

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

MAX - 7 2002

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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Amesbury Friends Meeting House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 120 Friend Street N/A not for publication

city or town Amesbury N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Essex code 009 zip code 01913

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brona Simon

DSHPO

Feb. 5, 2002

Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature]
Edson H. Beal

Amesbury Friends Meeting House
Name of Property

Essex, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

EDUCATION: daycare facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: granite

walls WOOD: weatherboard

roof Asphalt shingles

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

(See Continuation Sheets)

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7. Description

Setting

The Amesbury Friends Meeting House occupies an open triangular lot in the mixed residential/institutional/civic center of Amesbury, a quarter-mile west of the town hall. Three other churches stand a short distance to the east. The immediate neighborhood, once part of a large farm, is built up with single-family houses dating mainly from the 18th through the early 20th centuries. The area includes several historic house museums: two blocks east on Friend Street is the home of poet John Greenleaf Whittier, and within a half mile are the Mary Baker Eddy Historic House, the 1649 Macy-Colby House, and the 1870 Ferry Schoolhouse, now the Bartlett Museum.

The meetinghouse stands on a small rise, with its north wall close to Friend Street, facing east over a grassed front yard to the intersection of Friend Street and Greenleaf Street, which has its north terminus directly in front of the meetinghouse property at a small triangular town square marked by a World War I memorial. The south edge of the lot borders on the curve of a short section of narrow dirt road, lined with tall maples, which remains from the oldest known road in Amesbury, the Old Indian Path, which was in use by 1641. Across the path to the south is the large Town Park, with fields, woods, and a small pond.

The meetinghouse property is encircled by a wooden picket fence, built in 1991, which replaces other picket fencing shown in historic photos from several periods. Behind the building on the west part of the lot, where the meetinghouse carriage- and horse sheds formerly stood (demolished before 1951), is a small modern playground.

Exterior description

The meetinghouse, begun in 1850 and opened for worship in 1851, is a plain, woodframe, 1 ½ -story gable-front building that eloquently evokes in its architecture the Quaker aesthetic of simplicity, harmony, and restraint. It is clad in the original pine clapboards, and has an asphalt-shingle roof. The foundation is granite-block on the front and rear elevations, and brick on the side walls. A narrow exterior brick chimney rises up the rear wall just south of the gable peak.

The building is three- by three bays, and measures 40 feet, 6 inches by 47 feet, 8 inches. The main gable-end facade is a symmetrical arrangement, with a center double-leaf door, each half of which has four recessed panels, flanked by two large four-foot-wide 20-over-20-sash windows. A 9-over-6-sash window occupies the gable peak. Two broad granite steps with an iron rod railing at their north end lead to the entry, and a horizontal hood projects over the door, supported at the corners on simple curving brackets. Above the doorway is a painted wooden sign which reads "Friends Meetinghouse, 1851." Along each side of the building are three more widely spaced 20-over-20 sash windows. All of the main windows, and most of their panes, are original. The north foundation level is pierced by five window openings fitted with three-pane windows.

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Six basement-level windows on the more exposed south side were added in the early 1990s, when the basement was renovated for a daycare center. A below-grade entry with an early 1990s 6-panel steel door, located at the west end of the south elevation, is accessed by a stairway with a wooden balustrade. The north (rear) elevation has a 12-over-12-sash window to either side of the center; the gable window is boarded over.

Although true to the Quaker philosophy, exterior decoration is nearly non-existent in this building, the Greek Revival mode of the times is still expressed in the finish details. The cornerboards and the flush window casings have the broad Greek Revival proportions; and the roof, which overhangs all four walls, has a boxed, echinus-molded cornice with returns on the gable ends. Until the late 20th century, the larger windows had two-piece louvered wood blinds, which enabled the upper and lower sashes to be covered separately.

Interior description

The interior of the building is characteristic of 19th-century Quaker meetinghouses in both its arrangement and the simplicity of its finish. The plan consists of two main spaces: a broad front vestibule spanning the width of the building, and the auditorium or worship space, which incorporates a gallery or balcony at the east end over the vestibule. An enclosed winding stairway occupies each end of the 5 1/2-foot-deep vestibule. The stair at the south end, fitted with a 1990s flush door, descends to the basement; the stairway at the north end rises to the gallery. Under the north stairs, just west of the four-panel stairway door, is a small closet, also with a four-panel door. (Like those at the main entry, all the interior paneled doors are of simple stile-and-rail construction, devoid of moldings on either side.)

In the rear wall of the vestibule, two large four-panel doors, one to each side of center, open into the auditorium, which is divided into two separate spaces by a three-foot-high east-west fixed partition of horizontal boards. Above it is a movable partition wall made up of three separate sections separated by square, cased posts. Each partition section has two rows of nine vertical, recessed panels. (The movable partitions, which are raised and lowered by pulleys, allowed for men and women to conduct their monthly business meetings in separate spaces. The partitions were raised for the worship services, and lowered for the business meetings.) The ceilings and most of the outer walls of the worship space are plastered. A 38-inch-high dado of planed boards fills the lower section of wall below the windows. The gallery, which projects 18 inches into the room, is also faced with planed, painted boards, divided at intervals by five-inch-wide stiles. It is not known whether a large wall cabinet at the south end of the east wall is original to the building, or was part of renovations made later in the 19th century. The cabinet, filled with book shelves, has two large sliding four-panel doors trimmed with applied moldings. Due to the size of the windows, the interior of the building is flooded with light, an effect which is enhanced by a white and off-white color scheme, even on the original pine floorboards.

