



Haverford Township Historical Society



OLD HAVERFORD FRIENDS MEETING

By Richard D. Kerr

The Old Haverford Friends Meeting house is the earliest place of worship built in Delaware County, dating back to 1688. (It is now called "Old" to differentiate it from a different Quaker meeting house, known as the Haverford Friends Meeting, built in 1834, nearly 150 years later.)



Old Haverford Friends Meeting House as it appears today, seen from the east. (photo by author)

When the early Welsh Quakers arrived with William Penn in 1682 and 1683 to establish the colony of Pennsylvania, their religious customs naturally came with them. At first, "meetings for worship" were held in the homes of various members. The first surviving document that records an account of a Haverford Meeting dates to 1684. The term "Haverford Meeting" is a bit confusing, because for a time the Schuylkill, Merion and Haverford Meetings held "Haverford Monthly Meetings" in a round-robin fashion in those areas. Plymouth and Radnor later replaced Schuylkill. The Haverford Monthly Meeting was associated with the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting.

The construction of a log meeting house in Haverford, along present-day Eagle Road in what is now the Oakmont section of the township, followed the establishment of a Friends Burial Ground just up the road in 1684. Both are believed to have been on land owned by William Howell. He later deeded the land to the Trustees of the Haverford Meeting (John Bevan, William Lewis, Henry Lewis, and Morris Llewellyn) in 1693. The first marriage held in the Haverford Meeting House occurred on March 20, 1690

for Lewis David and Florence Jones. Evidence exists that the Haverford Meeting House, along with Quaker traditions, were permitted to be used to solemnize marriages of some colonists who were not themselves Quakers.

In 1700, a stone addition was made to the original log meetinghouse. It included a clever design using stoves built into the walls. These stoves were fed with wood from the outside and also vented to the outside. In this way they heated the walls and the interior of the building in a smokeless manner. This addition is now known as the “old end” of the building, since a century later, in 1800, the original log section was replaced by a stone “new end.” These two ends form the main building seen today. Renovations and subsequent lower-roofed rear additions have since been made to the structure.

The establishment of the Quaker “Haverford School,” now Haverford College, in 1833, in combination with a concurrent schism within the Society of Friends, led to the establishment of a second meeting house in Haverford Township in 1834, on Buck Lane and closer to the college grounds.



View from north of the Old Haverford Friends Meeting house, as it looks today from Eagle Road. (photo by author)

Both Friends Meetings in Haverford Township have continued in unbroken activity since their dates of establishment. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission has erected a cast historical monument sign in front of the Old Haverford Friends Meeting along Eagle Road. The Delaware County Planning Department has determined that the meeting house is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Explore for More... Old Haverford Friends Meeting

Read about today's Old Haverford Friends Meeting on their own website:

<http://www.oldhaverford.org/>

The "new" Haverford Friends Meeting also have their own website:

<http://www.haverfordfriendsmeeting.org/>

Bits and pieces of the history can be gleaned from George Smith's chronologically-ordered *History of Delaware County* published in 1862:

<http://www.delawarecountyhistory.com/documents/delco.pdf>

See a photo of the remaining details of the unusual heating stove within the walls of the "old end" in *Old Roads out of Philadelphia* by John Thomson Faris in 1917 (on the unnumbered page after page 128):

<http://books.google.com/books?id=8kIVAAAAYAAJ&pg=128#v=onepage&q&f=false>

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