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NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Meeting House of the Friends Meeting of Washington
Other names/site number Friends Meeting House

2. Location

Street & Number 2111 Florida Avenue, N.W. [NA]Not for Publication
City, town Washington []Vicinity N/A
State District of Columbia Code DC County Code 001 Zip Code 20009

3. Classification

Ownership of Property		Category of Property		No. Resources w/in Prop.	
				Contr.	Noncontrib.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public-Local	<input type="checkbox"/>	District	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public-State	<input type="checkbox"/>	Site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Objects
		<input type="checkbox"/>	Object	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Carol P. Thompson
Signature of certifying official State Historic Preservation
Officer for Washington, D.C.

7/2/90
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. 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:)

Patricia Andrus 9/6/90

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious structure

RELIGION/church school

SOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious structure

RELIGION/church school

SOCIAL/meeting hall

EDUCATION/library

EDUCATION/school

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories
from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Colonial Revival

foundation: STONE/sandstone
walls: STONE/sandstone

roof: ASBESTOS & STONE/slate
other: _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

INTRODUCTION

In response to its gently sloping site on Florida, the stone Meeting House of the Friends Meeting of Washington¹ is stepped down a full story from its one-and-a-half-story main block to a two-and-a-half-story stone subordinate structural element which has a two-story stone ell. The six-by-three-bay main block has the traditional Quaker meetinghouse form, having long, low massing, dual entrances, and symmetrical facade. (See Figures 10 & 11.)

Originally constructed in 1930, the Colonial Revival structure was enlarged with an ell in 1950, the addition is compatible to the original, using identical materials and design.

Located at the intersection of three streets (Square 2515, Lot 47), the building has street facades on Decatur and Phelps Places, N.W., which are subordinate to the Florida Avenue facade. (See Figure 1.) The lot is defined by an iron fence punctuated with stone piers which encompass a terraced garden. The Meeting House is included in the Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District.

GENERAL EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Washington Friends Meeting House is a Colonial Revival building decorated with Georgian elements, such as quoins and keystones, and Federal elements, including a pedimented round-arched doorway. (See Figure 2a-d.) The exterior building material is stone, the majority of which is Pennsylvania Foxcroft, laid in coursed rubble. With the exception of those with fanlights and dormers, all windows are flanked by paneled shutters and surmounted by flat stone lintels with radiating voussoirs and prominent keystones. The main roof is covered with asbestos shingle, and the subordinate roofs are covered with slate. All three roofs of the structure are defined by pedimented gable ends and

See Continuation Sheet [x]

¹Hereafter the building is referred to as the Washington Friends Meeting House, or the Meeting House, for simplicity.

9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of add. data:

- State SHPO office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Under one acre

UTM References

A 1/8/ 3/2/2/4/6/0/ 4/3/0/8/9/0/0/
 Zone Easting Northing

B /
 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property occupies lot 47 of Square 2525.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Lot 47 is comprised of the original lot (#808) which is historically associated with the Friends Meeting House, as well as the lot (old #47?) which has been historically associated with the townhouse at 2121 Decatur Place.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Clare Lise Cavicchi, Judith Helm Robinson

Organization Robinson & Associates Date May, 1990

Street & Number 1606 20th Street, N.W. Telephone 202-234-2333

City or Town Washington State District of Columbia

Zip code 20009

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unadorned cornices. Stone quoins mark the edges of walls, at the corners, and at exposed openings of doors and windows. Much of the door and window hardware is of cast iron and of a traditional form.

The main structural block consists of a rectangular form housing the meetingroom. A multi-level subordinate structural element, known as the Decatur Place Wing, is stepped down in two stages to follow the site's contour. The main section of the wing is a two-and-a-half-story, four-by-two-bay, side-gabled block parallel to, and set back from, the dominant block. Projecting to the east is a two-story, two-by-one-bay, front-gabled ell.

Following are descriptions of the building's major facades:

East Facade

The Meeting House's primary (or east) facade is set back more than 50 feet from Florida Avenue. (See Figure 2a.) The one-and-a-half-story, six-bay form of the meeting-room block is protected by a low-pitched, side-gabled, slate-shingled roof which terminates with a low copper-banded stone chimney bisecting the peak at each end. The stone facade is defined at the edges by stone quoins, at the base by a stone water table, and at the top by a simple wood cornice. The second and fifth bays contain double Federal-style doors headed by projecting pedimented hoods. The remaining four bays are punctuated by twelve-over-twelve sash windows.

South Facade

The south facade which abuts the sidewalk on Decatur Place, is the south end of the Decatur Place wing. (See Figure 10c.) The two-and-a-half-story, two-bay gable end of the wing is dominated by a Federal-style round-arched doorway which contains a fanlight surmounting the door and is itself positioned between Doric pilasters headed by a raking cornice with returns. Above the door are a pair of four-over-four windows. A six-over-six window is found in each story in the bay to the left. A fanlight defines the center of the gable-end pediment. This facade is extended to the east by

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a one-bay, two-story addition with a single six-over-six window on each story. Set slightly lower than their mates to the west, the windows reflect the changing slope of the land. Likewise, this section of the building lacks the short stone watertable found west of the doorway.

North Facade

Facing Phelps Place is the one-and-a-half-story, three-bay north facade of the meeting-room block. (See Figure 2c.) Flanked by twelve-over-twelve windows, a double-door entrance in the central bay is protected by a pedimented portico with a single Doric column at each outer corner. Cast-iron strap hinges and door handle are relics from an early Pennsylvania meeting house. Centered above two six-over-six windows in the pediment is a round-arched tablet inscribed,

Washington
Friends
Meeting
House

West Facade

The rear facade, facing west, is a two-story, flush wall, stepped down to the south for the subordinate structural element, with symmetrically arranged windows and doors. (See Figure 10d.) The meeting-room block has two twelve-over-twelve windows in the outermost bays of the second story. The remaining eleven windows of the facade are six-over-six sash, two of which are of a smaller scale than the others. Three doors in the meetinghouse block open out onto a stone walk which leads west to a playground area. The roof of the wing holds four dormer windows with six-over-six windows.

INTERIOR

The interior of the meeting room follows traditional Quaker design in its plan and detail. Its plain wooden benches face toward the center of the

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room which is finished with flush wainscotting and simple trim. Modern conveniences are hidden, with radiators fitted into window sills and lighting sources concealed from view.

More elaborate in design are the stair hall and library, which are embellished with paneled wainscotting. In addition, the stair hall features a spiral banister at the newel post, and the library (originally the Reception Room) features a marble fireplace and delicate plaster cornice. Both spaces are embellished by paneled wainscotting.

SITE

Nestled in the Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District, an in-town suburb comprised of elegant townhouses and apartment buildings, detached stately houses, and several noted churches and schools, the Friends Meeting House rests on a sloping hillside directly across the street from an apartment building, at the edge of the neighborhood. The perimeter of the site is defined by an iron fence with stone piers set on a stone retaining wall. (See Figure 10a.) Here the Foxcroft stone is trimmed with limestone. Gateways, found one each on the north and south walls, are inscribed with tablets stating the building's name and date of construction.

Leading from the northern gate is a flagstone walkway which joins with two pairs of stone steps to the meetinghouse block, a stone terrace at the entrance to the subordinate structural element, and two flights of steps leading down to the southern gate. Adjacent to the walkway is a stone sundial inscribed with the motto, "I mind/the light/dost thou" with the names "Penn," "Woolman," and "Fox."

The landscaping was originally designed by Rose Greely, a Washington, D.C.-based landscape architect. A tree-lined garden extends easterly down the

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slope from the walkway.² The site holds the potential for archeological remains connected with the history of the Friends Meeting.³

²According to some sources, the grounds once held an oak tree marking the boundary of Washington, DC. By the late 1970s, only a stump of this tree remained.

³Assessment based on review of historic maps and interview with Nancy Kassner, District of Columbia Archeologist.

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The Meeting House is the last known work completed by Walter Ferris Price, a prolific Philadelphia architect who was recognized as an authority on Quaker architecture.⁴ Price was devoted to studying traditional Quaker architecture so that he could capture its essence in his designs. The sources for his design of the Washington Friends Meeting, which are well documented, come from meetinghouses in the Philadelphia area as well as in England.

The Washington Friends Meeting House was designated a District of Columbia Landmark on November 8, 1964, and is a contributing element of the Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District.

HISTORY

There were two factors which led to the construction of a new meetinghouse in Washington, D.C. in the late 1920's. The first was a growing desire to unify congregations of the two extant Friends' Meetings: the Washington Preparative Meeting, at Thirteenth and Irving Streets, and the Washington Monthly Meeting, on the 1800 block of I Street. The second reason was to provide a meetinghouse suitable for the newly elected Quaker president Herbert Clark Hoover (1874-1964).

An unofficial committee of Friends from the two congregations joined to purchase a lot and erect a meetinghouse for the new meeting, known as the Friends Meeting of Washington. The treasurer of the group was Mary Vaux Walcott (1860-1940), a wildflower painter, geologist, and philanthropist, who initially purchased the site. (See Figure 4.) Mrs. Walcott is best known as the author of North American Wild Flowers (1925), a five-volume publication by the Smithsonian Institution which contains 400 of her watercolors. She had been a good friend of the Hoover's since the early 1920s. From 1921 to 1929 the Walcotts and Hoovers lived only a few houses apart, at 1743 22nd Street and 2300 S Street, respectively. Mrs. Walcott

⁴ Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architect, pp. 625-29.

