

A Quaker meeting house in Southern California

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Figure 1. St. James, Piccadilly (1672-84), designed by Sir Christopher Wren. [Photo: Tony Hisgett, Wikipedia Commons]



Figure 2. Caln Meeting House in Chester County, Pennsylvania [Photo: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, PA-6227-27]

THE QUAKER MEETING HOUSE erected by the Orange Grove Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in northern Pasadena (at 520 East Orange Grove Boulevard) between 1908 and 1909 can startle architectural historians (Figs. 7 and 18). It breaks sharply with Quaker building traditions that first emerged in North America toward the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. In this paper I will go first to two examples of the standard or ideal Quaker meeting house—one in rural Chester County, Pennsylvania, and another in the great urban, Quaker capital, Philadelphia—then turn to the Orange Grove meeting house in Pasadena, which I hope to reveal as a virtually unique architectural experiment. This is a story that needs telling: the OGMM's founders were fearless when it came to designing their new meeting house.

THE IDEAL MEETING HOUSE

Right from the start, in the 1650s Quakers must have gathered in their houses to worship, pray, and seek the light within. But as followers of George Fox (1624-91) grew in number, household dwellings no longer sufficed. Quakers did meet outdoors for worship on occasion, even ideally. But shelter for meetings was needed. As with so much else of established religion in 17th-century England, Fox scorned the religious architecture of his own time, growling about its excessive pretention. He found nothing to admire in the (very best!) Anglican churches of his day—for example, the ones that the famed architect, Sir Christopher Wren, built all over London after the Great Fire in 1666. “Steeple houses” (Fox’s words) could not serve the Religious Society of Friends.

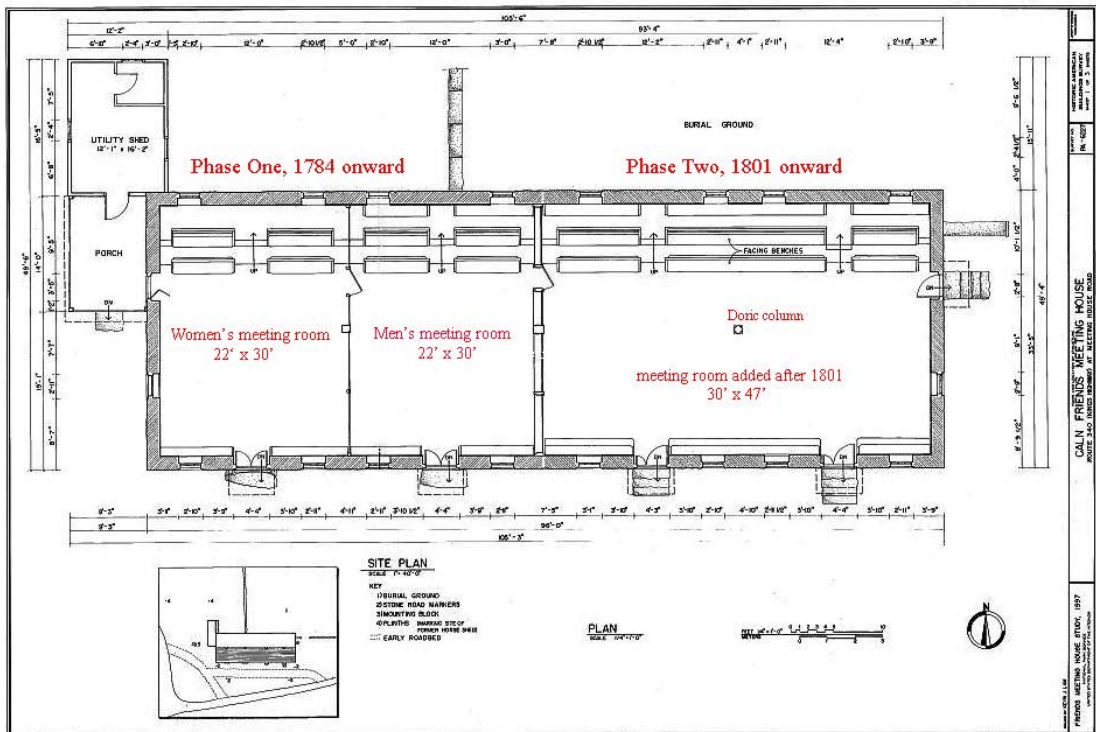


Figure 3. Plan, Caln Meeting House [Photo: Library of Congress, Prints and Drawings Division, PA-6227-1]

But a standard Quaker architecture did eventually emerge. In North America an ideal meeting house had formed during the century after Fox and it looked much like an ordinary house. Caln Meeting House near the village of Thorndale in Chester County, Pennsylvania, is one of the earliest surviving examples. Built in 1784 by anonymous patrons and country masons and carpenters, then much enlarged in 1801, it shows how Friends typically gathered for worship in rural America through the long 19th century.¹

Key here is the segregation of two of the sexes, male and female. The front of the Caln building has 12 bays (as architectural historians say): Eight windows alternate with four doorways. Reading from left to right, the first six bays mark the original structure (of 1784), and the six quite similar bays toward the right belong to an 1801 addition, which doubled the size of the meeting house subtly (so the added portion looks just like the original). Thus, two phases of construc-

tion in exactly the same style (see Figs 2 and 3). During the first phase—again, the six bays on the left—the builders set up two large rooms, each measuring 22 by 30 feet, separated by a narrow wooden baffling. On the façade, each of the two rooms has its own entry or doorway. The rooms were gendered. Women entered on the left, men on the right, and while each group worshipped together, they occupied separate spaces. Such segregation of the sexes conformed to a tradition reaching back to early Christian times in the West—starting with the huge new churches in Rome built by the first Christian emperor, Constantine (306-337 C.E.), in which Rome's bishop (that is, the pope) led the faithful in eucharistic celebrations—in the mass.² No masses at the Caln Meeting House, of course! But one does find the same segregation of the sexes in silent worship. During such gatherings, to be sure, the door and the moveable panels in the baffle that separated the men and women would be propped



Figure 4. Caln Meeting House, interior of the room added after 1801 (looking west) and doubtless built for the exclusive use of men. Note the “boxy” wooden barrier at the west open through two “windows” and a door to the women’s space further west (the black pipe of the wood-burning stove on the women’s side is visible in the left window). The benches are original and datable to the early 19th century. Elders sat on the right (north side) and the rest of the community to the south. Note the prominent Doric column—a focal point. [Photo: Library of Congress, Prints and Drawings Division, PA-6227-20]



Figure 5. Arch Street Meeting House, Philadelphia, constructed 1803-11, main front with its central projecting pavilion. Designed by Owen Biddle (1774-1806). [Photo: Library of Congress, Prints and Drawings Division, PA, 51-PHILA, 10-17]

open. Ministries from both sides could be heard and acknowledged equally. But traditionally in Quaker practice, men and women held separate monthly meetings for business. Men dealt with all issues concerning the property’s up-keep and expenses, plus worship and ministry. The women, by contrast, dealt with pastoral care for families, and most importantly, with marriage plans.³ During business meetings the baffle between the two sides would be sealed.

