**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**
**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

*(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)*

---

**1. NAME**

**COMMON:**

Friends Meeting House

**AND/OR HISTORIC:**

---

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

North Road and Weeden Lane

**CITY OR TOWN:**

Jamestown

**STATE:**

Rhode Island, 02835

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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY (Check One)</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District X Building</td>
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<td>Yes: Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site X Structure</td>
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<td>Unrestricted</td>
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<tr>
<td>X X X X X X</td>
<td>Public Acquisition:</td>
<td>Being Considered</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X X X X X X</td>
<td>In Process</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X X X X X X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X X X X X X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)**

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertaiment
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Religious
- Private Residence
- Museum
- Scientific
- Public
- Transportation
- Other (Specify)
- Comments

---

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**OWNER'S NAME:**

Society of Friends, care of Mr. William Wharton Smith, Elder

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

Hull's Cove

**CITY OR TOWN:**

Jamestown

**STATE:**

Rhode Island, 02835

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**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:**

Town Clerk

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

Town Hall, 71 Narragansett Avenue

**CITY OR TOWN:**

Jamestown

**STATE:**

Rhode Island, 02835

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**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

**TITLE OF SURVEY:**

Historic American Buildings Survey

**DATE OF SURVEY:**

1958

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:**

Library of Congress

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

Independence Avenue and 1st Street, S. E.

**CITY OR TOWN:**

Washington

**STATE:**

District of Columbia

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The Jamestown Friends Meeting House, which dates from about 1786, is a severely plain one-story timber-framed gable-roofed structure set on a low fieldstone foundation. It is covered with cedar chingles which are set off by the white-painted trim, which is limited to corner-, eaves- and sill-boards and the simply-framed window and door openings. In accordance with Quaker practice there are two entries--in this building they are on the south (long) front--one for men and one for women. These doorways contain four-panel doors in board enframesments with the plainest of angular (not moulded) cappings. There are two windows on the south elevation, one to the right of each entry, and they are set so high that the eaves-board running across them serves as the upper part of their enframements; windows of similarly high placement are on the east and west ends of the building, and all have six-over-six sash. The two windows of the north elevation are smaller, since they are placed above the raised interior seating on that side of the building. There is another very small window in the peak of the east gable, and a stone chimney is also located at this end of the building. All windows have single-leaf, battened exterior shutters.

The one room of the interior has plain plastered ceiling and walls and a wide-board floor. This room can be divided to separate the men's and women's meetings by means of two hinged, wide-board partitions which, when raised, fasten to the ceiling by wrought-iron hooks. The pews have seats and back-rails formed of plain wide boards attached to pew-ends that are cut to an S-shape at the top. Those of the west meeting-space are arranged in rows facing north; those in the east space are arranged at right angles, facing north and east, around the stove that heats the room. A raised bench--the rising seat typical of Friends meeting houses--runs the length of the north wall.
**Significance**

**Period** (Check One or More as Appropriate)
- Pre-Columbian
- 16th Century
- 18th Century
- 20th Century
- 17th Century
- 19th Century

**Specific Dates** (If Applicable and Known) C. 1786

**Areas of Significance** (Check One or More as Appropriate)
- Aboriginal
- Prehistoric
- Historic
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Art
- Commerce
- Communications
- Conservation
- Education
- Engineering
- Industry
- Invention
- Landscape Architecture
- Literature
- Military
- Music
- Political
- Religion/Philosophy
- Science
- Sculpture
- Social/Humanitarian
- Urban Planning
- Other (Specify)

**Statement of Significance**

This small structure, truly handsome in its simplicity, exemplifies the intentionally plain, durable, well-thought-out, yet sensibly commodious, character of the building works of the Quakers in their early settlements in America. Though rather late in date, it is particularly valuable in Rhode Island as a surviving, unchanged, small meeting house of this sect, which arrived in the colony c. 1657 and was first largely centred on Aquidneck (Newport) and then Conanicut (Jamestown) Islands, from which it spread.