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and Mrs. Hoover shared a common interest in the Girl Scouts and the Society of Friends, among other things. It was no coincidence that the site that Mary Walcott and Lou Henry Hoover selected for the new Friends Meeting House was in the same vicinity as their homes. Historians of the Friends Meeting have written, "A survey of suitable sites was made by Mary Vaux Walcott and Lou Henry Hoover (Mrs. Herbert C. Hoover). The most desirable plot and the least expensive was that on Florida Avenue, between Phelps and Decatur Places, N.W."⁵

Mary Walcott personally raised the \$45,000.00 needed to buy the property from the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Tuttle, Jr. The Washington Star (5/15/30) reported that the Hoovers were among the subscribers. The money "came not only from Friends and friends of Friends, but from a number of Meetings [throughout the country] in amounts ranging from 50 cents to five thousand dollars."⁶ Lucy M. W. Foster, of Rhode Island, donated the money for the building itself, which totaled \$75,097.50.

President Hoover, and his wife, Lou Henry, influenced the style of architecture selected for the meetinghouse. Lou Henry especially had a definite interest in architecture, having essentially designed her own home, in Stanford, California, now known as the Lou Henry Hoover House (1919).⁷

When a group of Friends approached the President for his opinion on the subject, he confessed that he admired the traditional Quaker architecture. His wife reported that Hoover told the group that "the Friends have developed one of the few types of architecture that could be considered

⁵Stanton and Sharpless. Friends Meeting of Washington, p.8.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Dorothy F. Regnery, National Register nomination form for the Lou Henry Hoover House, Stanford (Santa Clara County), California.

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essentially American."⁸ When asked to consult with them through the design process, however, Hoover replied that his busy schedule would prohibit further participation. The meetinghouse form to which Hoover referred had emerged in this country by 1800.⁹ Characterized by two entrances in a symmetrical facade, the preferred form was rectangular and side-gabled. Inside, plain wooden benches face are arranged around the middle space rather than toward an altar. The West Branch, Iowa meetinghouse (1856) frequented by Hoover as a boy was of this type.

Lou Henry Hoover was influential in providing assistance with the design of the meetinghouse. (See Figure 4.) She so admired the Westtown Meeting House (1928) in Pennsylvania, which she visited with Mrs. Walcott, that she decided a duplicate should be made in Washington. The committee of Friends selected Walter Ferris Price, architect of the Westtown Meeting House, to build their meetinghouse. By this time, Price had formed a partnership with William McKee Walton.

Nine days after a permit to build was issued on August 4, 1930, the jury of the Architects Advisory Council, sponsored by the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, commended the meetinghouse design. The rating meant that the design "meets exceptionally well the standards which should be maintained for private buildings in the national capital."¹⁰

Construction was begun in August 1930 and completed by the end of the year. (See Figure 3.) A small ceremony for the cornerstone laying, held on December 20, 1930, was attended by Mrs. Hoover, as well as Mary Walcott, Lucy Foster, and Walter Price. On November 5, the builder, Samuel Prescott

⁸Lou Henry Hoover letter to Mary V. Walcott, March 20, 1930.

⁹Willard B. Moore. "Quaker Meetinghouses," p.120.

¹⁰Report of the jury of Architects Advisory Council, 8/13/30. Filed with D.C. Building Permit 135013, August 4, 1930.

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& Company, received a permit to erect a 6'6" stone and iron fence, which cost approximately \$7,500.¹¹

The landscaping of the Meeting House grounds was done by Rose Greely (1887-1969), a prominent Washington, D.C. landscape architect. Little is known about Greely's original design or how much of it remains in the present landscape. A graduate of the Cambridge School of Architecture, she was distinguished as the only woman to work on the advisory committee of the Colonial Williamsburg restoration.

The first meeting for worship took place on January 4, 1931. President Hoover, who had been born a Quaker and whose mother had been an active Quaker preacher in Iowa, regularly attended services at the meetinghouse throughout his presidential term, which ended in March 1933. (See Figure 7.) A history of the Meeting records that, "The president's party occupied a half of the middle seat next to the center aisle on the north side."¹² In keeping with the Quaker egalitarian philosophy, however, no plaque marks the exact place where the President sat. After Hoover moved from the area, he continued to be a member of the congregation throughout his life.

THE ARCHITECT AND HIS DESIGN

The firm responsible for the Washington Friends Meeting House was Price and Walton, and the design was clearly Walter Ferris Price's. Price (1857-1951) was an authority on the design and restoration of Friends' meetinghouses. He was a prolific worker, completing the design or restoration of some 200 projects on his own, between 1897 and 1922, and another 36 projects with William M. Walton. In addition to the Westtown Friends Meeting House (1928), he designed the Atlantic City Meeting House (1926) and restored the Philadelphia Arch Street Meeting House (1906).

¹¹D.C. Building Permit 137608, November 5, 1930.

¹²Stanton and Sharpless, p.11.

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Price also designed significant buildings for Quaker and other educational institutions, including the Haverford Union at Haverford College (1908), and the alumnae building at Mount Holyoke College (1913).

After being associated with the architectural endeavors of his brothers, Frank L. and William L. Price, for nearly ten years, he established his own practice in 1902. A later partnership with William McKee Walton (1879-?) lasted from 1923 until Price's retirement in 1931.

In the Washington Friends Meeting House, Price used the simple form traditional among Quaker meetinghouses: rectangular, side-gabled, with symmetrical dual entrances. (See Figure 2a.) Acknowledging that his design "is a composite of several American meeting houses," Walter Price recorded many of his design sources in a 1931 article in the Bulletin of Friends' Historical Association. "The hoods over the two east doors are common to the country type of stone and brick meeting houses in the neighborhood of Philadelphia. The north porch is of strictly colonial design." An innovative departure from traditional architecture is the steel frame used to support the structure.

In addition to the overall exterior design, other features were taken from his design at Westtown, including the interior color scheme of gray with cream trim, concealment of interior lights, sundial inscription, and use of Foxcroft facestone. (See Figure 9.) Price wrote that the use of this particular stone "has only one antecedent that I know of, namely the house at Westtown."¹³

Price stated that he chose the Foxcroft stone, "because it is the most beautiful grey stone we know, having a satin-like texture... Accordingly, two-thirds of the face stone was taken from the Foxcroft quarries near the West Chester[, Pennsylvania,] Pike, the remaining one-third being of a similar shape and cleavage of local stone, having a brown cast."

¹³Bulletin of Friends' Historical Association, 1931.

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An important difference between this building and the Westtown Friends Meeting is its complex, multi-level form developed in response to its sloping site. (See Figure 6.)

Materials from several historic buildings are reused in the Washington Friends Meeting House, further strengthening its ties with President Hoover and with the history of the American Society of Friends. A ground floor room (now used as an office) has a beamed ceiling of timbers from the White House. The architect wrote, in 1931, "To Mary Walcott belongs the credit for the idea of using...[the] old timbers that were removed from the White House about three years ago. This material is of great interest in that it was built into the White House in 1814, after the British army had burned Washington. After three visits to the mill which had these old beams, we succeeded in getting a supply of the material which now makes the ceiling of this room a thing of beauty and of historical significance."¹⁴

Also reused in the meetinghouse are the cast-iron strap hinges which come from Pennsylvania's Birmingham Meeting House (1763, 1818), With the help of N. Walter Suplee, of Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, Price secured the hardware which came "from the unused doors of an unused end of the old meeting house."¹⁵

A number of meetinghouses served as design sources for the building's interior. The pattern for the wainscoting in the meetingroom came from the Merion Meeting House (1695). While the bench ends, gallery, and curved sounding board are styled after the Arch Street Meeting House, in Philadelphia, the cross-section profile of the benches are from the meetinghouse at Coulter Street in Germantown, Pennsylvania. A curve in the wainscoting, found where it changes height to accommodate the gallery, is based on that found in Jordan's Meeting House, in England, as well as others in that country. The original color scheme of the meeting room--gray

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

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painted walls, gray stained benches and wainscoting, with the remaining
woodwork painted cream--was based on Price's Westtown. The original
cushions were a mulberry color.

Accommodations in the interior design for modern technology were subtle.
Electric lights were concealed behind the sounding board, throwing off
reflected, indirect light. Price omitted the louvered ceiling panels
traditionally used for ventilation, "because we have fans and forced
ventilation from beneath."¹⁶

The most decorative of the interior rooms was the committee room, now known
as the Library, which was outfitted with "a colonial fireplace with marble
facing,...a paneled wainscot, a quartered white oak floor, and a dainty
plaster cornice." Price intended it to be treated as a reception room,
"with good colonial furniture."¹⁷

Price considered the most unusual feature about the building's setting to
be its iron and stone fence. (See Figure 5.) Traditionally, a high,
solid, stone wall would surround a Quaker meetinghouse, separating it from
its typically rural surroundings. Price's wall invites communication
between the building and its suburban neighborhood. "We promised the
commissioners, who made several concessions in the placing of this
building, that we would try to give the effect of a tiny park in the center
of Washington."¹⁸ The design source for the caps of the four gateposts was
the yard at St. Peter's Church, in Philadelphia.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

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THE ADDITION

As early as 1936, the Friends Meeting of Washington discussed the need for enlarging the Meeting House. Owing to the onset of World War II, "the matter," as historians of the Meeting wrote, "was shelved until sometime in 1947, when the need for additional space had become more pressing and building materials and mechanics had become generally available." At that time a committee was formed, which soon selected Leon Chatelain, Jr., AIA, of Washington, D.C., to be the architect.