As seen in the plan (Fig. 3), the barrier between the men’s and women’s sides in the original 1784 structure is thin and narrow, but the divider between the original structure and the addition of 1801 is quite thick, even “boxy.” Both were made of wood (the original 1784, eastern wall of the building, the one in masonry, having been removed entirely during the reconstruction) and both had moveable panels to be closed or opened. The 30 x 47 foot room dating from 1801, some say, was designed to accommodate quarterly meetings where members from the nearby monthly meetings would join those from the Caln meeting (Fig. 4). But more likely this new space was meant to serve a larger meeting at Caln *tout court*. After 1801, in both quarterly and monthly meetings, men would occupy the 30 x 47 foot room to the east, and women would take the two 30 x 22 foot rooms to the west, that is, the rooms that once comprised the entire 1784 structure. The moveable panels in the “boxy” barrier would be open between the two sides, male and female, during worship, and closed as the monthly and quarterly meetings met for business.

Thus, one of the features of the ideal North American Quaker meeting house was a façade featuring gendered entryways for men and women—at least two, but sometimes more, as in the Caln Meeting House after 1801 where the two to the east were for men, and the two to the west for women. Note, also, in Fig. 2, the prominent porch roofs over each door. They shelter the late comer who waits here before entering, should anyone within be engaged in ministering. But more than that, they are a standard visual feature of meeting house fronts from this time forward.

One can measure the impact of all these features by looking at the Meeting House at 330 Arch Street in Philadelphia, built between 1803/04 and 1810/11.

This structure (Fig. 5) has the distinction of being designed by an architect, the Philadelphian, Owen Biddle. It served for the city's yearly meetings of women, but was used monthly for regular meetings by a mixed group. True enough, this façade has two stories and three entryways. A big, central, projecting, and pedimented pavilion has a non-gendered doorway that leads to a hallway dividing the women's and men's sections. But the façade still has two distinct entries left and right, one for women and one for men. Each of these also has the typical Quaker porch. The iconography (the features) of a standard Quaker meeting house are easy to recognize.

PLAINNESS, A QUAKER IDEAL

Throughout, the standard North American meeting house speaks of plainness. All decorative detail—ornament of (nearly) every sort—was refused. The Caln Meeting House reveals this austerity in almost every aspect. The regular rhythm of entryways and windows across the façade provides a stark, repetitive, visual order to the elevation (Fig. 2). The wooden frames of the doors and windows have the simplest construction a carpenter can provide. Even the door leaves are plain: They are flat and planar without panels, mullions, or windows. The roof overhang may suggest a cornice that crowns a façade, but the “cornice” has no moldings; carpenters fashioned the soffit (the underside) of the overhang as a flat, horizontal plane.

Inside the Caln Meeting House (Fig. 4) rectilinearity dominates (though one finds the slanting backs of the original benches and the curvilinear silhouettes of their armrests to provide visual relief from the interior's horizontal and perpendicular rigor).⁴ True enough, the long walls have cornices. But those were installed for fluorescent lighting very recently and must be thought away if one is to judge the appearance of the original interior.

But there is one ornament of genuine note in the Caln Meeting House and that is the bright, white Doric column standing within. The plan (Fig. 3) shows how the ceiling rafters were supported by a row of three robust, wooden posts, one at the center of the structure (embedded in the “boxy” barrier),



Figure 6. Benjamin Henry Latrobe's design for the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., from a contemporary print dated 1825. [Library of Congress, Prints and Drawings Division, pga.03496]

one on the women's side (incorporated into the narrow baffle), and another—no mere post but an actual Doric column—standing freely at the center of the room on the men's side (Fig. 4). It is a handsome feature. Rising on a high pedestal, it seems almost classic in aspect, though its proportions are rather narrow—a bit too tall. It looks to have been carved from the trunk of a high, straight tree set up horizontally on a huge lathe. Its base, a torus, supports a shaft that has a very sophisticated entasis, that is, it bulges toward the middle, then tapers toward the top. The capital, a standard Doric one, has a cushion molding (an echinus) topped by a “plinth” (that is, an abacus). Note the narrow half-round molding toward the top of the shaft, a necking in classic form. Once carved, its creators painted it white (to suggest white marble?). Here was a post that could not be hidden in a barrier or baffle as the other two were; it perforce had to stand freely out in the middle of the men's place of worship. All concerned doubtless rejected setting up a rectilinear wooden post in this position as “too plain.” The column must have seemed almost necessary. But, however it was specified at the start, it could not help but become a single, central, *visual* focus for those gathered in worship here. Let me come back to this feature below. Quaker meeting houses did not always have such visual foci, but many did and still do.

A quick word here about the striking columnar architecture from the Meeting House at 330 Arch

Street in Philadelphia from the early 19th century (Fig. 5). Owen Biddle, the architect, specified that the three porches from its main front, built of wood by skilled carpenters, ought to conform, in design, to standards that the ancient Greeks and Romans had established for festive structures built in masonry. Thus, each porch has a pair of Doric columns on tall pedestals very like the one at Caln Meeting House. But here at Arch Street, the columns support a porch roof constructed as if it were a full, classic, marble entablature, that is, with horizontal architraves, friezes, and cornices (but, interestingly, sans pediment)—as if each porch were a kind of classic temple front (or a mini-such-front, an *aedicula*). At the turn of the 18th to the 19th centuries in America, classicizing design of this kind was everywhere. Compare the contemporary, early 19th-century, columnar composition specified by the architect, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, for the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. (Fig. 6). One notes how the porches at the 330 Arch Street Meeting House have no applied ornament or luxury. The column shafts are not made of fancy marble. Their bases and capitals are as simple as can be. Their architraves, friezes, and cornices are utterly smooth. Back in the day, around 1800, all this plainness doubtless made the newly stylish, classicizing features acceptable in a Quaker context.⁵

Latrobe's façade for his Capitol Building was "movemented" (as art historians say). Its elevation had three distinct vertical planes, one in front of another. From the plane formed by the building's front, a broad central pavilion projected to establish a new parallel plane, and from that a temple front projected to a third such plane. Owen Biddle's façade for the Arch Street Meeting House has the same, if much restrained, movemented design (again, Fig. 5). Its central pavilion projects slightly, and its gable recalls a temple front's pediment. The entry porches, configured as mini-temples (*aediculae*) project to yet a third plane. The façade of Biddle's meeting house is more mural, far less columnar than Latrobe's for the U.S. Capitol, but it plays with the same grand design. What's key at this juncture—fascinating really—is how closely nevertheless Biddle hewed to the formal configuration of the ideal Quaker meeting house.