The windows in the space south of the partition, presently used for the worship meetings, are fitted with late 20th-century, unpainted louvered wooden interior blinds. This half of the worship space was renovated

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in 1892. Its simple wooden benches were replaced with beaded-board oak benches with curved, paneled armrests more similar to church pews, which are still in use today, although the carpet that was installed at that time is long gone. The benches have an armrest only on one end, due to the fact that they were originally aligned against the center partition. A significant feature of the building is the row of "elders' benches," or "facing benches," which occupy a low platform across the west end of the room. Here the elders and "recorded ministers" of the Friends Society sat facing the rest of the worshippers. These benches were also replaced with wooden pews in 1892, along with the low rail with chamfered posts which stands in front of them. While the elders' benches are fixed in place, the others are movable. One of the benches is marked with a brass plaque as the John Greenleaf Whittier pew.

While all of the benches in the space south of the partition are the 1892 replacements, several benches in the north space, which received a set of new benches in 1899, may remain from the original furnishings of 1850-51. Nine of these are built of simple planks, rather than beaded board. The three rows of benches in the gallery are of similar construction.

The original mechanism in the attic for raising and lowering the paneled partition is still in place, and functional. It consists of a system of ropes and pulleys which are operated by a 36-inch-wide wooden windlass, operated by an iron crank. The windlass turns a heavy, hewn wooden shaft which lies in an east-west orientation just north of the center line of the building. As the windlass turns, ropes attached to the partitions and led over wooden pulleys mounted just below the roof ridge are wound around the shaft, raising the partitions into the attic space.

The interior of the building is only minimally altered, with most of the modernization confined to the basement. In 1980 a bathroom was installed at basement level, and in 1991 the entire basement was converted to a day care center that has been leased since that time by a Headstart program. The 1990s work consisted of adding two restrooms, a full kitchen, an office, two classrooms, and a mudroom, with a new entrance at the southwest corner of the building. During the course of the renovations, a small basement area which may have been a secret chamber for hiding fugitive slaves during the era of the Underground Railroad was destroyed.

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are located on the Amesbury Friends Meeting House property, it is possible that sites are present. One site is reported in the general area (within one mile). Environmental characteristics of the property indicate the presence of several locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, distance to wetlands) that are favorable indicators for many types of ancient sites. The property includes an excessively drained, level to moderately sloping stream terrace within 1000 feet of an unnamed tributary of the Powwow River. Wetlands are located south of the meeting house draining easterly to the Powwow River. The confluence of the Powwow River and the estuarine zone of the Merrimack River lie approximately one mile southeast of the nominated property.

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Extensive ancient Native American settlement has been documented along this portion of the Merrimack River drainage. Given the above information, the size of the nominated property (less than one acre) and impacts related to historic land use, a moderate potential exists for locating ancient Native American resources on the property.

A high potential exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the nominated property. Archaeological survey and testing may determine whether structural evidence of the meetinghouse carriage and horse sheds survive in the vicinity of the modern playground located in the western part of the lot behind the meetinghouse. Archaeological evidence may also survive from basement structures removed during renovations to the meetinghouse in the 1990's. A small basement area/secret chamber has been reported in the meetinghouse basement prior to renovations. Archaeological evidence of occupational related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may also survive in the area surrounding the meetinghouse.

(end)

Amesbury Friends Meeting House
Name of Property

Essex, MA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- XA** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- XC** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
- COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
- RELIGION

Period of Significance

1850-1952

Significant Dates

1850

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Thomas W. Thorndike, head carpenter

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

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8. Significance

The Amesbury Friends Meeting House, the fourth built in the community, is significant as one of the most intact 19th-century Quaker meetinghouses in the northeast part of Massachusetts. In its architecture it embodies the fully-developed Quaker aesthetic of its time, and through its associations with the lives and accomplishments of the members of the Amesbury Society of Friends it exemplifies the Quaker philosophy.

The property meets Criterion A at the local level for 150 years of service as the center of activity of the Amesbury Friends, a major religious subgroup in Essex County and the adjoining section of New Hampshire with origins dating back to the 1650s. The building was the locus, not only for worship services, but for the social activism inherent in Quaker beliefs that locally took its most visible form in the mid 19th-century anti-slavery movement, which was led by some of the society's members. Among them was one of the most eloquent anti-slavery voices in the country, poet and author John Greenleaf Whittier, who came to Amesbury in part because of the presence of the Friends congregation, and served as the head of the building committee for the fourth meetinghouse. The property also meets Criterion C at the local level as a well-preserved mid 19th-century meetinghouse which employs a subdued version of the Greek Revival style to interpret such Quaker values as frugality, simplicity, and harmony of form. Such features as the very large 20/20 windows, the egalitarian interior seating arrangement, and the movable partition which served to separate the worship space into male and female compartments for the business meetings are the physical embodiment of aspects of the Quaker philosophy. In spite of the 1991 alterations to the basement of the building, the Amesbury Friends Meeting House maintains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; it also meets the requirements of Criterion Consideration A for religious buildings.