Chatelain's career was characterized by a wide variety of projects ranging from residences and churches to office buildings. His major works include the Westmoreland Congregational Church (1948-55), the Kiplinger Building (1948-64), the McDonough Gymnasium (1952) at Georgetown University, and the Equitable Life Insurance Company (1956). His buildings received numerous local, national, and international awards, including eight from the Washington Board of Trade for Excellence in Architecture.

Though Chatelain prepared initial drawings for the addition in 1947, construction did not begin until 1950. The final design for the addition, known as the Decatur Place wing, was to provide five rooms with a total of 1,800 square feet of additional space. In accordance with the wishes of the Friends Meeting, which were consistent with his own philosophy, Chatelain designed the new construction to be in complete harmony with the original work.¹⁹ He sought out identical Foxcroft stone, taken from the same quarry as the originals.

The building was enlarged in 1950 by a two-story, one-by-two-bay ell. Alterations completed at this time also included the addition of one-and-a-half stories to part of the original wing, and the addition of dormers to the east and west sides of its original roof. (See Figures 10 & 11.) Overall, the additions are remarkable for their compatibility with the

¹⁹From an interview with Sara Hadley of the Friends Meeting of Washington, 8/8/89; substantiated by Leon Chatelain III.

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design and material of the original building, employing the same type of Pennsylvania stone and identical woodwork. When asked to cite late in his career the work of which he was most proud, Chatelain said, after some contemplation, that it was the Washington Friends Meeting House because no one would know that it was not all completed at one time.²⁰

The Mohler Construction Company, of Washington, D.C., which was awarded the contract, started work on October 2, 1950 -- 12 days after the permit to build (9/20/1950, A-12791) was issued. The Friends occupied the new quarters for the first time on August 8, 1951. Total cost of the addition was \$63,187.79.

A minor alteration to the original building occurred in recent years when iron door latches were replaced with more secure doorknobs. The Friends have placed the original hardware in storage.

CONCLUSION

In 1970, the Friends Meeting acquired the red brick townhouse (1923) at 2121 Decatur Place. Now known as Quaker House, it is used primarily for child care. The building, which is not historically associated with the Friends Meeting House, is a contributing element in the Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District.

The Meeting House of the Friends Meeting of Washington is significant for embodying the distinctive characteristics of the traditional Quaker meetinghouse form, for representing the work of Walter Price, an authority on Quaker architecture, and for its historical associations with President and Mrs. Hoover. It remains an important architectural and historical element in the District of Columbia.

²⁰ Ibid.

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 - b. West Elevation (rear)
 - c. North Elevation, Phelps Place
 - d. South Elevation, Decatur Place
3. "Work is Speeded on Quaker House," Star, c.December 1930 (clipping otherwise unidentified). (Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King Library)
4. "A Quaker Meeting House for Washington," Public Ledger, c.November 1930. (Athenaeum Collection)
5. Washington Friends Meeting House, c. 1930-50. From: Horace M. Lippincott, Quaker Meeting Houses and a Little Humor (1952), p. 118.
6. Washington Friends Meeting House, from southeast. Evening Star, c. March 1943. (Historical Society of Washington Collection)
7. Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover at Phelps Place entrance, Washington Friends Meeting House, c. 1931-33. (Friends Meeting of Washington Archives)
8. Mary Vaux Walcott (1860-1940). (Friends Meeting of Washington Archives)
9. Westtown Friends Meeting House (1928). (Athenaeum Collection)

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10. Alterations to Friends Meeting House, Leon Chatelain, 1950.
 - a. Front (West) Elevation
 - b. Plot Plan, Section & Details
 - c. East and South Elevation
 - d. West and North Elevation

11. Friends Meeting House with 1950 addition.
Illustration by E. M. Glinslow Gross, in Stanton and Sharpless,
"Friends Meeting of Washington: Background and Origin," 1965.

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National Park Service

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FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

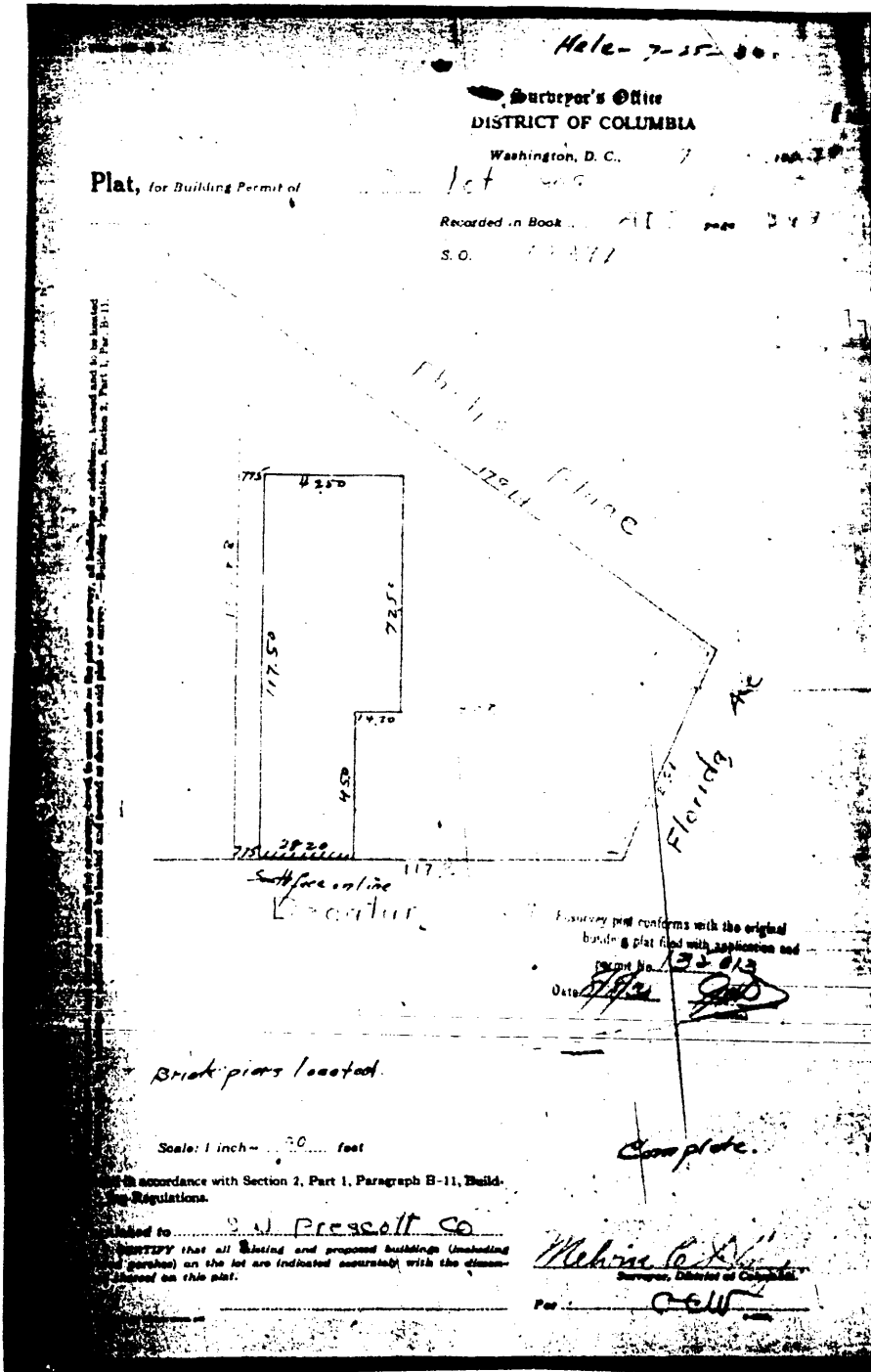
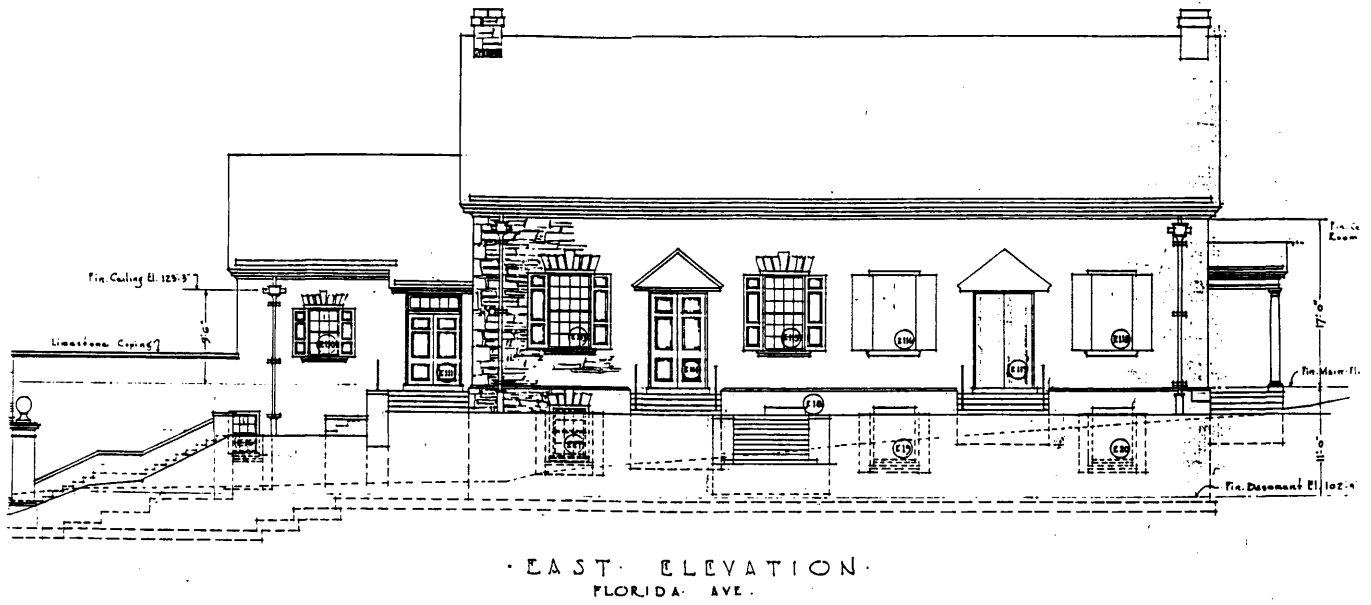
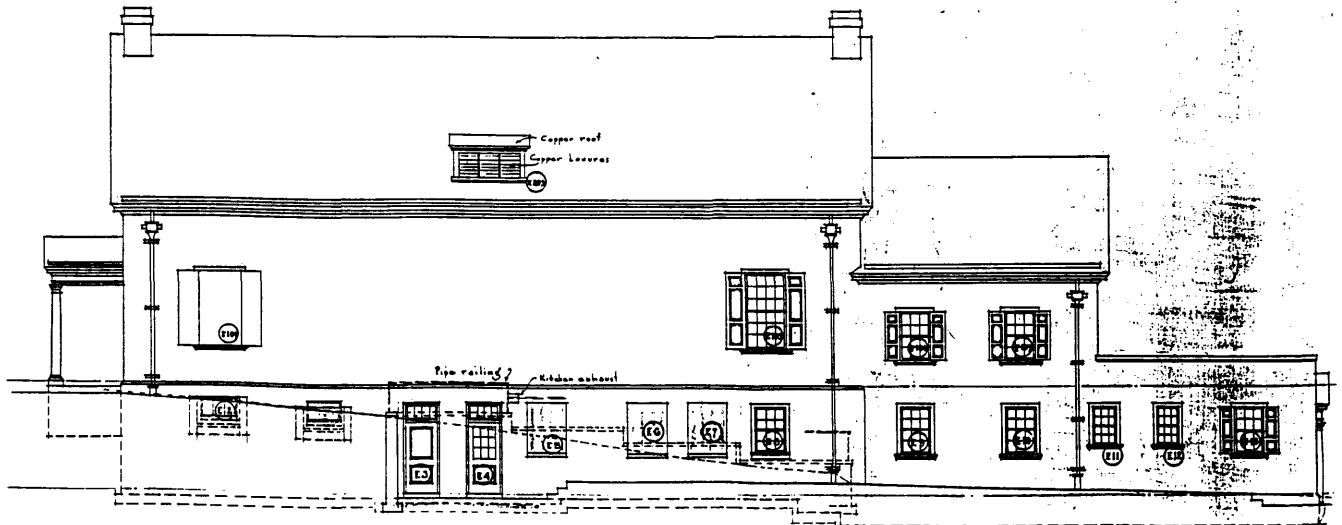