ORANGE GROVE MONTHLY MEETING HOUSE
(1907/8-1917/18)

The Quaker meeting house at 520 East Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena contrasts with the ideal in almost every way. That its builders were conscious of the standard plan and design cannot be doubted, which makes their fashioning the structure in 1907-08 as a (then) right up-to-date bungalow in the Craftsman style very bold indeed (Figs. 7 and 8).

The OGMM, founded in 1907, was the third such Quaker meeting in Pasadena. As a liberal, un-programmed, Hicksite project under the protection of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania,⁶ it contrasted sharply with the two other, much more conservative meetings in the city. The earliest appears to have been the Pasadena Monthly Meeting, started in 1884, founded by the Ohio Yearly Meeting (Conservative), so-called, then in 1917 transferred to the Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative). Members of this meeting practiced plain speech and plain dress, and apparently, did so deep into the 20th century. Interestingly, PMM's meeting house, built 1885-87, was located only one city block away from the OGMM (to the south) at the southwest corner of East Villa Street and Oakland Avenue (Fig. 16). PMM was laid down (Quaker parlance for disbanded) in 1987-88⁷ and its meeting house repurposed thereafter.⁸ A third programmed meeting (led by a pastor) looks to have been organized in the late 1880s as First Friends Church (Quaker). It appears in 1888 in a Pasadena city directory located at the southwest corner of N. Marengo Avenue and Washington.⁹ But in a directory dated only two years later (in 1900), it had already moved to the northwest corner of N. Raymond Avenue and East Villa Street.¹⁰ This meeting appears to have grown more and more liberal as the decades passed. In 1964 First Friends Church moved to a new property and building located on the southwest corner of East Orange Grove Blvd. and Altadena Drive, then between 1992 and 1997 it reorganized as the Foothills Community Church and severed any of its remaining links with the Quakers.¹¹ For the last 20 years or so the OGMM has been the sole Quaker meeting in Pasadena.



Figure 7. Orange Grove Monthly Meeting House looking southwest, Pasadena, California, planned 1907, built 1908-9; East Wing added 1918. [Photo: Judson Emerick]

In 1907-08 the OGMM's Building Committee engaged the architect Ferdinand Davis, resident of Pomona, California, and famous for his work in that nearby city, to design their new meeting house.¹² Davis (1840-1921) grew up in Maine, went to Lebanon, New Hampshire, at age 18 to apprentice as a carpenter, enlisted at age 21 in the Seventh New Hampshire Volunteers on the Union side in the Civil War,¹³ then returned to Lebanon after 1865 to take up furniture building. Some 17 years later, in 1882, he received his first major architectural commission, a commercial center in Lebanon called the Whipple Block, and then in 1886, a commission to build a memorial structure, a museum/shrine for Lebanon's Civil War veterans (and among those veterans, Davis himself). Davis married, left New Hampshire for California, and settled in Pomona in 1887, where he designed Pomona's First National Bank (1889), a three-story building dominated by a central tower with an onion dome, that jumbled classical pediments, elaborate entablatures, round arches, and huge Renaissance volutes

(Fig. 9). A similar exuberance characterized his design for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Pomona dating to about 1895 (Fig. 10). Nineteenth-century American builders had such easy access to wood (and in California, to old growth redwood) that even large and tall buildings were framed in that material. For the Seventh-Day Adventists, Davis played with the so-called Carpenter Gothic style in which builders pick up motifs using wood that we know best from the long Christian building tradition in stone masonry (windows with pointed arches and elaborate tracery, gables that framed arches, tall bell towers, and so forth). As his reputation grew, the city of Pomona hired him to design their civic horse stables in 1909, a huge, brick, utilitarian structure near the Southern Pacific railroad tracks. At the same time, Pomona's Masons asked Davis to design their new Lodge located in the city's center (Fig. 11). Here, playing with neo-classical motifs as builders might do in Paris during the Second Empire (1851-1870), he capped the imposing, two-story, brick-faced, rectangular core



Figure 8. Gamble House, Pasadena, 1908-10, by Charles and Henry Greene, the ultimate California bungalow and the winter residence of one of the founders of the Proctor and Gamble Corporation in Cincinnati, Ohio. [Photo: Jim Heaphy, Wikipedia Commons]

of the Lodge with a tall, heavy, lavishly ornamented cornice supported on dentils, and a mansard roof with oval dormer windows wreathed by tightly-wound scrolls. Then at the entry to the Lodge, by contrast, he set up a sober and austere Doric temple-front, the four columns of which are made of cement, and the entablature of metal-clad wood (?). He had it painted white to suggest marble. Davis's sense of play as he built—his scrambling of styles and motifs, his eclecticism—marks all he did, the better to set forth, he must have thought, the liberty and freedom with which a true modern might seize ideas and themes from western architecture's long past for present delight.

For the project at the Orange Grove Monthly Meeting in 1908, however, Davis started with an utterly new style of building, the California bungalow, a kind of domestic architecture that had, then, just begun to appear in the suburbs of San Diego, Pasadena, Santa Barbara, and Berkeley. It was a key product of the Euro-American Arts and Crafts move-

ment. One wonders if Davis knew the work of the architects, Charles and Henry Greene, whose iconic California bungalows—the Blacker House and the Gamble House, both in Pasadena—were going up at just the moment the Orange Grove people engaged Davis as designer of their new meeting house. To be sure, these famous Greene and Greene homes, patronized by giants of industry and set out expansively in landscape gardens, were truly exceptional.¹⁴ The normal California bungalow, fashioned mainly for early 20th-century renters moving up to home ownership in the new suburbs, were much more modest and smaller in size. Davis built homes in this manner quite soon after Greene and Greene, as shown by a fine, surviving example in Pomona's own bungalow heaven, that is, in suburban Lincoln Park. (Fig. 12, compare Fig. 8).

