

WASHINGTON

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Benjaminville, Friends Meetinghouse and Burial Ground

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number N/A

N/A not for publication

city, town Holder X vicinity of

state Illinois code 012 county McLean code 113

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Cemetery

4. Owner of Property

name Friends Cemetery Association, c/o G. L. Bedell

street & number R. R. 1

city, town Arrowsmith N/A vicinity of state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. McLean County Recorder of Deeds

street & number 105 Courthouse

city, town Bloomington state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Benjaminville complex is a typical Friends meetinghouse and burial grounds. It is a rectangular frame building which preserves almost all of its original structure and arrangement. The only significant alterations are a small combination privy-storage shed on the East end and the addition of a concrete floor to the porch. These changes do not, in any major way, detract from the building's quality or 19th Century character. The structure is situated on two acres of rolling prairie, in park-like landscape, isolated from other buildings and surrounded by cropland.

The meeting-house, built in 1874, is a balloon framed, gable roofed structure measuring 42'X32', oriented East to West. Entrance is provided from the South by two doors on the long wall which bisect the halves of the length, at the door jambs. Three windows are placed on the South wall, the center one bisects the whole length of the wall and the other two are situated to the left and the right of their respective doors. An 8' wide porch runs the entire length of the South wall. Two windows on the East and West walls bisect the halves of the width of the structure. The fenestration of the North facade duplicates that of the South facade. A small addition, ca. 1910, measuring 14'X17' was placed on the East wall to serve as privy and storage shed.

The building is sided with weatherboard, 5" to weather. Corner boards, window and door trim are 5"X1" stock with no carvings. Except for doors, white is the only color that has ever been used. Windows, 4 light over 4 light, measure 8'X6"X2'9". The two entry doors are panel and rail construction and measure 7'10"X3'5½". The panels are raised and are secured with decorative moldings.

The interior space is severe in appearance. The dominant decorative element is the hand graining used on most wood surfaces. Like the building, the room runs East-West. A raised gallery along the North wall faces the pews which are bisected by a 3½' high 5" beaded board partition. The partition bisects the interior length of the room. The pews and partition are grained, as are interiors of the doors and windows. The walls are 6" beaded pine board wainscoting stained dark. The plaster walls have been recently covered with a pressboard paneling. Although this paneling is intrusive, it is in no way a permanent fixture and would be easily reversible. Oil burning stoves set in the original flues have replaced the original iron stoves.

The two acres of grounds are planted with grass and local species of deciduous trees. Burials are oriented East-West and are divided into three sections, Quaker, non-Quaker and a new section in which the descendants of both are mixed.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1874

Builder/Architect UNKNOWN

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Benjaminville Church is an excellent and well-preserved example of a Quaker meeting-house. For many years this location, and after 1874, this particular building, served as the focus of settlement for what one history called: "One of the strongest settlements of Friends that is to be found anywhere in the state." (History of McLean County, 1879: pg 632) It is also the only surviving structure of the Hamlet of Benjaminville. The structure and site are of both architectural and historical significance.

The building is no longer owned by a religious organization and, while occasional services are held there, it no longer serves primarily as a church. The importance of the building derives from it being an example of a particular kind of architecture and from its historical associations.

The building is a fine example of traditional Quaker architecture. As Carole Rifkin states, "For Quakers it was almost domestic in scale and character, resembling the late medieval English dwelling." (Rifkin, 1980: pg 117). This style of building remained essentially unchanged from the Colonial period until the end of the 19th Century. The hallmarks of the style include extreme exterior simplicity, lack of interior ornament, and a bilateral division manifested on the outside by the separate men's and women's doors and on the inside by some form of partition. Commonly, the entrance was in the long wall. Stained glass, steeples, and pulpits are not used. Burial grounds typically adjoined the meeting-house. The Benjaminville site displays all of these characteristics.