FIGURE 1: Plot plan, Friends Meeting House Building Permit #135013

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC



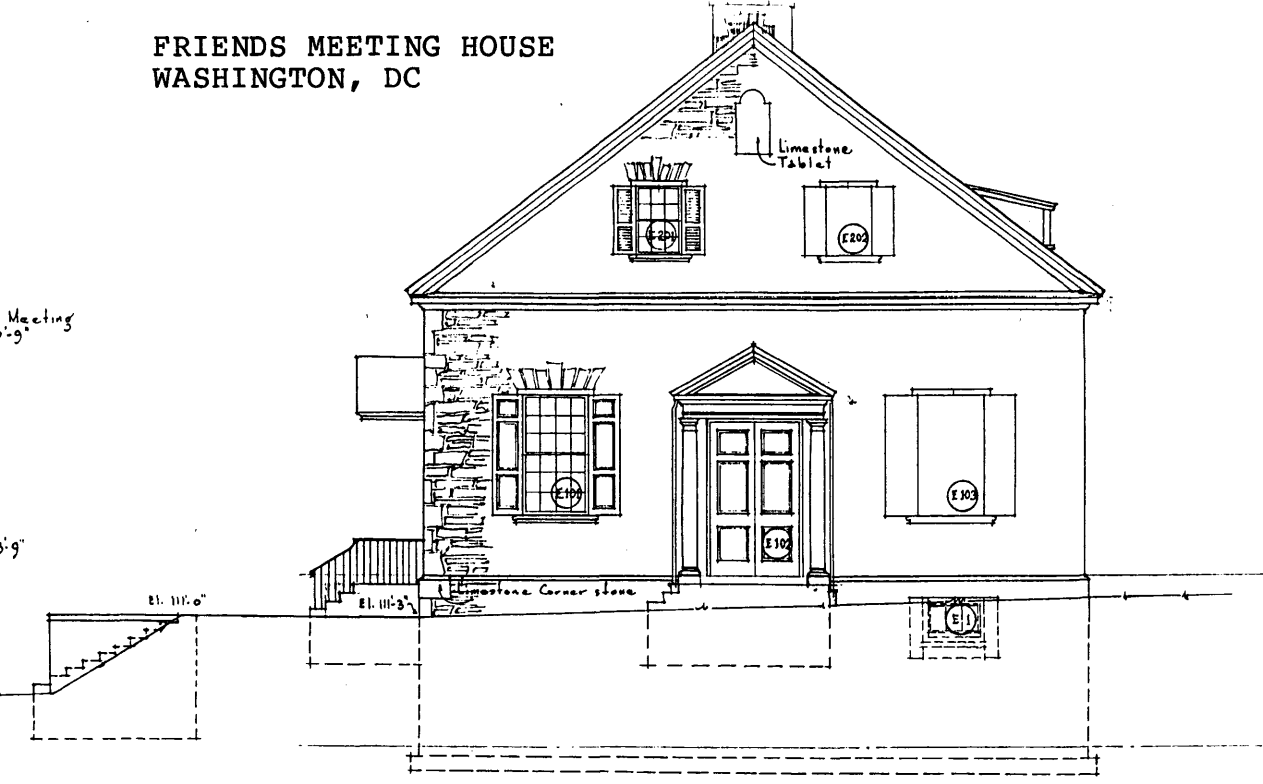
a. East Elevation, Florida Avenue



b. West Elevation (rear)

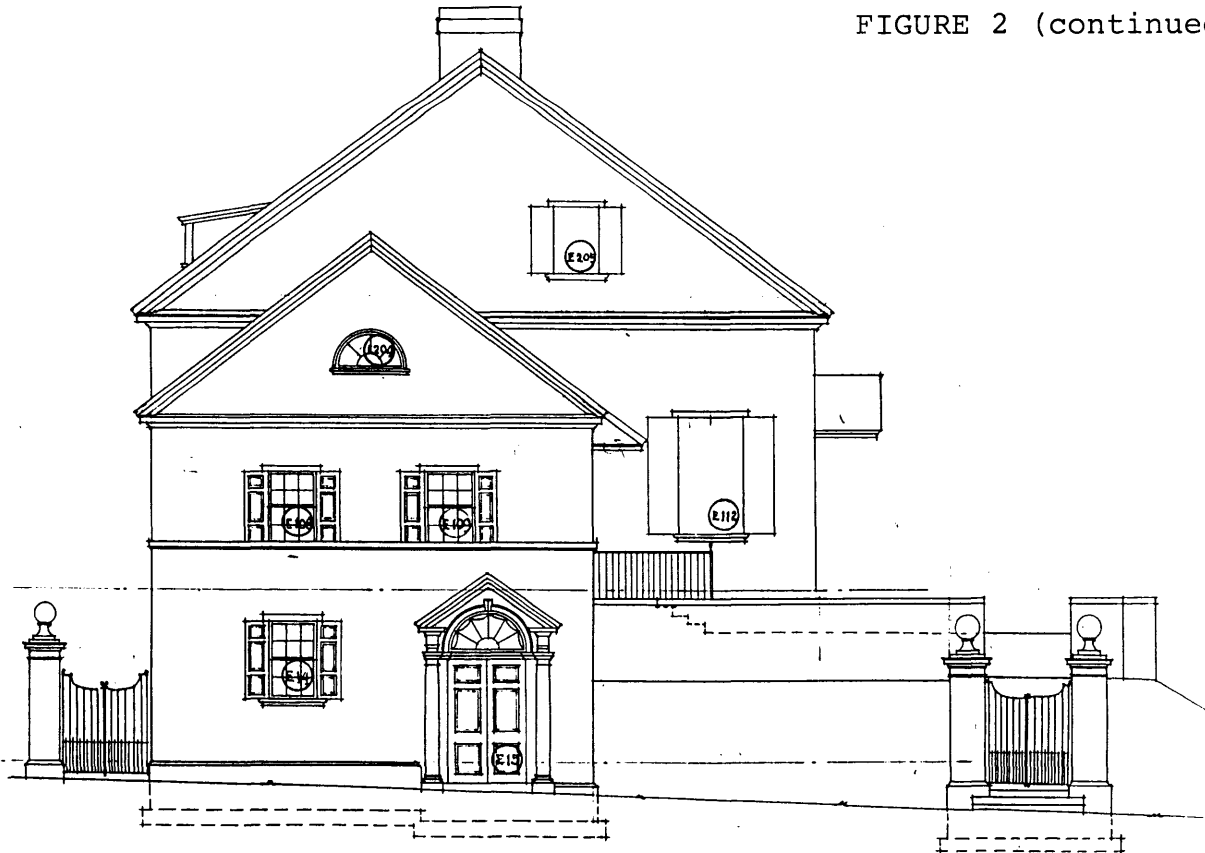
FIGURE 2: Friends Meeting House,
Walter Price, 1930.