Arts and Crafts? The movement had sprung up in England during the last half of the 19th-century in reaction to industrialization. Rejecting the mass-pro-

duced and (often) shoddy products emerging from the smoke belching, steam-powered, cavernous factories that exploited throngs of underpaid, anonymous, and spottily trained wage-earners, the Arts and Crafts movement extolled instead the individual crafts person of the pre-industrial, European world, especially the masters and apprentices in the medieval shop system who, working on commission, fashioned objects from start to finish that revealed their original handiwork. It was an Oxford University Professor, John Ruskin, who first, famously—in two classic publications, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53)—spelled this out.¹⁵ Disparaging the coal-burning, nature-destroying, soul-less, secular England of his day, Ruskin entreated his contemporaries to remember how, centuries previously, the soaring Gothic cathedral linked with belief, faith, and moral purpose had focused people's lives. Medieval, Gothic buildings, both religious and secular, had varied columnar supports, windows with pointed arches, ornament based on both geometry and the study of growing things in the natural world, and everywhere, delightful imperfections and asymmetries (so “unmechanical,” said Ruskin), all of which emerged from the handiwork of a free people (not factory workers!) at home in nature spiritually and materially. Consider Plate IX from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* where Ruskin reproduces a Daguerreotype (a photo) of the “head window” in Giotto's famous bell tower for the cathedral of Florence (dating to the early 14th century), and then commends the play of lights and darks in the design, presenting this detail, and many other such High Gothic moments, as models for modern architects (Figure 13). One can't help but remember how, between 1840 and 1876, the British rebuilt their Houses of Parliament (after they had burned down calamitously in 1834) in a neo-Gothic style and so revalued a past associated with the special probity, uprightness, and honesty that Ruskin found in “the Gothic spirit” (Fig. 14).

What the California bungalow did so effectively in the early 20th century was tap into the 19th-century Ruskinian analysis that told how Modernity had gone wrong and what could be done, if you were a builder, to remedy its mistakes. Greene and Greene would

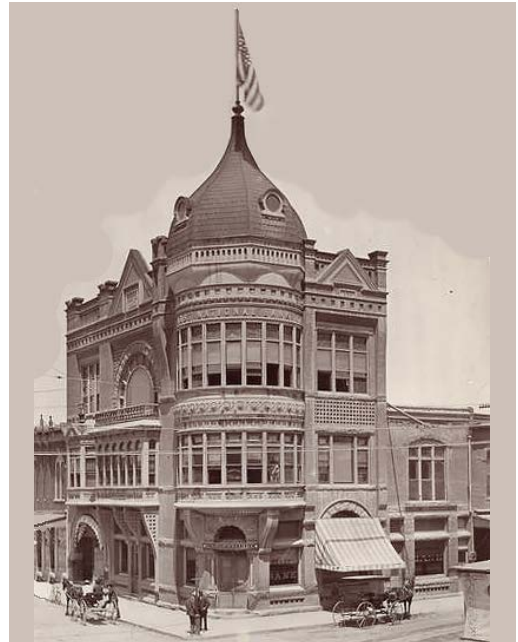


Figure 9. First National Bank, Pomona (1889, replaced in 1922). [Photo: Pomona Public Library SCPO1958, in public domain]



Figure 10. Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Pomona, 360 W. 3rd St. (ca. 1895), now serving as Humanity Church. [Photo: Judson Emerick]

surely have known Ruskin's *Seven Lamps* (republished in 1880), would have appreciated his revaluing of medieval High Gothic masonry buildings. But the Greenes responded by rethinking American, *wood-framed*, domestic architecture. Their Blacker and Gamble Houses in Pasadena had no Gothic aspects, but like Ruskin's recommended models, displayed hand-crafted integrity set out to put their occupants in close contact with the natural world. These houses huddled the earth, low and horizontal (with roofs at very low pitch) so that they and their occupants might better integrate into the natural environment, into the open countryside that the American suburbs were construed to represent. (Both the Blacker and Gamble Houses in Pasadena sat in picturesque, informal, landscape gardens [Fig. 8]; Ferdinand Davis's bungalow in Pomona [Fig. 12] looked out upon a green and leafy civic park).¹⁶ Wood was the primary material used everywhere in the Craftsman house, and inside, it was used unpainted (but lightly stained, sealed, and clear varnished) so that its source, the tree, might easily be recognized (Fig. 15). Windows stretched across walls dramatically to integrate inside and outside. Landscaping put trees and bushes next to the walls as if to dissemble them. Porches opened to the air and sky—even doubled as bedrooms, as places to sleep unencumbered by walls. And inside both Greene and Greene houses, skilled crafts people made chairs, tables, benches, divans, and so forth from wood, each



Figure 12. The bungalow at 1251 N. Palomares Street, Pomona, designed by Ferdinand Davis (1914). [Photo: Judson Emerick]



Figure 11. Masonic Lodge #789, 395 St. Thomas St., Pomona (1909-10). Davis was a dues-paying member of this Lodge. [Photo: Judson Emerick]

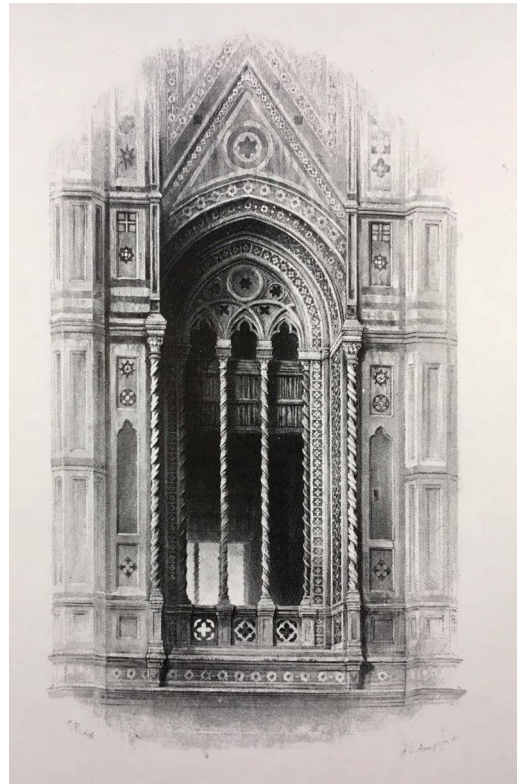


Figure 13. Plate IX from Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* showing a window from the bell tower that Giotto designed for the cathedral of Florence in the early 14th century. [Photo: Judson Emerick, from the original in the public domain]



Figure 14. Houses of Parliament (1840-76) by Charles Barry and Augustus Pugin in the neo-Gothic style Ruskin championed. [Photo: Wikipedia Commons]

designed specially by the Greenes for their special sites, and each an artwork by itself. Built-in furniture, stairway railings, moldings, benches, fireplace surrounds, even the light fixtures, were all crafted by hand specially for these buildings. If the factory underpinned the modern world's physical, material wealth—for better or worse—the bungalow staged that world's opposite—a modern's notion of *spiritual life*. The California bungalow stood as the factory's foil and hence as fulfillment of modernity's central promise of self-realization.