The town of Amesbury, located in the northern portion of Essex County, was originally part of the large 1638 Merrimac(k) Plantation, which included land in Essex County, Massachusetts, and in southern New Hampshire. Settlement began in the 1640s, and in 1666 its territory was included in the land west of the Powwow River that was separated from Salisbury and incorporated as Salisbury New Town. The next year the name was changed to Amesbury. In the 19th century some parts of Salisbury were re-annexed to Amesbury, and in 1876 the land that makes up the town of Merrimac was divided out. Amesbury is flanked by the New Hampshire border on the north, Salisbury on the east, and Merrimac on the west; the Merrimack River forms the town's southern border.

Although most of the early residents of Amesbury were Congregationalists, by 1657, shortly after Quakerism was founded, Quakers (Friends) formed a small but significant subgroup in the Salisbury/Amesbury area. As religious dissenters, they endured a long period of persecution in the late seventeenth century, during which they traveled to neighboring Hampton and Seabrook, in what is now New Hampshire, to attend religious meetings. In 1705, the group of Friends in Amesbury purchased a lot at the town center on Friend Street (which later derived its name

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from that original building) to construct their own small meetinghouse. By that time one of their members, Thomas Challis, who served on the Building Committee, was a town Selectman. During his several terms in office, Thomas Challis did much to dispel some of the long-standing public policies which created hardship for citizens who did not espouse the prevailing Congregational/Calvinist theology. He opposed the tax imposed on Quakers and other non-Congregationalists which forced them to support the town church and minister, and in 1714, Quakers were freed from the local tax.

According to tradition, the first Friends meetinghouse was later torn down, and in the 1740s a second meetinghouse was built near the site of the first one on Friend Street. In 1803-04, Jacob Rowell, a member of a longtime Quaker family, sold the Amesbury Friends Meeting another lot on Friend Street (now occupied by the Sacred Heart Parish.) There they built a third, larger meetinghouse, which they occupied through 1849. The next year, seeking a quieter location more removed from the center of town, they bought the current property at the intersection of Friend and Greenleaf Streets from Eliphalet Barnard. Construction of the present building was begun in 1850 and apparently completed early the next year. The third meetinghouse was moved to Pond Street, purchased by the Freewill Baptist Church, and subsequently converted to a rental house.

By 1850, a number of conventions in the form and language of Quaker meetinghouses in America were well established. In general, 19th-century examples were simple rectangular buildings, often barnlike, with twin entrances, the left one traditionally used by men, the right by women. The typical interior was furnished with rows of plain unpainted, unpadded, wooden benches, oriented not toward an altar or pulpit, but toward a "facing bench" for elders (appointed officials who oversee the spiritual lives of the members) and recorded ministers—individuals who are particularly gifted in spoken ministry. Youths and servants were seated in upper galleries. At Amesbury, in spite of the replacement of many of the benches in the 1890s, the interior is still intact, with rows of movable benches, a facing bench along the west wall, and a narrow gallery at the east end over a broad vestibule. While at Amesbury there is a single exterior entry centered in the east facade, there are separate men's and women's doors in the inner wall between the worship space and the vestibule.

The accommodation of an abundance of natural light, which was understood by Quakers to be evocative of God's light and conducive to meditation and spiritual growth, was an important consideration in the design of Friends meetinghouses. The huge multilight sash windows in the Amesbury meetinghouse are one of the best illustrations of that concept. (While they might otherwise be considered something of an anachronism in an 1850 building, the 20-over-20-sash windows have a prominent local precedent in the 1785 town church, the Rocky Hill Meetinghouse, [NR 1972].)

In accordance with the Quaker values of frugality and simplicity, architectural decoration was minimal. Minor embellishments, however, especially those with a practical purpose, such as window blinds and projecting door hoods, were features that were shared by both meetinghouses and Quaker domestic housing.

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While there is a simply-bracketed hood over the main entry at Amesbury, there is no decoration at the windows. (Two-part louvered exterior window blinds from the Amesbury windows were taken down in the 1990s; the most salvageable examples are stored on the premises.)

Other Quaker concepts, including their views of ministry, worship, church organization, and egalitarianism also found expression in the architecture of their buildings. While men and women worshiped together, for instance, they sat on separate sides of the meetinghouse and held separate business meetings,—a practice which dated back to the 1671 teachings of Quaker founder George Fox (1624-1691.) Illustrative of the Quaker view of equality between the sexes, it meant that women, as well as men, kept the society's records, and became skilled in business responsibility. The effect of the segregation was to amplify rather than hush the voices of the female members, giving their deliberations equal weight to those of the men. Quaker women also frequently rose to preach during the worship meetings. Such participation in Quaker meetings fostered public speaking and leadership skills, an effect that has been noted in the significant number of Quaker women who emerged as leaders in the 19th century anti-slavery and women's suffrage movements, including Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott. To accommodate the separate and simultaneous business meetings, which took place once a month after the worship service, most Quaker meetinghouses constructed between 1671 and 1870 (the year the practice was discontinued) were built with counterbalanced partitions or hinged panels which could temporarily divide the worship space into two separate compartments. The interior of the Amesbury meetinghouse incorporates the original central partition, which is still raised and lowered on special occasions by the original hoisting mechanism.

Few intact mid 19th-century Quaker meetinghouses survive in New England. Among the handful of extant, fully developed gable-front buildings of the period are the similar-sized meetinghouse at West Epping, NH (1851); the 1842 meetinghouse in West Falmouth, MA, (which has an altered interior;) and the smaller Smith Mills Friends Meetinghouse, built in 1849 in Dartmouth, MA, which has recently been dismantled and relocated to Deerfield, MA, where it is to become part of a Quaker retreat. In northeastern Massachusetts, the Amesbury Meetinghouse is the only pre-Civil War Quaker meetinghouse still used for its original purpose.

