspective of west end & north rear; The Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library, 20 July 1888.

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<sup>27</sup> ? May have been in Merion Preparative Meeting, Financial Papers 1790-1878 (FHL, RG2\Ph\M47). No date is given on the subscriptions, although they were collected by Enoch Matlack, who died in 1884. Other subscribers include Lewis Garrett, John Jones, Thomas Pugh, Ralph Pugh, Lydia Davis, Eli Matlack, Rachael Matlack, etc.

B. Interviews:

Sharpless, Edward. Interview by author, July 1997, Radnor Meeting House, Ithan, Pennsylvania.

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#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the Radnor 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: Christy Bernard, Pamela Howell, Kevin 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. A Special thanks goes to Edward Sharpless for his assistance in facilitating the documentation of Radnor Meeting House.