While the old Friends Meeting House in Newport is still extant, it was built on a much larger scale to accommodate the needs of the yearly meeting of New England Friends held in Newport from the late XVII Century until the 1890's or later. By 1875 that building had been more than tripled in size and its original character totally concealed (it is now the subject of study that will explain and reveal its architectural development). The less pretentious and more typical meeting houses in Portsmouth and Lincoln have been altered, and other notable ones--in Providence, East Greenwich, Oaklawn, Cumberland and elsewhere in the state--have disappeared altogether.

The Society of Friends itself has also largely disappeared here--though it was once an important religious body and counted many persons prominent in local history and government among its adherents. However, the island of Jamestown still has a (very diminished) Quaker congregation; so its meeting house is one of long, continued use, though now it is generally opened only in summer, when there is the annual return of a long-standing summer colony from Philadelphia, that stronghold of Quakerism, who may attend services in the building, and when tourists are drawn to inspection of the old structure.

As in all Quaker (and later, Shaker) architecture, purposeful simplicity and firmness of construction, an undorned clothing of the building, are conspicuous. There is an economy of trim which indeed is nearly an absence of trim. There is evidence of careful thought

(See Continuation Sheet.)
8. Significance.

in respect to the use and arrangement of interior space (viz.: the swingdown partitions to separate the men's and women's meetings, and the concomitant separate but compatible seating plans), the placement of doors and windows—the latter high, lest outdoor visions disturb pious concentration—and thoughtful, not ungenerous, provision for comfort of seat and sight while the congregation participates directly in the Quaker rites.

The building has deservedly been well cared for for a long time; but for close to two hundred years it has really stood up on its own, because of the plain common sense, economy of design and structural firmness which were combined in its planning and erection. It was intended to be serviceable, and it still serves its original purpose.

In a somewhat remote and picturesque site, this little building has become a landmark and an attraction to visitors on Jamestown. It is also, however small and simple, a monument to Quaker philosophy and principles and to the honesty and excellence upon which they insisted in the products of their hands.
### 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


### 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**Geographical Data**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Corner</th>
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<td>Degrees</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Degrees</td>
<td>Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Degrees</td>
<td>Minutes</td>
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**Approximate Acreage of Nominated Property:** Less than one acre

**List All States and Counties for Properties Overlapping State or County Boundaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Code</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Form Prepared By:**

B. Christopher Bene, Surveyor-Researcher

Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

**Organization:**

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

**Date:** Dec. 31, 1971

**Street and Number:**

State House, 90 Smith Street

**City or Town:**

Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

**State Liaison Officer Certification:**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

- National [ ]
- State [X]
- Local [ ]

**Title:**

**Date:**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

_____________________________

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

_____________________________

ATTEST:

_____________________________

Keeper of The National Register

**Date:**

_____________________________
**1. NAME**

**COMMON:** Friends Meeting House

**AND/OR HISTORIC:**

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

North Road and Weeden Lane

**CITY OR TOWN:**

Jamestown

**STATE:**

Rhode Island

**CODE**

[141]

**COUNTY:**

Newport

**CODE**

[005]

**3. PHOTO REFERENCE**

**PHOTO CREDIT:** B. Christopher Bene

**DATE OF PHOTO:** 1971

**NEGATIVE FILED AT:** Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House, 90 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

**4. IDENTIFICATION**

**DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.**

Interior, looking south-west and showing wooden dividing partitions raised to ceiling.
GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES

Latitude: 41° 30' 51.48" N
Longitude: 71° 22' 30.44" W
**Name:**

Common: Friends Meeting House
AND/OR HISTORIC: 

**Location:**

STREET AND NUMBER: North Road and Weeden Lane
CITY OR TOWN: Jamestown
STATE: Rhode Island

**Map Reference:**

SOURCE: U. S. Geological Survey
SCALE: 1:24,000
DATE: 1957

**Requirements:**

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS
1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.
<table>
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<td>STATE: Rhode Island</td>
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<td>COUNTY: Newport</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View from the south-west, showing entrance front.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>