The size of the fourth Amesbury Friends Meetinghouse, which at 40 by 48 feet is larger than most of the other Quaker meetinghouses in the region, reflects the stature and importance the Society of Friends had achieved in Amesbury by 1850. By the middle of the 19th century the dominance of the Congregational church in Amesbury had given way to greater tolerance and a more diverse religious climate. Many of the Friends served as Selectmen and as other town officers, and in various ways exerted a strong influence on the development of the community as a whole. The family of Eliphalet Barnard, for instance, later donated the land for the town library. Although many members were farmers, the society included several wealthy and influential merchants and industrialists. Among them were successive generations of the Huntington family, including M. Newell Huntington, who bequeathed a valuable collection of Indian relics

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to the town of Amesbury which is now on display at the Bartlett Museum, and Jacob Huntington, considered "the father of the carriage industry"--the industry which, beginning in the 1850s, brought world renown to Amesbury.

The ample size of the fourth Amesbury meetinghouse also illustrates the significance of the Amesbury Monthly Meeting's role within the larger Quaker community. Quaker societies ("meetings") are organized geographically into monthly, quarterly, and annual meetings--the reference being to the frequency of their gatherings for the purpose of conducting business. The Monthly Meeting, which holds its business meetings once a month, is the smallest unit, typically consisting of a single worshiping community, which sometimes includes smaller, less organized communities under its care. The Amesbury Meeting, for instance, assisted in the development of a number of smaller "preparatory" meetings, including West Newbury, and several in New Hampshire--Weare, Epping, West Epping, Pittsfield, and Seabrook. The Quarterly Meeting is a regional organization. In Massachusetts, the Quarterly Meeting serving much of the coastal region presently encompasses the area from Amesbury south to a preparatory meeting in Hingham. For over a hundred years after the meetinghouse was built, from 1851 to 1962, the Amesbury Friends Meeting House was the location for the gatherings of the Salem Quarterly Meeting, during which time the region served was much larger, and included several societies in southern New Hampshire as well as Massachusetts.

The best-known of the Amesbury Friends, both today and in his own time, was the poet, author, and abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892). Born in Haverhill, he had both Quaker and Puritan ancestry. He was raised as a Quaker, and attended the Amesbury meeting long before he and his family moved to town. In his youth he was both a poet and journalist (1826-1832,) editing newspapers in both Boston and Haverhill, and by 1830 was named editor of the most important Whig journal in New England, the *New England Weekly Review*, in Hartford, Connecticut. He returned to the Haverhill area in 1832, and, encouraged by Newburyport abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, devoted much of his time to the cause of abolition. Over the next decade, with such essays as his pamphlet *Justice and Expediency*, he became arguably the most influential writer on abolition in the country. He served one term in the Massachusetts legislature from Amesbury, and in later years became a well-known lobbyist in Boston and Washington. He was a member of the Electoral College in 1860 and in 1864, the year Lincoln was elected President. One of Whittier's poems, *Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott (Luther's Hymn)*, (published in June, 1861,) which calls for the abolition of slavery, later influenced Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation.

Whittier moved to Amesbury in 1836, largely to be closer to the flourishing Quaker society of which he had been an active member since childhood. He settled with his mother, aunt, and sister in a house across the street from the third Friends meetinghouse. Whittier's most prolific work, both poetry and prose, including his only novel, *Leaves from Margaret Smith's Journal* (1849,) was produced between 1843 and 1865. During that time, he published eight volumes of poetry and most of his literary prose, including numerous articles and reviews.

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An Amesbury Selectman and a devout Quaker, Whittier was closely involved with the activities of the Amesbury Friends for most of his life. As chairman of the Building Committee for the fourth meetinghouse, he was the driving force and primary decision-maker in its construction. It was he who chose the carpenters--two elders and a minister--as well as the head carpenter in charge of construction, Thomas W. Thorndike, of Weare, New Hampshire. His control over the design of the building was made clear by his niece, Mrs. S. T. Pickard, speaking in 1901: "Some of the Friends feared he would be too modern in his ideas, and add unnecessary comforts, but when he employed three elderly carpenters, all members of the Friends Society, the result was the very plain house which has now become famous because it was where he worshipped."

The Amesbury meetinghouse was also an integral part of Whittier's literary life. Over the years, in his writings he drew upon his Quaker faith, his experience at Friends meetings, and the meetinghouse he knew so well as both subject matter and inspiration. His spiritual values and his social consciousness permeate much of his prose and most of his poetry, and in later life, (1866-1892,) he was known as "the Quaker poet." Some of Whittier's poems vividly portray the meditative silence of the Quaker meeting as the vehicle to spiritual insight and fellowship with others. *Pennsylvania Pilgrim*, describing Quaker meetings of William Penn's time, includes the lines

Lowly before the Unseen Presence knelt
Each waiting heart, till haply some one felt
On his moved lips the seal of silence melt.

Or, without spoken words, low breathings stole
Of a diviner life from soul to soul,
Baptizing in one tender thought the whole.

Referring to the poem, Whittier's biographer Rufus Jones noted that "Only a person who had experienced the best and deepest aspects of the Quaker type of meeting for worship could have written those words of insight. The 'low breathings of a diviner life,' passing from soul to soul, like a spiritual contagion, is what ought to happen in Quaker worship." (Jones, *The Faith of John Greenleaf Whittier*, 23.)