Elbert Russell described a pioneer Quaker Church in the following words: "West of the Allegheny Mountains, Friends meeting-houses assumed a fairly uniform type of architecture. They were log or frame buildings, rectangular in shape, with partitions which contained movable 'shutters' dividing the building into two equal rooms, one for the women and the other for the men....The rooms were usually heated by iron stoves.... The rooms lacked any attempt at decoration and the windows were of plain glass." (Russell, 1942: pp. 277-278)

Some comment should be made on the absence of shutters in the Bentown Church. The group was a pioneer in holding its meetings as one body of Friends, rather than as two distinct bodies of men and women Friends. In her history of the church, Mrs. Coale points to this accomplishment with considerable pride. (Coale, ca.1900: pg 2) This group was one of the first seven in North America to hold combined meetings in this way. This liberal Quaker group addressed the issue by simply dividing the building with a waist-high wooden partition.

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The excellent graining which distinguishes the interior should not be taken as something which was contrary to Quaker tradition, for individual crafts-men were encouraged to create as the spirit moved them. Edmund W. Sinnott has noted this feature of Quaker meeting-houses: "Indeed, in the meeting-house at Adams, Massachusetts, there is a plaque calling attention to the fact that the building displays a variety of handiwork - a symbol of the Quaker conviction that each man must be guided by his own inner light." (Sinnott, 1963: pg 201)

A burial ground is typically associated with a Quaker site. As an 1825 Rules of Discipline state "And to prevent the introduction of improper internments amongst us, it is recommended that two or more Friends be appointed to the care of our...burial grounds...and that no person who is not a member be buried within, without a permit." (Rules of Discipline: 1825, pg 1D). At Benjaminville, this was handled by burying Quaker and non-Quaker in separate sections.

Aside from its architectural merit, the Bentown church has considerable local historical significance. This part of McLean County was largely unsettled until 1856, when three Quaker families, those of Joseph Marot, Issac Clement and Timothy Benjamin moved to this area of elevated but treeless prairie. Subsequent settlement of this vicinity is closely tied to the Society of Friends and the Benjaminville Church. Even more than most 19th Century pioneer groups, the movement of Quakers was dominated by religious considerations. A good Quaker was expected to settle only among other Friends. The 1825 Rules of Discipline sternly admonished: "Friends are advised to be very cautious in changing their place of residence: it having been observed that the dissolving of old, and the forming of new connections have in many instances been attended with effects prejudicial to a growth in the truth and the service thereof,..." (Rules of Discipline: 1825, pg 14). Regular communication bound this group of Quakers to others and settlement moved along these lines.

The settlement of the Benjaminville area was gradual. In 1859, a meeting-house costing \$1,000, was built at the site of the present church and the cemetery was soon established. Throughout the 1860's there was a slow but steady flow of Quakers into the area. In 1874, the present structure was built. Settlement continued after this building was in use with the arrival of Friends like Sydney Averill, John Brown and others in the 1870's. This building was the social and political, as well as the religious center, of the community. Individual Quakers from other meetings such as Abel Mills, whose autobiography has been published by the Illinois State Historical Society, often visited the Benjaminville meeting.

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The members of the meeting regularly took public stands on peace, Indian affairs, prison reform, Women's Suffrage and education, while publicly demonstrating their opposition to the evils of prize fights, gambling and lotteries. Thus, throughout the 19th Century, this building was the focus of a distinct and dynamic community of considerable local political importance.

The Hamlet of Benjaminville was never large, but at one time there were at least two other churches and a few shops. Its failure as an urban place was decided in 1870, when engineers determined that the elevated ground, which had first attracted settlers, would be a distinct disadvantage for a train. As one local poet lamented:

"I lately returned from your city,  
And landed near Benjaminville,  
But oh what a terrible pity  
It lies so far up the hill.

"Now the fact of the business is this,  
Though sadly against my will  
The railroad has made a clean miss  
of the Town of Benjaminville."