This must be why Ferdinand Davis and his patrons at Orange Grove chose the California bungalow as a model for their meeting house. For a liberal, well-educated, early 20th-century audience, the California bungalow better summed up an American's spiritual aspirations than did the ideal Quaker meeting house of the long 19th century. If the Villa Street people (from the Pasadena Monthly Meeting) built (in wooden frame construction typical for California in the later 19th and early 20th centuries) a virtual copy of the ideal meeting house (Fig. 16)—complete with separate entries for men and women—then the OGMM's refusal to do so makes one further and progressive point very clearly: It did not separate men and women in worship. An early photograph of the meeting room at Orange Grove shows how men and women gathered together there for worship, and right from the start (Fig. 17).

But the OGMM went further, prompted by their

architect, Davis, always ready as he was to play with his models. If the California bungalow typically has a very low roof line on a plan with a main horizontal, *longitudinal axis*, the OGMM's meeting house was *centrally planned* with very steeply pitched roofs and a prominent *vertical axis* (Fig. 18). Centrally planned? That's shown in the way each of the four sides of the original meeting house had a tall triangular gable. Those to the front and back were a little bigger than those on the sides, but not by much. The building is almost square in plan. It faces due north. The crest of the roof running north-and-south crossed that of the roof running east-and-west at very nearly the same height, and at their crossing the crests marked and emphasized the building's central, vertical axis. What this did (and still does, even though the east gable of the original building was dismantled for the addition of the fellowship room in 1918) was announce, fix, and magnify that single, autonomous, ungendered, perfectly square, 31 by 31 foot worship room within. But a great irony thus arose. The vertical accent established by the four pitched roofs echo a tower, and not very faintly. A tower? Even, perhaps, a church steeple? That Davis was thinking like this, that he was quite rejecting the North American Quaker ideal in this instance, the one discussed in the first sections of this paper, is shown by the three, tall, attenuated, and cunningly pointed windows in Gothic style that stood at the center of each of the four gables (Figs. 7, 18, and 19).¹⁷ Gothic? Compare the window designed by



Figure 15. Gamble House by Greene and Greene (1908-10), living room. [Photo: Jim Heaphy, Wikipedia Commons]



Figure 16. The former meeting house of the Pasadena Monthly Meeting (the Villa Street Meeting), Pasadena, (1885-87), now taken over by a non-profit. Note the separate entries for men and women, each beneath a prominent gable on the main front. [Photo: Judson Emerick]

Giotto in the early 14th century for the bell tower of the cathedral of Florence (Fig. 13). Note how a triangle tops each of the Orange Grove windows: Triangles are much easier to frame in wood than the curved, intersecting arches, carved from stone, that usually form the “points” of pointed Gothic windows.¹⁸ It looks as if Davis and the OGMM’s Building Committee in 1907-08 were happy to link their meeting house with the long tradition of the Christian church in the West—George Fox’s antipathies to “steeple houses” notwithstanding.

What Davis brings in here eclectically (and characteristically!) are the major elements of an American wood-framed church from the Carpenter Gothic tradition, one which Davis himself knew well. The Orange Grove meeting house echoes closely Davis’s design for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Pomona, built around 1895. The church in Pomona (Figs. 10 and 20) had front-and-side gables set out in just the same way as the gables were at Orange Grove (Fig. 18), and each of the gables of the Seventh-Day Adventist church had Carpenter Gothic features. So, if the Quaker meeting house has gables with Gothicizing windows, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church has gables with fancy scalloped arches, an impressive rose window on the east side, and a huge Gothic, pointed window on the main north front, each of which was provided with

elaborate tracery of the kind associated with the great High Gothic, collegiate churches and cathedrals of 13th-, and 14th-century Europe. “Carpenter Gothic” was another spin-off—along with the Arts and Crafts movement—of the 19th-century British and American Gothic revival.¹⁹ The style in question was, of course, applied in both secular and religious structures, but was used in California especially for churches. Among surviving examples, one might cite the Presbyterian church in San Francisco’s Noe Valley neighborhood (originally the Lebanon Church) dating to 1881, which survived San Francisco’s earthquake in 1906 (Fig. 21). The First Presbyterian Church in the city of Napa just to the north of San Francisco, dating to 1874, provides another such example (Fig. 22).

Rather than see Davis and the members of the OGMM’s Building Committee working with/playing with motifs from the long Christian architectural tradition in ways that Quakers normally would not do, I would argue that they would have viewed both the exceptional verticality of their structure and its startling Gothic windows as fitting and appropriate. Consider that all of them, Davis and his Quaker clients, had spent decades of their lives in the 19th century. All of them knew of the Gothic revival that flourished in the United States during that century’s

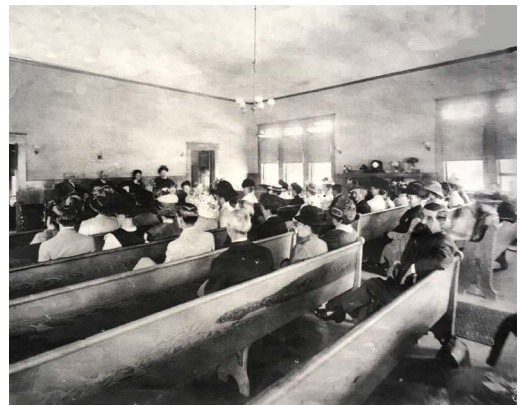


Figure 17. The Orange Grove meeting house has one single worship room shared by both men and women, as this early 20th-century photo shows. Note the women’s large hats on both sides of the central aisle. [Photo in the public domain]



Figure 18. The Orange Grove Monthly Meeting House (1907/08-1909) as it appeared originally (before construction of the fellowship room in 1918). Note the steeply pitched roofs and the resulting tall gables stressed by the deep roof eaves typical of the Craftsman bungalow. (Photo from a postcard mailed on January 12, 1914.) [Photo: Judson Emerick, from original in the public domain]

last half. Doubtless they sensed how the Carpenter Gothic church shared its cultural impetus with the new and exciting California bungalow from the Arts and Crafts movement—so much so that they could and did combine them eclectically at 520 East Orange Grove Boulevard. They were reaching for an architecture that they must have felt denoted genuine, human liberation. Indeed, it can look as if all of them had taken Ruskin's architectural manifestos, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice*, quite to heart.