Whittier conceived the ideas for many of his poems while sitting with his brethren in the Amesbury meetinghouse. He stated that *Laus Deo*, for instance, a poem praising God for the abolition of slavery, "formed itself" as he sat, waiting on the Lord, in the meetinghouse. His poem *First Day Thoughts* (1853) describes a worship experience there, as does *The Meeting* (1868):

And so I find it well to come
For deeper rest to this still room,
For here the habit of the soul
Feels less the outer world's control;

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The strength of mutual purpose pleads
More earnestly our common needs;
And from the silence multiplied
By these still forms on either side,
The world that time and sense have known
Falls off and leaves us God alone.

In the circle of the Amesbury Friends, that "mutual purpose," in which Whittier played so great a part, was shared by a group of people who included farmers, merchants, and professionals, and who worked together toward common goals. As Rufus Jones describes them, "The members of this meeting in Amesbury were for the most part inarticulate in words, but there were in the group some Friends who preached very loudly through their lives of grace and goodness." (Jones, 9.)

In one example, during the 1850s Whittier and other members of the Amesbury Meeting exerted a stabilizing influence when the New England Yearly Meeting (the annual gathering encompassing all Quaker Meetings in New England) experienced some major theological disagreements. At the urging of Whittier and others, the Amesbury Meeting steadfastly refused to take sides in the schism that developed among factions in the Yearly Meeting.

As an abolitionist, John Greenleaf Whittier was also part of a long Quaker tradition, and he had many compatriots among the Amesbury Friends. As early as 1671, the founder of Quaker worship, George Fox, had urged Friends to treat their slaves well and to free them after some years of service. By the early 18th century, many Quaker societies were questioning the practice of human slavery altogether, and in 1758, the New England Yearly Meeting passed a resolution prohibiting Friends from buying and selling slaves. While much of the history of the fugitive slave movement is unwritten, records show that Newburyport Quaker Richard Plumer often drove fugitives to Amesbury in his farm wagon, and delivered them to the care of both John Greenleaf Whittier and another society member, Robert Brown. It is believed that the fourth Amesbury meetinghouse was used as a waystation on the Underground Railroad; a small chamber located in the basement until the 1991 renovations has traditionally been thought to have been part of that network. The chamber, concealed below the floorboards of the worship space, was apparently fitted with several sleeping berths.

Over the course of the latter half of the 19th century and into the 20th, New England Quaker meetings lost large numbers of members to other churches. Some societies moved closer to the mainstream by becoming "programmed meetings," in which ministers were hired and music, readings, and set prayers were incorporated into the service. During Whittier's lifetime the Amesbury Society apparently experimented with adding music to the worship service. He noted with dismay a woman who came to an Amesbury meeting and "sang like an evangelist." He afterwards lamented "I didn't know as we would

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Amesbury Friends Meeting House
Amesbury (Essex County)
Massachusetts

Section number 8 Page 7

ever be able to get the sing out of the meetinghouse." ("Where Whittier Prayed," 1902.) The Amesbury meeting apparently became a programmed meeting for a time in the early 20th century. Elderly Friends recall the employment of a hired minister, and photographs taken of the interior between about 1905 and 1915 show that a piano occupied the center front of the worship room. The Amesbury society ultimately returned to an "unprogrammed" meeting, however, in which the members adhered to the quiet of the traditional Quaker meeting and individually assumed responsibility to minister to each others' needs.

In 1902 the Amesbury Friends numbered about fifty people, in about a dozen families. As some meetings within the region overseen by the Salem Quarterly Meeting closed or became inactive, the membership of the Amesbury society was bolstered by an influx of Friends from other societies. Although the Amesbury Friends were active through mid-century, during a period between 1975 and the early 1980s the Amesbury Monthly Meeting was "laid down," or temporarily discontinued. During that time the meetinghouse was rarely used, and its ownership was transferred to the New England Yearly Meeting. The Amesbury meeting was reactivated by a small worship group and reestablished as a Monthly Meeting in the late 1980s. In 1989 the property, which over the years had lost about 5 percent of its land area, was conveyed back into their ownership. The congregation has grown in numbers since its reestablishment, and today is an active spiritual community, carrying on the Quaker "testimonies," or basic beliefs, which include a rejection of war, living a life of simplicity, and finding "that of God" in all people. Current ministries at Amesbury include social justice, Bible study and other adult study, and children's spiritual educational programs. The 1991 conversion of the meetinghouse basement to provide space for a Headstart program for low-income children is one reflection of the Amesbury Meeting's ongoing commitment to social change. Today, as it ends its 150th year in the fourth meetinghouse, the Amesbury Monthly Meeting is still a traditional meeting, without hymns, sermon, set prayers or responsive readings, and without a hired minister.

Archaeological Significance

Since patterns of ancient Native American settlement in Amesbury are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Ancient sites in the meetinghouse locale may be significant by contributing information on the importance of sites located along tributary streams of the Merrimack River to sites located along the main channel of that drainage. Native American sites in this area may represent a seasonal component of a subsistence and settlement strategy that was based on resources and site locations along the coast or the main drainage of the Merrimack River.