(Pantagraph, Feb. 2, 1870, pg 3)

The other churches were moved to the tracks and other businesses eventually shut down. About two years ago, the building which had once housed the wagon shop, the only other remaining structure in Benjaminville, was destroyed by fire. Thus, the meeting-house and its burial ground are the only visual reminders of a bygone Quaker Community.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

COALE, Elizabeth H.  
ca.1900 "Friends" Typescript history of the Benjaminville Church,  
McLean County Historical Society.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2.5 Acres

Quadrangle name HOLDER, IL

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References

A 

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

B 

Zone	Easting					Northing									

C 

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D 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification N.W. 1/4 of the N.W. 1/4 of the S.W. 1/4, of the S.W. 1/4 of Section 6, T.23-R 4-E (Dawson Township)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Greg Koos-Archivist/Site Manager - William Walters-Prof. of Geograph

organization McLean County Historical Society date August 3, 1983

street & number 201 E. Grove Street telephone 309/827-0428

city or town Bloomington state Illinois

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *David Keeney*

title *Director*

date 10/24/83

For NPS use only

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

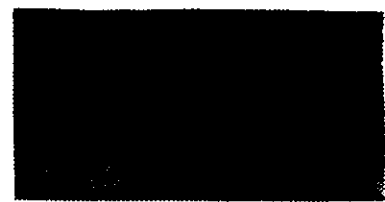
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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Bibliography

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HISTORY OF MCLEAN COUNTY  
1879 Chicago: Wm. LeBaron

MILLS, Abel  
1926 "The Autobiography of Abel Mills" Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 19:1-2 (April-July) pp. 91-239

RIFKIN, Carole  
1980 A Field Guide to American Architecture, New York, New American Library

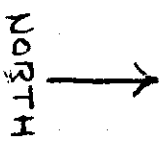
RULES OF DISCIPLINE OF THE YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS HELD IN PHILADELPHIA  
1825 J. Mortimer, Philadelphia

RUSSELL, Elbert  
1942 The History of Quakerism, New York: Macmillan

SINNOTT, Edmund W.  
1963 Meeting-House and Church in Early New England, New York: McGraw-Hill

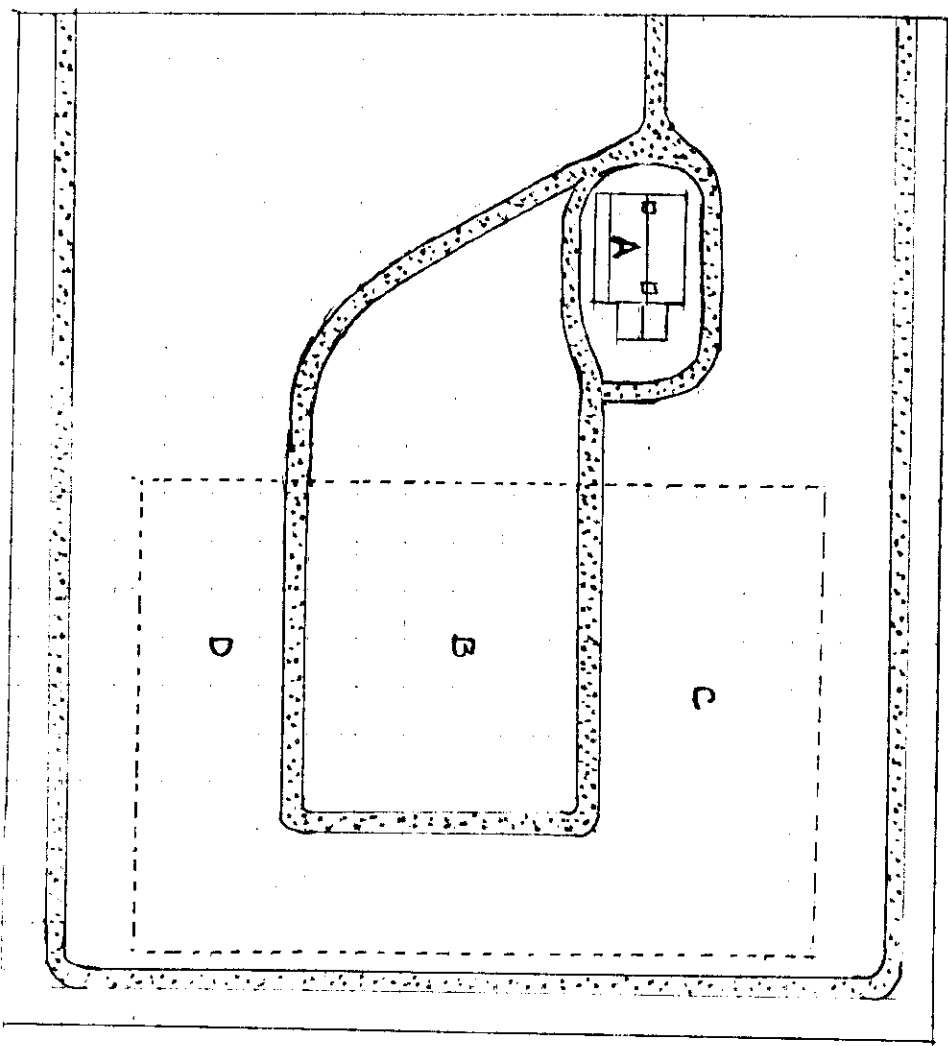
BENJAMINVILLE FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE AND BURIAL GROUND