But eclectic in style as the Orange Grove meeting house may be, its exterior elevation, especially its main north front (Figs. 7, 18, and 19), has a calm, spare, even quiet elegance that the California bungalow (Fig. 8) or the exceedingly busy, picturesque Carpenter Gothic church (Figs. 20, 21, and 22) almost never exhibit. The triad of Gothic windows in the north gable (Fig. 18) make a straightforward statement (graceful



Figure 19. The three Gothicizing windows (attic ventilators) in the north gable of the Orange Grove meeting house, each topped by a triangle, not the curved, intersecting arches of the true "pointed window."

[Photo: Judson Emerick]



Figure 20. Pomona, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church at 360 W. 3rd Street (ca. 1895). Note how Davis used gables on the front and sides of the church to signal the building's central plan just as he does at the Orange Grove meeting house. Davis also capped the large, square room inside the church with a truncated pyramidal roof topped by a lantern with a pyramidal roof. [Photo: Judson Emerick]

but austere) that contrasts sharply with the jumble of Gothicizing motifs decorating, for example, the main front of the Lebanon Church in San Francisco, the First Presbyterian in Napa, or the Seventh-Day Adventist church in Pomona. In the Orange Grove Meeting House Ferdinand Davis quite shuns the busy, even over-ornamented designs for which he was well known (Figs. 9, 10, and 11), and stages the newly organized Quaker meeting in Pasadena in a decidedly restrained manner. I can easily imagine the Orange Grove Quakers watching their effervescent Pomona architect carefully and constantly tightening the reins.

Let us now look inside the OGMM's meeting house,

where clear-varnished wood makes the main impression in typical Craftsman style (Fig. 23). A glance at the luxury of the Gamble House interior (Fig. 15) reveals at once how, at the OGMM, this woodwork was carried out in an exceedingly plain and unornamented manner.²⁰ Note here, inside the square meeting room, how the ceiling is coved dome-like to, again, stress the meeting house's central vertical axis. The dome rising over the square is one of western architecture's favorite such centering devices—and again, Davis and the OGMM's Building Committee shrugged off the ideal Quaker meeting house with its longitudinal, horizontal axis. At the OGMM's meeting house that central



Figure 21. San Francisco, Noe Valley Ministry, formerly known as the Lebanon Church, 1021 Sanchez Street (1881). [Photo: Daniel King]



Figure 22. Napa, First Presbyterian Church, 1333 3rd St. (1874). [Photo: Sanfranman59, Wikipedia Commons]

axis was given great emphasis inside, on the ceiling overhead, by the built-in, Craftsman style, wooden lighting fixture—the ring studded by 12 electric light bulbs in brass sockets.²¹ Originally another pendant lamp bearing a chandelier with five electric light bulbs fell from the center of the wheel (see Fig. 17).

I count this luminous crown as one of Davis's and the Building Committee's happiest ideas. Like the white Doric column at the center of the men's worship space at the Caln Meeting House of the early 1800s (Fig. 4), it focuses the OGMM's meeting room visually. But unlike the column, this feature gives distinct architectural form to the Quaker conviction that one goes inside the meeting house "to greet the light." It is fascinating to think how, nearly a century later, that is, between 1998 and 2000, the esteemed American artist of light, James Turrell, a birthright Quaker, designed a new meeting house for the Live Oak Friends Meeting in Houston, Texas, that explored *the very same idea* (Fig. 24).²² The skyspace—which is what Turrell calls this kind of building—in Houston put members of the meeting in a quiet, plainly decorated room, the ceiling of which has a razor-sharp-edged rectangular opening to the sky for illumination. (When needed, a protective panel on the meeting room's roof may be moved to cover the opening.) This rectangle on the meeting house ceiling does not "read" as a window. It has no frame. It appears "pasted" onto the curve of the ceiling, a two-dimensional patch of light. The skylight it reveals thus takes on a new meaning, especially at sunrise or sunset, the skyspace's best times of day, when the sky's color changes dramatically over an hour or so and the ceiling rectangle accordingly changes color and luminosity, then goes to a deep, velvety black in the night-time darkness. The great beauty of the skyspace lies in its capacity to make these changes palpable, sunrise and sunset magnified and transformed magically. Light inside the skyspace takes on the dimensions of a dream, says Turrell,²³ an unreal, but nevertheless distinct image felt by each viewer, by each member of the meeting.²⁴ At both the OGMM and the Live Oak Friends meeting houses, then, architects at either end of the 20th century found compelling ways to display what Quakers call the Light Within.



Figure 23. Interior, Orange Grove meeting room looking south. Note the wainscoting and door frames in wood; note also the coved ceiling and the luminous crown of 12 electric light bulbs at the ceiling's center. [Photo: Judson Emerick]

Today we marvel at Turrell's skyspaces. Could the Orange Grove meeting room (Fig. 25) have had a similar impact 90 years earlier? I would argue yes. Consider that in 1908-09 when the light fixture in question was crafted, electric lighting was undergoing its first major revolution—as the Edison Company's carbon-filament light bulbs, which glowed only dimly, were being replaced by General Electric's earliest tungsten-filament ones, which were far, far brighter.²⁵ For the founders of the Orange Grove Monthly Meeting the luminous crown overhead at the center of their meeting room's ceiling would undoubtedly have seemed new, remarkable, and awe inspiring.

One cannot help but wonder if James Turrell (1943-), who grew up in the Pasadena Monthly Meeting, located one city-block south of the Orange Grove Monthly Meeting,²⁶ might have visited at

Orange Grove during the 1950s and 60s, that is, before he embarked on his artistic career in the later 1960s. Members of the Villa Street Meeting do appear to have interacted with the Orange Grove people over the years.²⁷ Did Turrell remark the progressive architecture of the meeting house on East Orange Grove Boulevard as smething special? Did the ring of bright lights on the ceiling of the OGMM's worship space impress the young man as innovative? After all, nothing of this kind could be found at Villa Street

CONCLUSION

Original in its design, the Orange Grove meeting house must be counted as an architectural success, one of Ferdinand Davis's most interesting performances, and a tour-de-force on the part of the members of the