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC



c. NORTH ELEVATION
PHELPS PLACE

FIGURE 2 (continued)



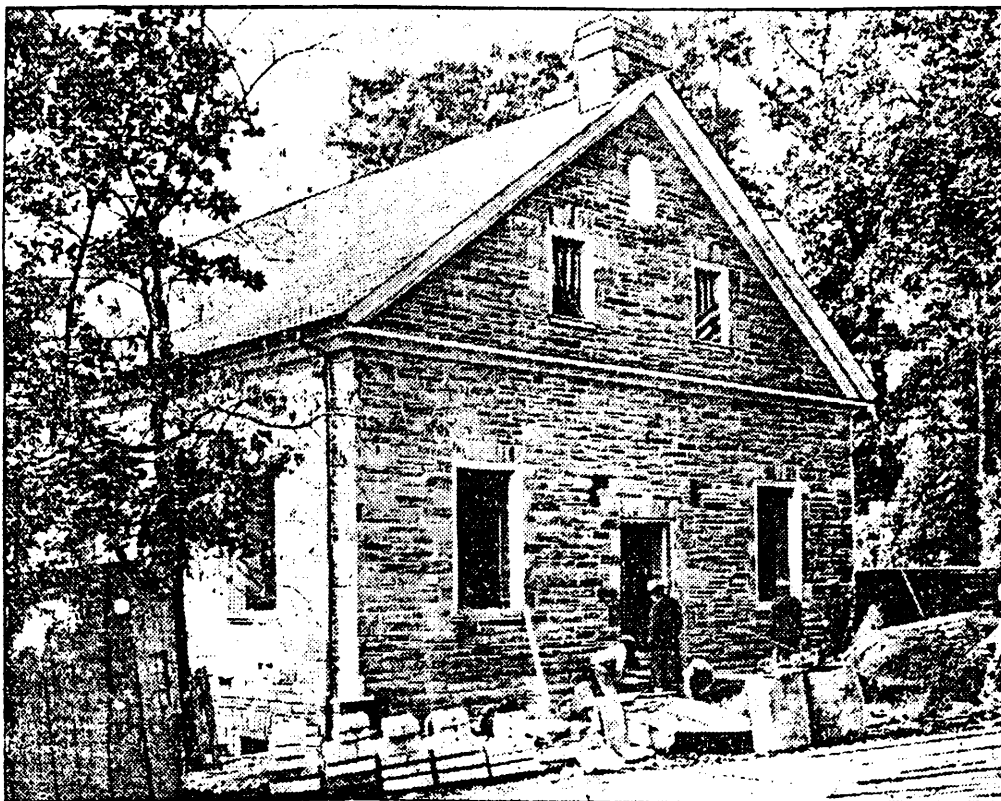
a. SOUTH ELEVATION
DECATUR STREET

BLUEPRINTED

JUN 18 1930

MAY 17 1930

PRESIDENT MAY WORSHIP HERE CHRISTMAS



This "old-fashioned" structure, to be known as "Washington Friends' Meeting House," is being constructed at Florida avenue and Phelps place, to be a national gathering place for "Friends," including President and Mrs. Hoover. It may be finished in time for Christmas. —Star Staff Photo.

But today the two doors are merely to expedite entrance, and President and Mrs. Hoover will worship side by side in the unadorned auditorium, white of ceiling, gray of wall, where the Friends, foregoing the music and ritual of other religious groups, will sit in the silence of their fathers did before them, until one of their number arises to address them.

White House Beams Used.
Beams that came from the White House in the last remodeling, when the third story was added, will be used for the ceiling of the committee room in a basement wing to the main meeting house. Here the business affairs of the congregation will be settled. There will be a huge fireplace.

On the job to the Phelps place entrance to this committee room.

will be the hardware from a discarded door of the old Birmingham Meeting House on the Brandywine, where were taken the wounded of the Battle of Brandywine.

Proud oaks already stand in the yard. A wall of native stone will be built. Rhododendrons will be planted. Some ground covering more rustic than grass will cloak the slope. Every thought is being given to make the President's church truly a country meeting house, dignified and suitable to the faith.

WORK IS SPEEDED
ON QUAKER HOUSE

Builders Hope President and
Wife Will Worship in It
Christmas.

On a wooded slope bounded by Phelps place, Florida avenue and Dorr place, not far from President Hoover's former home, on S street, a sturdy stone structure of traditional Quaker architecture is being completed, a national "old-fashioned meeting house" where President and Mrs. Hoover and Friends of all branches in America may worship in the simplicity and silence of that ancient faith. The building is being rushed by contractors with the hope that it may be ready for Christmas. The heavy stone work is complete, the slate roof is in place, and preliminary grading operations have already started on the gently rising hillside.

Behind the building of this sturdy structure of modest dimensions there is no great national organization nor are there any plans for extensive celebration usually marking the dedication of national churches of other faiths in the National Capital. Quietly have plans for the "new old-fashioned" building gone forward, and the organization behind the movement still is described as "elastic." Contributions have come from noted "Friends" of various branches throughout the country. It is understood. It has been reported that President Hoover contributed to the building. But no list of contributors or even the group behind the movement has yet come to light. The money has been raised, the "meeting house" is being completed, and when once opened for worship the mention of money in the public meetings for worship will be noticeable by its absence. No collection of money for support of the meeting ever will be taken at a meeting for worship.

Many Church Features Lacking.

The new "meeting house" has no steeple, no bell. It has no chimes, nor will there be any organ, as the worship of the old-fashioned "Friends," as it was explained today by one of them, will be carried on without music.

Plans for the meeting house were drawn by Walter F. Price of Philadelphia, an authority on Quaker architecture, who has made an extensive study, not only of old meeting houses in this country, but in England as well.

The treasurer of the building committee, the only person who has appeared publicly in connection with the meeting house, is Mrs. Charles D. Walcott of 1743 Twenty-second street.

"We hope that Friends of all faiths

Most of the "monthly meetings" of "Friends" throughout the country belong to one of the two principal branches known as the "Orthodox" and the "Hicksite" groups of Friends, but the new meeting house is to be identified with neither. It is independent and will welcome members of either of these principal groups or of the other smaller groups of Friends, it was explained.

President Hoover, according to the manner of speaking of Friends, was "born a Friend." His mother was a Quaker preacher well known in Iowa, where she traveled extensively, addressing many different meetings. Mrs. Hoover later joined the Friends faith. They have worshipped at both of the Friends' meeting houses here in Washington, one on I street and the other at Thirteenth and Irving streets, and also in one at Sandy Spring, Md. It is expected that the new meeting house will probably be their principal place of attendance after Christmas.

Quaker Architecture Used.

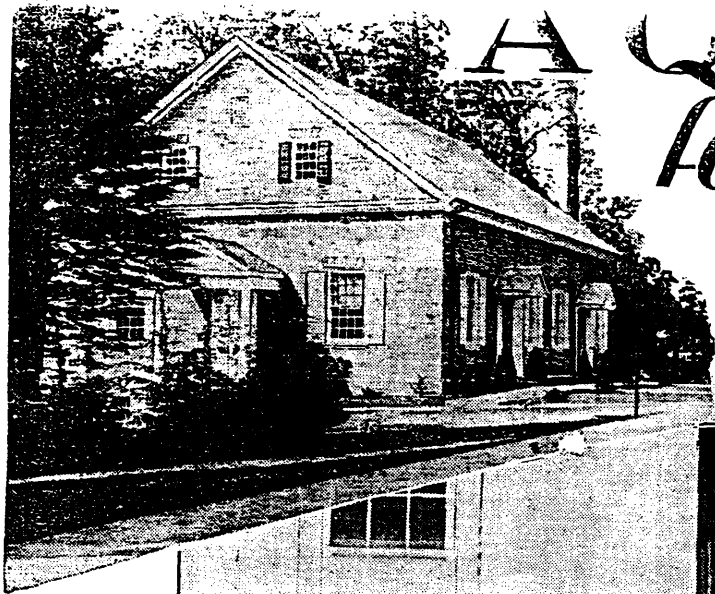
Into the structure is being put all the solidity that was the Quaker contribution to architecture.

The twin doors of the early congregations with their twin flights of steps appear on its Eastern exposure, each door bordered in big blocks of the native stone. The twin chimneys are copper-banded, and copper eaves empty into decorative twin copper rain-spouts.

In the days of William Penn, the two doors divided the congregation, the women entering one door, the men another and a shutter was available to divide the two groups. For women were once too timid to join in discussions with the men though the Quaker faith

FIGURE 3: Star, c. December 1930 (clipping is otherwise unidentified.) Washingtoniana Collection, Martin Luther King Library.