Historic archaeological resources described above have the potential to document the facilities present at a Friends Meeting House and the extent that Quaker frugality and simplicity characterized those facilities and the activities at the facility. Structural evidence and artifacts associated with the carriage and horse sheds may document the extent that minimal aspects of transportation and equine care were characteristic of those facilities. Detailed analysis of the

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Amesbury Friends Meeting House
Amesbury (Essex County)
Massachusetts

contents of potential occupational related features may also contribute information relating to Quaker frugality and simplicity. Archaeological testing in and around the meetinghouse area may contribute information that indicates the extent that earlier parts of the structure were altered during renovations. Structural evidence may be present that documents a secret chamber, reported to be used hiding fugitive slaves, in the basement area. Archaeological evidence of that structure and artifacts related to African-American culture, possibly from occupational related features, may help document the role of Quakers and the Amesbury Friends Meeting House in the Underground Railroad Movement.

(end)

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Amesbury Friends Meeting House
Amesbury (Essex County)
Massachusetts

Section number 9 Page 1

9. Major Bibliographical Sources

BOOKS, PAMPHLETS, MANUSCRIPTS

Amesbury Monthly Meeting (formerly Seabrook Monthly Meeting,) Minutes, 1883-present. (Records of the Religious Society of Friends, New England Yearly Meeting Archives, Rhode Island Historical Society.)

Freeman, Donald, et al. *Whittier and Whittierland, Portrait of a Poet and his World*. North Andover, MA: Trustees of the Whittier Homestead, 1976.

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Jones, Rufus M. *The Faith of John Greenleaf Whittier*, 1938. Reprint, New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, 1957.

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Rice, Margaret S. *Brief History of the Carriage Industry in Amesbury, Massachusetts, 1831-1927*. Amesbury, MA: the Whittier Press, 1927.

Salem Quarterly Meeting. Minutes, 1705-1985. (Records of the Religious Society of Friends, New England Yearly Meeting Archives, Rhode Island Historical Society.)

Sawyer, Dana. Notes on the history of the Salem Quarterly Meeting. 4/21/1994.

Siebert, Wilber. *The Underground Railroad in Massachusetts*. Worcester, MA, 1936.

Weeks, Silas. *New England Quaker Meetinghouses, Past and Present*. Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2001.

"Where Whittier Prayed." Article from unknown newspaper, 8/9/1902.

Whittier, John Greenleaf. *Journal of John Woolman*. Boston: Osgood & Co., 1871.

Woodwell, Roland H. *John Greenleaf Whittier: a Biography*. Haverhill, MA: Trustees of the Whittier Homestead, 1985.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Amesbury Friends Meeting House
Amesbury (Essex County)
Massachusetts

Section number 9/10 Page 2/1

9. Major Bibliographical Sources, continued

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Massachusetts Historical Commission:

Flynn, K., and Young, W. MHC B-Form for Friends Meeting House. *Survey of Historical and Architectural Resources, Amesbury, Mass*, 1989.

Amesbury Reconnaissance Survey Report, 1985; updated 1997.

Essex County

Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and Probate.

(end)

10. Geographical Data, cont.

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of the 14,280 square-foot parcel #260, Assessor's Map #52, at the corner of Friend and Greenleaf Street, on which the Friends Meeting House stands.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the major portion of the original property on which the Amesbury Monthly Meeting of Friends built their fourth meetinghouse in 1850.

(end)

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National Park Service

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Amesbury Friends Meeting House
Amesbury (Essex County)
Massachusetts

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RESOURCE COUNT

Map numbers are shown on the Assessor's map.

C = contributing; NC = non-contributing
B = building; O = object; Si = site;
St = structure

MAP#	NAME OR DESCRIPTION	DATE	STATUS	TYPE
1	Amesbury Friends Meeting House	1850-51	C	B
2	playground	1990s	NC	St

TOTAL RESOURCE COUNT:

Contributing

Non-contributing

BUILDINGS

1

0

SITES:

0

0

STRUCTURES:

0

1

OBJECTS:

0

0

TOTAL:

1

TOTAL: 1

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Amesbury Friends Meeting House
Amesbury (Essex County)
Massachusetts

Section number ____ Page ____

Photographs

All photographs taken by Anne Forbes, November 2001 unless noted

1. East and north elevations, Friend St. in foreground (Martha McManamy photo, 1999)
2. View SW to Greenleaf Street and town park
3. View W with old Indian path
4. East façade
5. Northeast view with picnic benches
6. Interior, vestibule looking N
7. South worship space, looking SW
8. South worship space, east wall
9. North worship space, looking SE
10. Gallery, looking S
11. Attic, hoist mechanism for dividing panels
11. Attic, windlass

(end)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Amesbury Friends Meeting House

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Essex

DATE RECEIVED: 5/07/02 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/21/02
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 02000376

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4.18.02 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



Amesbury Friends Meeting House
120 Friend St.
Amesbury, MA

① EAST and NORTH ELEVATIONS

M. McManamy 1999

91 0611-N-2-N-3 2 39 98



HANS METZGER

SPEED
←
HERE

② AMESBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
GESSER CO., MA

VIEW SW, TO GREENWICH ST. + TOWN PARK

94-11/2681450628 0411 N H

A. FORBES

11/01



FRIENDS MEETINGHOUSE

③ AMESBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
GUSSEX CO., MA

VIEW WEST, WITH OLD INDIAN PATH

BM-11-280141526 0411 N.H.