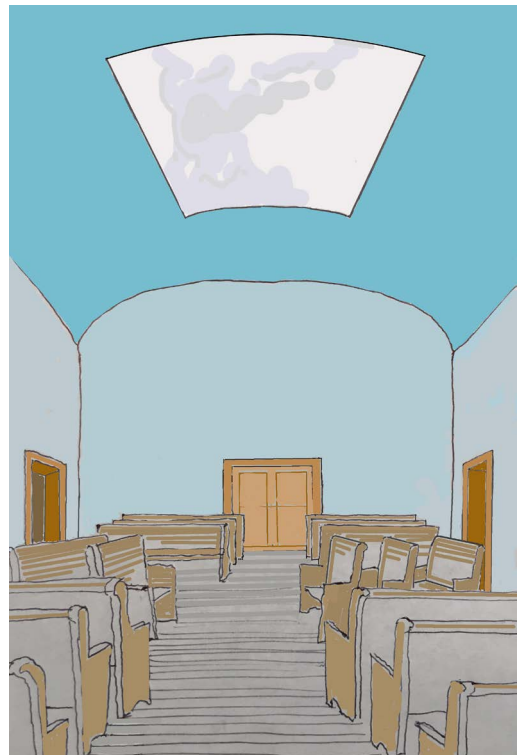


Figure 24. Houston, Texas, interior, meeting room, the Live Oak Friends Meeting House (1998-2000), 1318 W. 26th St., skyspace by James Turrell. [Sketch by Judson Emerick]

OGMM's Building Committee who advised Davis then boldly accepted his plans. The designers of the Orange Grove meeting house wrestled with the Quaker traditions and sought to rethink them. The garden-like setting of the Orange Grove meeting house, the plainness of the materials used (painted redwood outside; stained pine and oak inside), its "family size" (a modest 2,300 square feet), its one-story elevation with long rows of windows, its roof system with strongly projecting eaves and exposed beams, its broad porch sheltering a main entry surrounded by windows, all tell of the (then) contemporary and new California bungalow. Selecting that idea, especially since only a few years previously, the Villa Street Quakers had built in a very traditional Quaker fashion, the Orange Grove people revealed their progressive commitments. The tall gables, the building's vertical main axis (its central plan), and its attic ventilators framed as pointed Gothic windows, however, tap into the (then) contemporary architectural style called Carpenter Gothic, deeply traditional in many ways.

I hope to have suggested why the Orange Grove Quakers followed Davis's lead in this instance—not because they sought links with the long tradition of Christian church building, but because they judged that the neo-Gothic aspects heightened the California bungalow's basic message. ●

ENDNOTES

¹ Seth Beeson Hinshaw, *The Evolution of Quaker Meeting Houses in North America 1670-2000*, Masters Thesis in Historic Preservation and Conservation at the Penn School of Design, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2001 ([text available online](#)), Ch. 3, "The Quaker Ideal Meeting House."

² Margaret Aston, "Segregation in the Church," *Studies in Church History*, 27 (1990), volume devoted to "Women in the Church," pp. 237-294, for an overview from late antiquity to the present. Also, despite its apparent narrow focus, the study by Dale Kinney entitled, "Liturgy, Space, and Community in the Basilica Julii (Santa Maria in Trastevere)," *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam pertinentia*, 31 (2019), pp. 81-100. Kinney provides a wide-ranging précis of how, in early Christian and medieval Roman churches, priests, and congregants negotiated with each other to use ritual spaces.

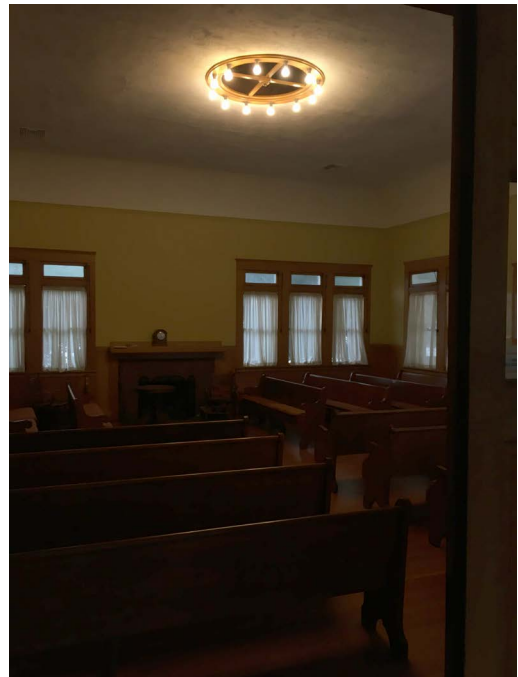


Figure 25. Interior, Orange Grove meeting room looking northwest. Note the central ceiling lighting fixture, now glowing with LEDs. [Photo: Judson Emerick]

³ Mary Maples Dunn, "Saints and Sisters, Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period," *Women in American Religion*, ed. J. W. James (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), pp. 27-46. Women's control of marriage in historic Quaker meetings gave them major social roles—remarkable really for the 19th century in any religious context.

⁴ The present bench system in the Caln Meeting House looks to have been installed after 1801. It has two parts—benches *fixed in place* along the north side for the meeting's elders that mount up stair-like in three steps; and facing them, *moveable* benches for the rest of the community on floor level to the south. The built-in, fixed benches extend from the addition of 1801 westward into the original core of the meeting house built in 1784.