A Quaker Meeting House for Washington



Meeting house in Westtown, Pa., which was admired by Mrs. Hoover and serves as a model for the Quaker meeting house being built in the Capitol City

Interior of an old Massachusetts meeting house (right), showing the movable partition between the men's and women's sections



Mrs. Herbert Hoover Inspired Movement to Erect in the United States Capital, Not Far From White House, a Place of Worship Duplicating the Quaint Type of Edifice Extant in Early Days of the American Colonies

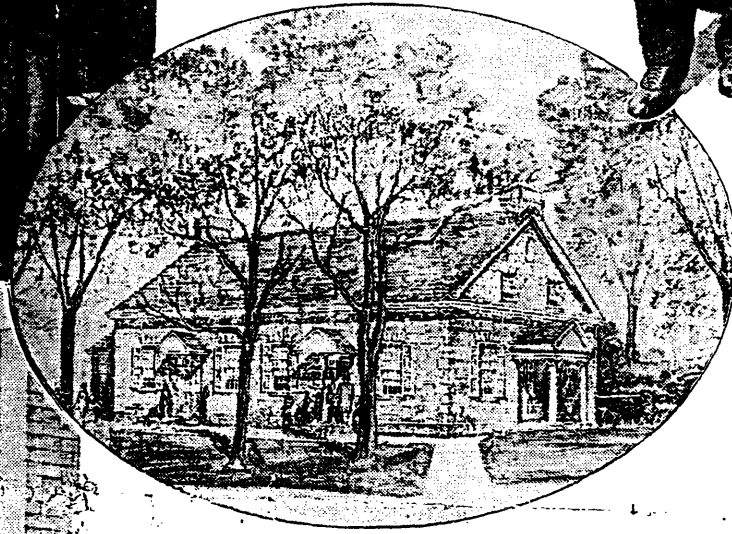


An elderly Quaker couple whose dress is suggestive of the costumes worn by Friends in the eighteenth century

By Alice Watts Hostetler

TO THE imposing array of church edifices which contribute to the beauty of the Nation's capital and express in materials of the earth homage to the spiritual is added another building which symbolizes the faith it represents.

In this instance a simple gray-stone structure presents a picture which calls to mind a religious society which sought an abiding place in the American Colonies and which stood for simplicity in dress and manner, equality between men and women and personal striving for the truth.



Sketch of the Colonial-type Quaker meeting house, designed by Walter F. Price, which is being built in the capital—a place of worship where "an old Quaker gentleman of the 1700s would feel at home"

where the human equation enters, for although men and women of today choose to emulate the customs of their forefathers, they will not have the same appearance. He will not see the Quaker dress familiar to him. The other innovation is that men and women carry on the business of their meetings together.

ALWAYS believes in the equality of the sexes, the Quaker men and women were given equal privileges. In the old meeting houses there was a partition which could be lowered at the time of the business meeting to permit separate government. Nowadays it is considered more efficient for the men and women to conduct their meetings together.

They both speak in meeting and they both take part in the business session. However, decisions are reached by the majority of the meeting and not by the

FIGURE 4: Public Ledger, c. November 1930. (Athenaeum)

(cont'd next page)

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

(cont'd from previous page)

...the... another building which... represents

In the instance a simple gray-stone structure presents a picture which calls to mind a religious society which sought an abiding place in the American Colonies and which stood for simplicity in dress and manner, equality between men and women and personal striving for the truth.

It is because of Mrs. Herbert Hoover that Washington is to have a true example of the old Quaker meeting—a building that will reveal the taste of the Quakers.

When Mrs. Hoover visited the new Quaker meeting house at Westtown, Pa. not long ago, the story goes that she said: "I have only one criticism. There should be two of these meeting houses: one for Westtown and one for Washington."

The wife of the President of the United States had gone with Mrs. Charles D. Walcott, wife of the former head of the Smithsonian Institution, to visit the Westtown meeting, which was designed "to make a Quaker gentleman of the old days feel at home," and was expressing her delight in no half-hearted way.

Her criticism might truly be called constructive, for now, not many blocks from the White House, a quaint Quaker meeting house is going up. Its setting is one which enhances its antique design. For two patriarchal oaks dignify the lot which slopes down to Florida avenue and which is bounded on the north by Phelps Place. This means to those who know their Washington that the situation is not far from Connecticut avenue at S street and is in the neighborhood of the former home of the Hoovers and the house in which Woodrow Wilson died.

The hillside adds to the beauty of the site and gave the architect the opportunity to make the building more complex than the one at Westtown, while retaining the same simplicity of design.

There can be no doubt that this meeting house in the capital will possess the characteristics of the one which aroused Mrs. Hoover's admiration, for the same architect, Walter F. Price, of Philadelphia, has designed it. Aside from the facts that he is a Quaker and that this meeting will be attended by the President of the United States and Mrs. Hoover, there are many reasons that make this undertaking of special interest to Mr. Price.

IT WAS Mrs. Walcott who assumed the responsibility for the enterprise that has made the meeting house of Mrs. Hoover's dream a reality. According to Quaker custom and tradition in all business affairs, the money was raised quietly and privately, and the structure was under way before it was generally known that it was even contemplated. In providing for expenses involved in conducting their meetings, members of the Society of Friends contribute their money voluntarily every year—a collection plate would be as shocking as a red hat at meeting in the days when gray was worn—and only the treasurer knows the amount of their financial support.

It does not seem unusual to Quakers, therefore, that the means for obtaining



President and Mrs. Hoover leaving Friends Meeting House, one of the two already established meeting houses for those of the Quaker faith in Washington, D. C.

ture and an old-fashioned meeting were provided without publicity. It is known that one donor, a woman, has given the money for the meeting house, but she remains anonymous. The cost of the lot and other necessary expenses have been borne by other contributors.

Although it may seem as though this meeting has been planned to satisfy a whim of the present mistress of the White House, the motives underlying its evolution have been sincere and deep. The men and women who are responsible for its erection desire to establish a place that is open to every one who wants to worship in the old Quaker way.

There will be no music nor paid pastor (innovations which some of the Quaker meetings are now adopting), and the meeting will be conducted in the old fashion, without a program of hymns and speeches. According to early custom, members of the meeting sit in silence until the spirit moves one of them to

are said to have the "gift of ministry" and are called "ministers." This meeting will be independent and will not be attached to either of the two Friends' meetings now in Washington.

The purpose which the architect had in mind when he designed the Westtown meeting house can be described by the building which will resemble it. When Mr. Price was asked to undertake the meeting house in Pennsylvania, he asked:

meeting in which an old Quaker gentleman of the 1700s would feel at home?"

That is the kind of a Quaker meeting that Washingtonians are going to have.

Go with the Quaker gentleman of 150 years ago to the Washington Friends Meeting. Walking up the shaded slope, he will see a low building which appears part of the hillside. Constructed principally of gray Foxcroft stone, which has the satin sheen of a pigeon's breast, with which some local stone of brownish hue has been blended, it is trimmed with white cornice, doors, window frames and shutters. Two simple doors, typical of the Quaker meeting house, with protecting hoods, form the entrance to the edifice. The building depends on proportion and line rather than on ornamentation

Sketch of the Colonial-type Quaker meeting house, designed by Walter F. Price, which is being built in the capital—a place of worship where "an old Quaker gentleman of the 1700s would feel at home"

Going in one of the little hooded entrances on the Florida avenue side of the building, the old Quaker gentleman will see two blocks of seats facing the gallery, the raised platform where the ministers and overseers sit. Facing in toward these sections from the Phelps and Decatur Place entrances to the meeting are additional benches, enough in all to seat 350.

Over the gallery is raised a curved hood which acts as a conveyor of both light and sound, for under it are two rows of seats in which will sit those who have the gift of ministry, and from above it light will be directed to the ceiling.

The walls above a simple wainscoting five feet high are a warm gray and would rest the eyes of the gentleman who in his day read by candlelight. The benches and wainscoting are stained the same color. Woodwork is cream and the ceiling white to throw the indirect lighting. A molded cornice marks the joining of ceiling and walls.

THE venerable Colonial will not be puzzled by electric-light fixtures, for the modern illumination that has developed from the experiment of his contemporary, the versatile philosopher, Benjamin Franklin, will all be concealed.

To his left is the low wing which houses the committee room, stair hall and the stairway which leads below to the social rooms and kitchen under the main meeting room. Its door opens on Decatur Place. It is in this wing that the architect plans to show a true example of Colonial work suggestive of American masterpieces. This entrance, the stairway and wainscoting will be of a richer type, for Mr. Price feels that here he can depart from the utter simplicity of the meeting room. The Colonial door, with its fan light, the stair hall, the wainscoting and the fireplace in the committee room, will suggest the architectural elegance indulged in by the American fathers.

In spite of its simplicity, however, the door on Phelps Place will be the one that reveals the richness that American tradition possesses—tradition of country and of family, for this door is the one that opens to Mr. Price associations with the past that make his duty a privilege and lend to it special significance. The strap hinges of iron and the lock for this entrance are the gift of the Birmingham meeting, near the Brandywine, in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and were removed from its door. That door opened to give refuge to wounded British and American troops after the Battle of Brandywine, when the meeting house was used as a hospital. The Friends who belong to this venerable meeting have contributed this hardware with historic associations for the door under the portico on Phelps Place.

The Quaker of 1750 would find only the

ALWAYS believes in the equality of the sexes, the Quaker men and women were given equal privileges. In the old meeting houses there was a partition which could be lowered at the time of the public meeting to permit separate government. Nowadays it is "consolidated" more efficient for the men and women to conduct their meetings together.

They both speak in meeting and they both take part in the business session. However, decisions are reached by the "weight of the meeting" and not by the casting of votes.

There are no ayes and noes and no counting of votes. According to custom the consensus of opinion is determined weight and not by ballot. There may be fifty members on one side of a question and only thirty on the other, yet the opinion of the thirty would prevail because their opinion carried most weight; that group included the most substantial thinkers and the one whose judgment was respected.

But to return to the Quaker meet in Washington, Mr. Price has built several Friends' meeting houses in America. He and his associates design schools, buildings, hotels and other pretentious structures, but he has an especial interest in the simple houses of worship of Friends. He has studied them in the United States, observing the different characteristics in the various sections. There are meetings in New England where Quakers first came; throughout the East and especially in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, where Quakers played a prominent part in colonization; in North and South Carolina, where they migrated, and in Indiana and Ohio.