A. FORBES 11/01



FRIENDS MEETINGHOUSE
1831

④ AMMSBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
ESSEX CO., MA

EAST FACADE

BM-11-200131026 0411 N 1

A. FORBES 11/1



⑤ AMESBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
GROSSER CO, MA

VIEW NORTHEAST

EM-11-2061135125 0411 N N

A. FORBES, 11/01



⑥ AMOSBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
LESSER CO, MA

VESTIBULE, LOOKING NORTH

BH-11/2001051628 0411 N N

A. FORBES, 11/01



⑦ AMESBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
USSER CO., MA

SOUTH WORSHIP SPACE, LOOKING SW

BM-1120114162 0411 N 1

A. FORBES

11/01



⑧ AMESBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
LESSON Co., MA

SOUTH WORSHIP SPACE: ~~DEATH~~^{LAST} WALL

A. FORBES

11/01



⑨ AMOS BURN FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
LSSOR CO., MA

NORTH WAREHIP SPACES, LOOKING SE

BM-11-2081130628 0411 N-2

A FORBES

11/01



① AMOSBURY FRIENDS
MEETING HOUSE

ESSEX CO., MA

GALLERY, LOOKING SOUTH

EM-11/2001E15J626 0411 H-2

A. FORBES, 11/01



⑪ AMESBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
GESSER CO., MA

Attic = Hoist mechanism for
sliding panels (partition)