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- ⁵ But note how the shutters from the first-story windows at 330 Arch Street have been decorated with rectangular panels (Fig. 5). In a major American city, a Quaker architect, Owen Biddle, might temper the push to utter plainness that ruled in the rural countryside (compare the Caln Meeting House in Fig. 2). But note that the exterior of the doors at the Arch Street meeting house are smooth, un-articulated, flat, plain expanses.
- ⁶ David H. Morse, *Orange Grove Monthly Meeting, A Centennial Timeline* (Pasadena: OGMM, 2007), pp. 3-5.
- ⁷ Pacific Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice*, PYM in Context, Quakers in Southern California, 2001 ([available online](#)). The Pasadena Monthly Meeting dwindled to a single meeting per month in the 1980s; in 1985 it withdrew from the Iowa Yearly on the basis of “theological differences” and a “few years later” was laid down, or disbanded: see History-Iowa Yearly Meeting, August 1, 2017, “Brief History of Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative)” ([available online as a PDF](#)); and see Morse, *Centennial Timeline*, p. 65, who reports that in March 1987 the PMM (the Villa Street Meeting) was in the process of being laid down. OGMM’s Resident Friend, Phil Way (1939-), member of the OGMM from his teenage years in the mid 1950s, reports that members of the Villa Street Meeting attended in “plain dress.” Jill Shook, attender at the OGMM meeting, reports that the Villa Street people worshiped in a room divided by a wooden baffle or partition in the standard Quaker style.
- ⁸ Jill Shook (see n. 7 above) played a major role, from 1996 onward, in repurposing the former PMM building at 500 East Villa Street in Pasadena as a local community center with after-school programs to aid some hundreds of underprivileged elementary, high school, and college students. She headed the group who applied, successfully, for the grant from the James Irvine Foundation that helped establish the Lake Avenue Community Foundation linked with the Lake Avenue Congregational Church in the city that grew into the faith-based non-profit now renamed *Stars*. *Stars* operates from several buildings in northern Pasadena, and among them, from 2001 onward, the former Villa Street meeting house.
- ⁹ See *The Los Angeles City Directory 1888 including a Directory of Pasadena* (Los Angeles, L.A. Directory Co., 1888). No actual church appears on this corner today. But the large and elaborate, late-19th century house still standing there could have served in the mid-to-late 1880s for First Friends Church.
- ¹⁰ See *The Moore Pasadena City Directory 1900* (Moore Directory Co., 1900).
- ¹¹ Morse mentions First Friends Church several times in *A Centennial Timeline* in entries spanning 1913 to 1975 on pp. 8, 9, 14, 40, and 57. The “steeple house” at Raymond and Villa which apparently served as the First Friends Church between ca. 1900 and 1964 now serves the Holy Assembly of the Church of God in Christ. My information about Foothills Community Church comes from their on-site caretaker via telephone on May 29, 2020.
- ¹² At their December 1908 meeting for business, members and attenders of the Orange Grove Monthly Meeting of Friends of Pasadena, so called, heard their Building Committee announce that it had hired Ferdinand Davis to design the new meeting house, that it had accepted his plans and specifications, that it had found a contractor and begun the work. The OGMM moved into its new meeting house early in 1909—as reported in the minutes for the meeting for business on March 14, 1909. See Morse, *A Centennial Timeline*, p. 6. In what follows, I provide a thumbnail history of Davis’s work from facts and images gleaned from the World Wide Web, q.v.
- ¹³ Davis wrote a war memoir preserved at the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- ¹⁴ Gamble of the Proctor and Gamble Corporation, Cincinnati, Ohio, built the world-famed Gamble House as a wintertime retreat. The Blacker House was constructed lavishly for Robert Blacker and his wife, Nellie Canfield, as their retirement home. Blacker made a large fortune in lumber in Manistee, Michigan, and owned and operated several very large, steam-powered sawmills. Please note that the Blacker House’s original, large, landscape garden is now lost, parceled off after Nellie’s death in 1946. For more, see “[Gamble House](#)” and “[Blacker House](#)” online; I rely on the Wikipedia articles.
- ¹⁵ Ruskin intended *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and the three volumes he devoted to *The Stones of Venice* (in which he declared the Doge’s Palace dating from 1340 onward, “the central building of the world”) as a vast, detailed manifesto for a new modern architecture based on High and Late Gothic models.
- ¹⁶ At the start the Orange Grove Meeting House also rose in a park-like setting standard for bungalows. David Morse recorded in his *Centennial Timeline*, p. 9, that in 1913 the OGMM

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was assessed \$283.65 by the city of Pasadena for its share for the paving of Orange Grove Avenue (now Boulevard); I judge from this note that before 1913 the landscape all round the original structure must have appeared much rougher, greener, and more open than it does today. The meeting lost a five-foot-wide strip across the north side of its entire property shortly after 1957 when Orange Grove Blvd. was widened; see *Centennial Timeline*, pp. 26 and 37. (In 1957 Pasadena bought this strip from the OGMM for \$2,077.) Thus between 1907-08 (when the land was bought for the meeting house) and 1957-58 (when Orange Grove Boulevard was widened), the OGMM's property was more expansive than at present. Its surrounding lawns and trees, partly visible in an old photo (see Fig. 18 above), had picturesque aspects. The five Italian stone pines planted by the meeting's founders became famous in Pasadena, lauded by the *Pasadena Beautiful Foundation* in 1993 as a "landmark grove." One of the five trees had to be removed in 1997, and the other four in 2007; see *Centennial Timeline*, pp. 71, 74, and 84. In 1987, Alex Taylor drew the Orange Grove meeting house showing it over-hung by these very tall, then already iconic, pine trees; Morse published the drawing on the cover of his *Centennial Timeline*.

¹⁷ The fireplace on the west side of the OGMM's meeting house has a tall chimney that rises through the center of the west gable outside. But this gable has two narrow windows in Gothic style, one on either side of the chimney. Compare Figs 7 and 18.

¹⁸ The "windows" in each of the four gables of the Orange Grove meeting house provide ventilation for the building's attic. Each opening, unglazed, was filled with slanted fins or louvers.

¹⁹ For an authoritative introduction to the Carpenter Gothic style of building, see the [extensively illustrated and informative Wikipedia article on the topic](#).

²⁰ The interior of the OGMM's meeting house was restored in August/September of 2014: The woodwork was scraped, sanded, lightly stained, and varnished; walls and ceilings were repainted in the meeting room, the fellowship room, and the library.

²¹ When the OGMM's meeting house was rewired electrically in 2018, an electrician carefully removed the original cotton-insulated wires in the ring of lights to restore the fixture with new ones.

²² <https://www.fgcquaker.org/cloud/live-oak-friends-meeting-houston> (visited on June 5, 2020).

²³ As James Turrell completed the skyspace at the Live Oak Friends Meeting House in 2000, he granted an interview to the editor of *Art 21 Weekly Newsletter* (visited on June 15, 2020). Turrell observed that "All or most spiritual experiences, near death experience, are described with a vocabulary of light. So, for me, this quality to feel light exists, almost like we see it in a dream ... light not seen with the eyes ... the light within."

²⁴ Given that this experience unfolds over time to a viewer actually present within the skyspace, Turrell has always been reluctant to permit still photographs to be published as records of that dynamic encounter. My sketch of the Live Oak Friends Meeting's skyspace (Fig. 24), based on a photograph, is thus inadequate in just the way Turrell says all photos of his skyspaces are. Nevertheless, [many such photos may be found online](#) (q.v.).

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incandescent_light_bulb (visited on June 6, 2020)

²⁶ Gail Whiffen, "James Turrell: Beyond the Skyspace," *Friends Journal*, February 2014 and <https://www.friendsjournal.org/james-turrell-beyond-skyspace> (visited June 23, 2020).

²⁷ Morse, *Centennial Timeline*, p. 8, records how in January 1913 the OGMM invited members of the Villa Street Meeting and the First Friends Church to come to a worship-, and business-meeting. On p. 9, Morse records how the OGMM and the Villa Street Meeting cooperated in resisting military build-ups in 1916. On p. 14, he tells how in June 1929 the OGMM offered to cooperate in various projects with the Villa Street Meeting and First Friends Church. On p. 40, he records that, in October 1958, people from the various Quaker projects in Pasadena met to exchange information about their various histories and hopes for the future.