Mr. Price has studied the oldest meeting houses in England, where the religion of the Society of Friends originated. There is the Ettington meeting house where George Fox, the leader who founded the Society of Friends, preached. Built in the late Gothic style with millioned windows, it is quite different from the ones Mr. Price designed to catch the spirit of the early Quakers in America.

THE vice president of the Washington concern which is translating Mr. Price's plans to stone and wood, John G. Scharf, says that the building is costing about \$70,000. It will be completed before Christmas in order that it can be dedicated by the new year.

It has been observed that Washington is becoming a city of magnificent churches, each one representative in the Nation's capital of a different faith. Many of them are impressive and cathedral-like in their proportions. In one of them the World War President is interred. There are pure types of Roman and Gothic and Renaissance ecclesiastical architecture.

The Quaker meeting house by contrast is diminutive and will accommodate only a handful of people. It will be wholly inadequate to house the crowds that will besiege it out of the curiosity that pursues a President even to his place of worship; but not even the great Cathedral of St. Albans, that looks down upon the capital from the west, more truly typifies the great religious body that is building it than does the modest Washington Friends meeting house represent the Quaker.

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

811



WASHINGTON D. C.

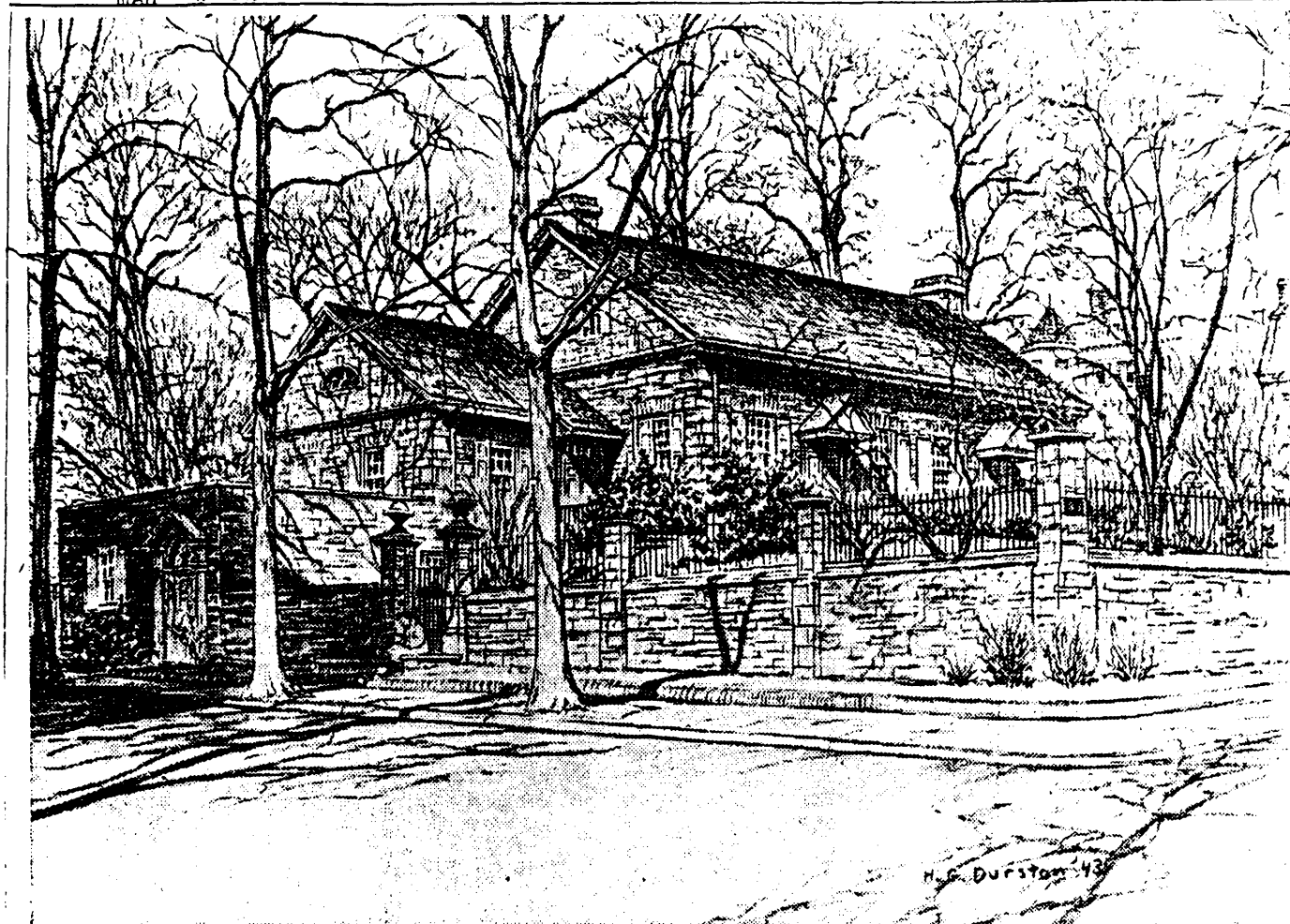
FIGURE 5: Friends Meeting House, east elevation.
(From: Horace M. Lippincott, Quaker Meeting Houses
and a Little Humor (1952), p. 118.)

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

Churches Quaker

MAR 6 1943

THE EVENING STAR, WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY



WHERE NO BELL RINGS—Helen Gatch Durston has drawn the 12-year-old meeting house of the Friends Meeting of Washington, 2111 Florida Avenue N.W. Built by means of an anonymous contribution of Friends here, the house has no chimes or organ to break the silence of worship. Its plans were drawn by a Philadelphia architect, Walter F. Price, after close study of Friends' meeting houses in England.

The Phelps place entrance is built with parts of the original door of the old Birmingham Meeting House on the Brandywine River. Wounded were taken there from the Battle of Brandywine, fought 121 years after the first Friends emigrated to

Boston in 1656. The most famous colony of Friends in America was set up when William Penn obtained a charter from King Charles II and sailed with his unarmed band to Pennsylvania in 1682. He signed a treaty with the Indians and it is said that no Indian has killed a Quaker in Pennsylvania from that day to this.

President and Mrs. Hoover sometimes visited the Florida Avenue Meeting House. An emergency feeding and housing billet post was set up there last year in co-operation with the Office of Civilian Defense. In addition, the Friends Emergency Service in Washington registers and trains volunteers there for settlement house work.

FIGURE 6: Friends Meeting House, from southeast.
(Historical Society of Washington collection)



FIGURE 7: President Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover at Friends Meeting House of Washington, Phelps Place entrance, c. 1931-33. (Friends Meeting of Washington Archives)

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

FIGURE 8: Mary Vaux Walcott (1860-1940). (Friends Meeting of Washington Archives)





FIGURE 9: Westtown Friends Meeting House (1928).
(Athenaeum Collection)

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC



FIGURE 10: Alterations to Friends Meeting House, Leon Chatelain, 1950.
a. Front (west) elevation.

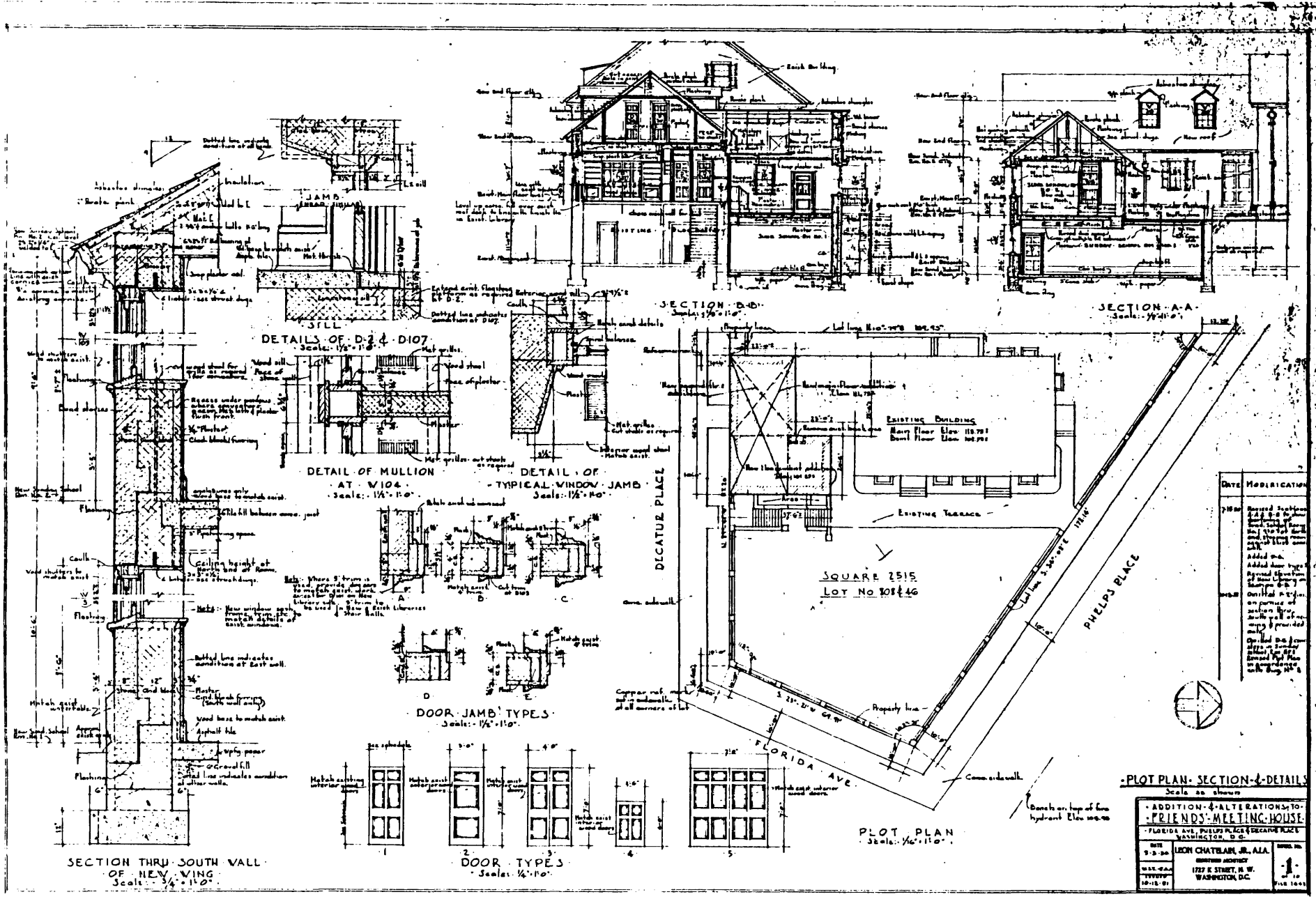


FIGURE 10 b. Plot Plan, Section and Details
1950 addition.