VICINITY OF HOLDER, ILLINOIS



- BURIAL GROUND
- GRAVEL ROAD
- A -- MEETING HOUSE
- B -- QUAKER BURIALS
- C -- NON-QUAKER BURIALS
- D -- CONTEMPORARY BURIALS

SCALE IN FEET



SEPTEMBER 8, 1983





# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

DEC 19 1983

IN REPLY REFER TO:

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to inform you that the following properties have been entered in the National Register of Historic Places beginning December 11, 1983 and ending December 17, 1983. For further information call (202) 343-9552.

STATE, County, Vicinity, Property, Address, (Date Listed)

CALIFORNIA, Los Angeles County, Los Angeles, Hacienda Arms Apartments, 8439 Sunset Blvd. (12/15/83)

CONNECTICUT, New Haven County, New Haven, Lighthouse Point Carousel, Lighthouse Point Park, Lighthouse Ave. (12/15/83)

DELAWARE, New Castle County, Delaware City, Delaware City Historic District, Roughly bounded by the Delaware River, Dragon Creek, DE 9, and the Delaware and Chesapeake Canals (12/15/83)

DELAWARE, Sussex County, Greenwood vicinity, Richards Historic District, County Rd. 34 (12/15/83)

FLORIDA, Gadsden County, Quincy, Gregory, Willoughby, House, Hwy. 274 and Krausland Rd. (12/16/83)

ILLINOIS, Lake County, Highland Park, Linden Park Place/Belle Avenue Historic District (Highland Park MRA), Roughly bounded by Sheridan Rd., Elm Pl, Linden, Park, and Central Aves. (12/13/83)

ILLINOIS, McLean County, Holder vicinity, Benjaminville Friends Meeting house and Burial Ground, N of Holder (12/13/83)

MAINE, Knox County, Allen's Island, (12/15/83)

MARYLAND, Baltimore (Independent City), Charles Village-Abell Historic District, Roughly bounded by University Pkwy., Guilford Ave., and 25th, Mace, Charles, and Barclay Sts. (12/15/83)

MISSISSIPPI, Hinds County, Jackson, Virden-Patton House, 512 N. State St. (12/16/83)

MONTANA, Beaverhead County, Dillon, Hotel Metlen, 5 S. Railroad Ave. (12/13/83)

NEBRASKA, Antelope County, Neligh, Neligh Mill Elevators (Boundary Increase), 111 W. Second (12/15/83)

NEBRASKA, Clay County, Sutton, Clark, Isaac Newton, House, 468 Cedar St. (12/15/83)

NEBRASKA, Douglas County, Omaha, Monmouth Park School, 4508 N. 33rd St. (12/15/83)

NEBRASKA, Fillmore County, Fairmont, Fairmont Creamery Company Building, SE of 6th Ave. and F St. (12/15/83)

NEBRASKA, Greeley County, Spalding, St. Michael's Catholic Church Complex, NE of Greeley Ctr. (12/15/83)

NEW MEXICO, Santa Fe County, La Bajada Mesa Agricultural Site, (12/15/83)