BM-11/200121825 0411 H 2

A. FORBES, 11/01

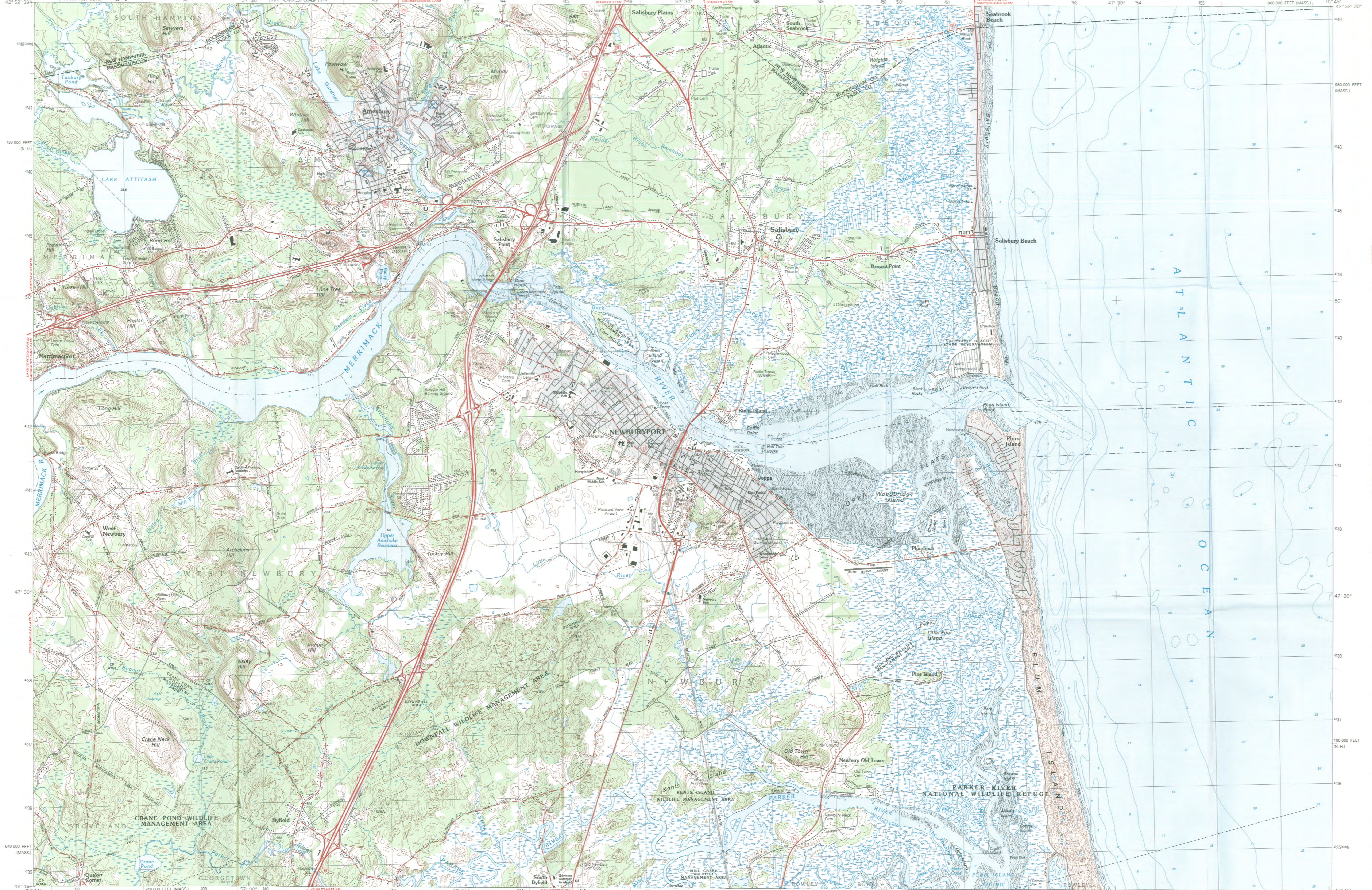


(12) AMOSBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
LESSOR CO, MA

ATTIC: WINDLASS

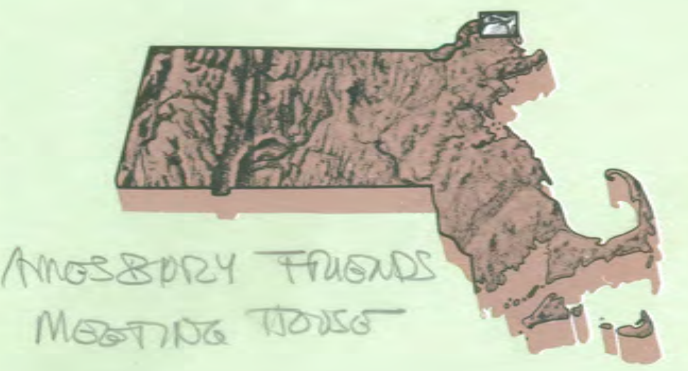
BH-11-2001271626 0411 H 2

A. FORBES 11/01



Newburyport

MASSACHUSETTS - NEW HAMPSHIRE
1:25 000-scale metric topographic map



7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names



Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with Massachusetts Department of Public Works
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, USCE, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts agencies

Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1978. Field checked 1979. Map edited 1983. This area also covered by 7.5-minute, 1:25,000-scale maps: Newburyport East and Newburyport West dated 1966 and 1968. Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS charts 13274 (1982), 13278 (1983), and 13282 (1978). This information is not intended for navigational purposes.

Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 19
10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone, and New Hampshire coordinate system
1927 North American Datum 1983
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 6 meters south and 41 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS

NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929 CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.5 METER DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN METERS DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE SHORING LINE REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2.5 METERS

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

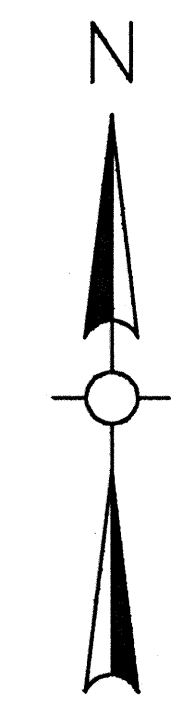
CONVERSION TABLE		DECLINATION DIAGRAM		ADJOINING MAPS		
Meters	Feet	MAGNETIC DECLINATION		1	2	3
1	3.2808	10° 28' N		4	5	
2	6.5617	11° 23' N		6	7	8
4	13.1234	12° 18' N		1	Kingston (7.5)	
5	16.4042	13° 13' N		2	Exeter	
6	19.6850	14° 08' N		3	Haverhill	
7	22.9658	15° 03' N		4	Laurens	
8	26.2467	15° 58' N		5	Spencerville	
9	29.5275	16° 53' N		6	Lawrence	
10	32.8084	17° 48' N		7	Spencerville	
		18° 43' N		8	Rockport	

FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

Topographic Map Symbols

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road, trail
- Road marker: Interstate, U. S. State
- Railroad: standard gage; narrow gage
- Bridge: drawbridge
- Foxtrot; overpass; underpass
- Built-up area: only selected landmark buildings shown
- House; barn; church; school; large structure
- Boundary: National, with monument; State; County, parish; Civil township, precinct, district
- Incorporated city, village, town
- National or State reservation; small park
- Land grant with monument; found section corner
- U. S. public lands survey: range, township, section
- Range, township, section line: location approximate
- Fence or field line
- Power transmission line, located tower
- Dam; dam with lock
- Cemetery; grave
- Campground; picnic area; U. S. location monument
- Windmill; water well; spring
- Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cave
- Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation
- Contours: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression
- Disturbed surface: strip mine; lava; sand
- Bathymetric contours: index; intermediate
- Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream
- Rapids; large and small; falls; large and small
- Submerged marsh; marsh; swamp
- Land subject to controlled inundation; woodland
- Scrub; mangrove
- Other: viewshed

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request



LEGEND

- ⓪ SUBDIVISION NUMBER
- 5 OLD PARCEL NUMBER
- Ⓜ NEW PARCEL NUMBER
- * FOR ADDITIONAL PARCEL INFORMATION SEE ADJACENT SHEET
- PARCEL LINE
- - - PRIOR PARCEL LINE WITH COMMON OWNER

NOTE:
THE AREAS, BOUNDARIES, AND DIMENSIONS SHOWN ON THIS TAX MAP ARE DERIVED FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS, GROUND SURVEYS, AND RECORDED PLANS, MAPS, DEEDS, AND WILLS, AND ARE INTENDED TO BE USED FOR PROPERTY ASSESSMENT PURPOSES ONLY AND NOT FOR CONVEYANCE.

38	39	40
51	52	53
63	64	65

INDEX

REVISIONS					
REV.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DR. BY	CK. BY	APP. BY

C:\8818\8818-AP\AP-52.DWG

AMESBURY FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
120 FRIEND ST.
AMESBURY
@SSOR CO.
MASSACHUSETTS

RECEIVED



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

February 5, 2002

Ms. Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Mail Stop 2280, Suite 400
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Amesbury Friends Meeting House, 120 Friend Street, Amesbury (Essex), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure

cc: Anne Forbes, consultant
Kathy Lowell, Amesbury Historical Commission
John MacDonald, Chair, Amesbury Planning Board
Mayor Nicholas Costello, City of Amesbury
Fritz Weiss, Treasurer, Amesbury Monthly Meeting of Friends
Martha McManamy