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

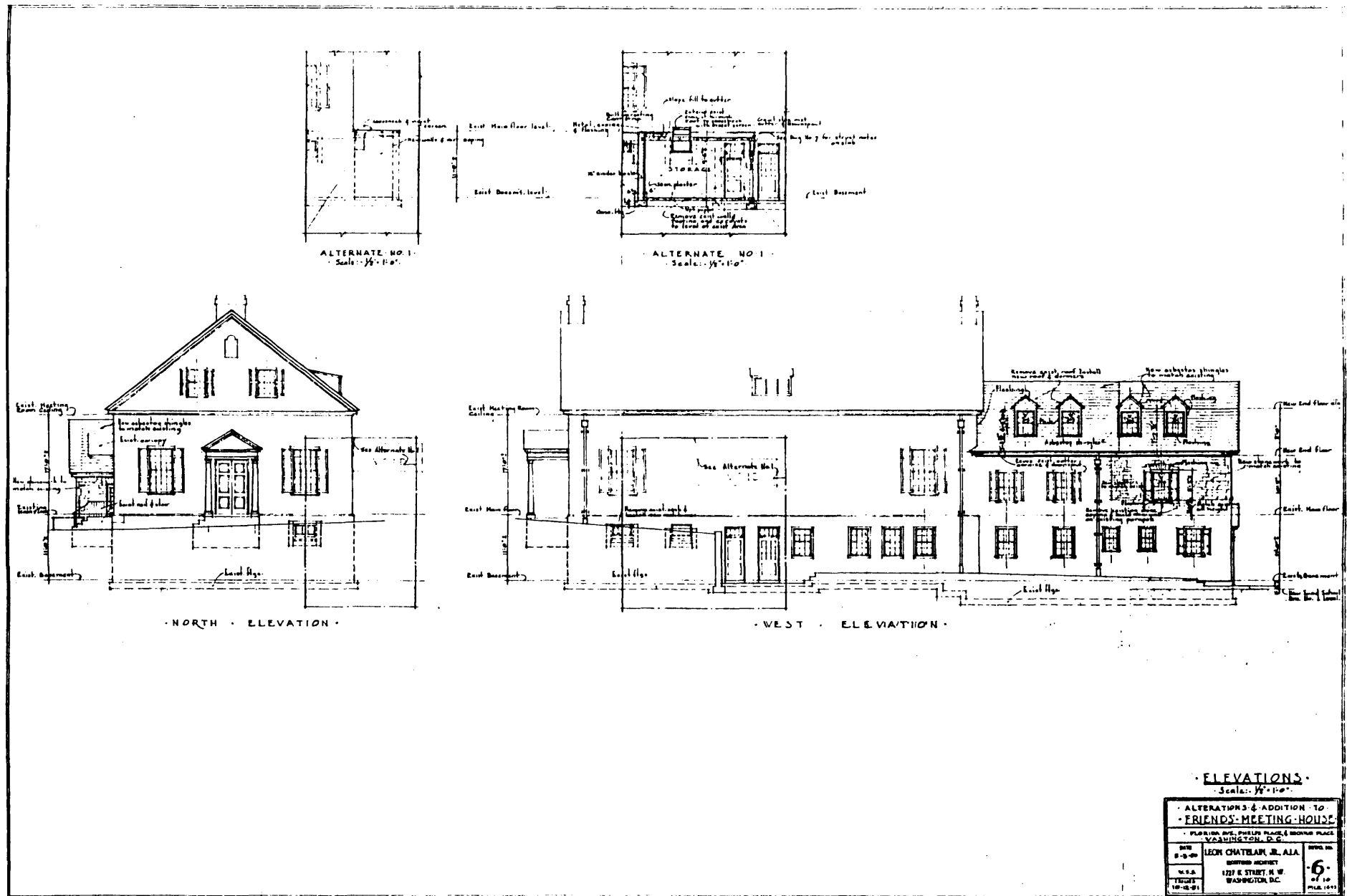
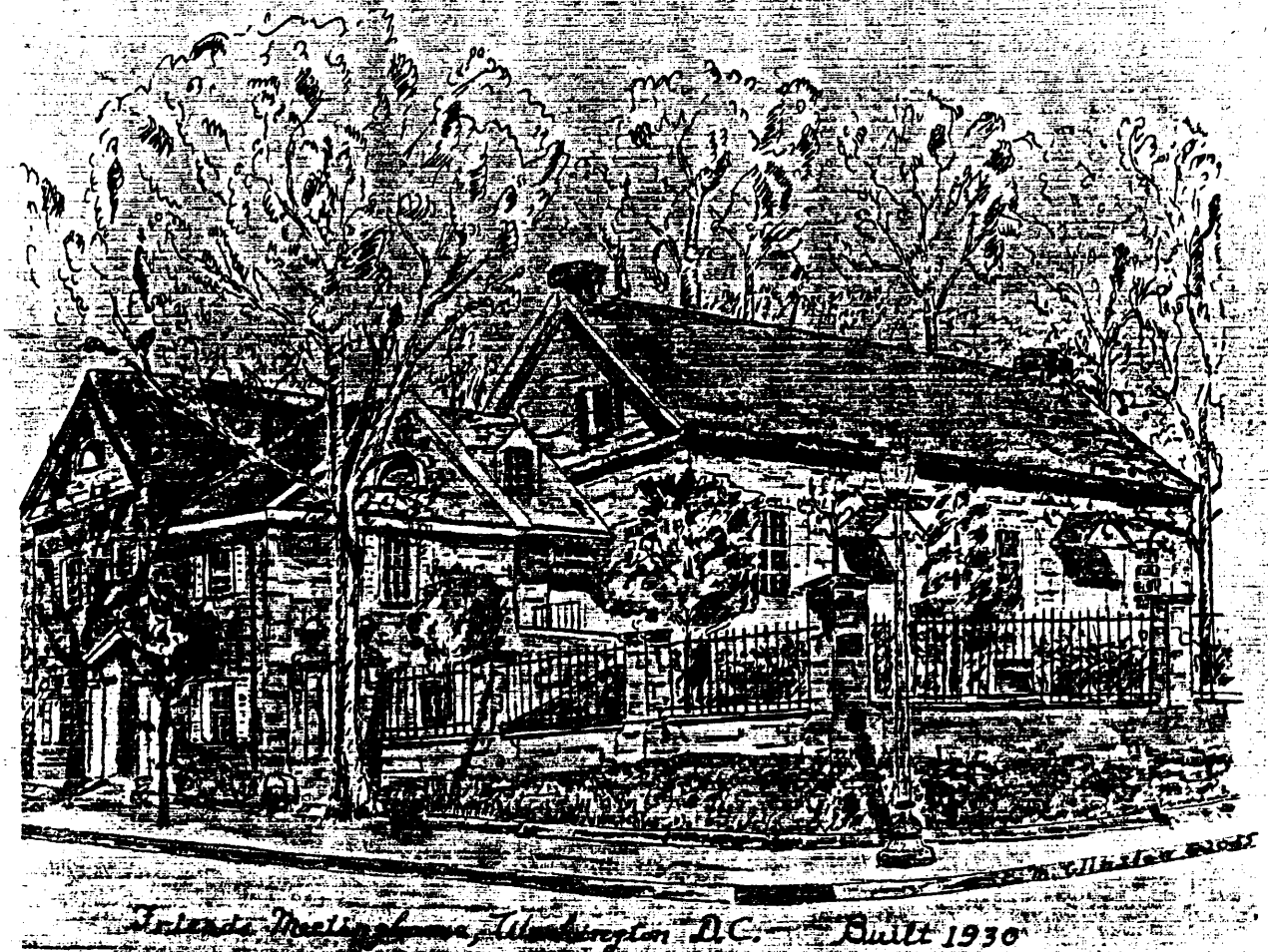


FIGURE 10 d. West and North Elevations.
1950 addition.

FRIENDS MEETING OF WASHINGTON

Background and Origin



Prepared by the Historians

SINA M. STANTON AND JULIA ROUSE SHARPLESS

FIGURE 11: Friends Meeting House with 1950 addition.
From: Stanton and Sharpless, "Friends Meeting of
Washington: Background and Origin," 1965.



S Street, N.W.

* Phelps Place, N.W.

LOT 808

Decatur Place, N.W.

Florida Avenue, N.W.

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
WASHINGTON, DC

Site Location