

TIMELINE OF HISTORY OF SANDY SPRING MONTHLY MEETING.

(Historical texts are quoted as written, using terminology then acceptable.)

1659-1730s

Richard Snowden arrived from England in 1659 as one of the early Quakers in Maryland and settled in the Laurel area. Seeking to increase the region's stability in the late seventeenth-century, Snowden supported the establishment of a militia, the Maryland Rangers. The Rangers patrolled the Patuxent Valley and pushed the Indigenous population of the Piscataway, among other tribes, which had been decimated by new diseases and war, out of the areas most favored by White farmers.¹ After a year, the Rangers were so successful that the Native Americans withdrew into the mountains. By 1698 the Rangers were disbanded.



The sandy spring, after which the town and Meeting are named.

The first few White families to settle permanently in the Sandy Spring area were Quakers, members of West River Meeting on the Western Shore.² In the 1720s, James Brooke (1705-1784), arrived in the region. In 1725, he married Richard Snowden's daughter Deborah and in 1728 he bought and built on local land, and set about acquiring large tracts of land in the area. Two of Deborah's sisters married John and Samuel Thomas. Samuel's father was a founder of the Herring Creek and West River Meetings in Anne Arundel County. By 1730, the families were worshipping together each Sabbath in each other's homes, and later in a converted tobacco barn.

1753-1770

In 1753, the Sandy Spring Friends Meeting was formally approved by the Maryland Yearly Meeting as a Weekly Meeting, part of the West River Monthly Meeting.³ Three of the children of Elizabeth and John Thomas are counted as founding members, and their eldest son and his wife were received as members of the Meeting in 1766.

The Sandy Spring Friends graveyard, adjacent to the Meeting, opened in 1754, with the first burial being Philip Thomas, the 21-year-old son of Samuel and Mary Thomas. (Details in *Burials and The Sandy Spring Friends Meeting Graveyard and at The Woodside Cemetery, 1754-2003*)

The first Meeting House was a log structure that was built by 1756 near the location of the present brick Meeting House. In 1770 James Brooke donated the first of what was to become seven acres of land for use by Friends. The Meeting House (1817), graveyard, and historic Lyceum (1859) were ultimately all located on this tract.⁴



Sandy Spring Meeting Graveyard

1765

A growing Sandy Spring Meeting suggested that the Monthly Meeting be held at Sandy Spring rather than traveling all the way to West River. Meeting members then rotated between the neighboring Indian Spring Meeting (Bowie) and Sandy Spring until 1778, when it was moved exclusively to Indian Spring and became Indian Spring Monthly Meeting.⁵

1720s-1800s

Despite George Fox's repeated advice against this practice, "early Sandy Spring Friends were slave holders, as were almost all Quakers in the Southern provinces."⁶ Beginning in 1760, the Maryland Yearly Meeting (which became Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 1790) discouraged the buying or selling of enslaved people, and in 1778, called for the expulsion of holders of enslaved people.⁷ Members of the Indian Spring Monthly Meeting, to which Sandy Spring belonged, were reluctant to accept the mandate. As a result, the Monthly Meeting established a system of visitations in 1781, whereby appointed members visited Quaker farms and reported on whether enslaved people were working there. Following these visitations, eight members of the Sandy Spring Meeting were disowned for continuing the practice. The Meeting's first settler and the donor of the Meeting's property, James Brooke, was among those disowned.⁷ "Some of them, however, having acknowledged they were in the wrong, were again welcomed into the fold."⁸

In March 1790, Basil Brooke (1738-1794) filed manumission documents in Montgomery County, Maryland, in which he granted freedom to twelve enslaved persons. By 1810 more than 650 free Black people lived in Montgomery County; in contrast 7,500 were enslaved. The largest settlement of free Black residents in the county was Sandy Spring.⁹ A large number of enslaved people in the Sandy Spring area were manumitted in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

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1770s

Primitive cultivation of the land depleted the soil after about 50 years, and farming families would customarily move to unfarmed land, usually to the west. However, the Quaker farmers studied the benefits of amending the soil with Peruvian bat guano. They purchased tons of guano, mixed it with lime and bone dust, and applied the mixture to their land, which increased production of crops. Emigration was avoided, creating the basis for the long tenancy of the early families in Sandy Spring and the Meeting, descendants of whom are still part of it. This farming innovation spread, improving the larger area's agriculture. ¹⁰

1776

A law enacted during the Revolutionary War required that all males older than 18 must sign an oath of fidelity to the Maryland Constitution. Three members of the Meeting refused to comply and were harshly penalized in finances and lands. Seven members signed the oath and were disowned by the Meeting. With only three men remaining, a fortunate influx of new settlers helped to repopulate the Meeting. This painful division has recurred in all wars.

1795

Baltimore Yearly Meeting created an Indian Affairs Committee. Sandy Spring members were among the founders and many have served on the committee since. Two volumes of history were published in 2021 and 2022, documenting the committee's work.

1797

Sandy Spring Quakers opened the first school in the area (the Isaac Briggs School) in a log cabin near what we call the "Old School House" to the northeast of the Meeting House. In 1860 it became a public school. The log cabin was destroyed by a storm in 1896 and replaced by the current building (then moved to its current location in 1927). This institution was just one of several schools established in the area by Sandy Spring Friends in the 1800s. In 1883 a member donated land for Sherwood Academy, a private Friends school until 1906, when it was given to Montgomery County, enlarged and renamed Sherwood High School.

1799

Beginning with the Sandy Spring Farmer's Club of 1799, the Sandy Spring Quaker community became a center of self-improvement efforts. ¹¹

1817

Members built a new brick Meeting House, still in use today, in the plain style of a simplified colonial, the unassuming manner of most Meeting Houses of the time. For decades, this Meeting House was the largest house of worship in Montgomery County. Members of the Thomas family, who built most of the brick houses in the area, helped plan the project. The interior space included a partition, dividing the Meeting House into separate worship areas and entrances for men and for women. The earlier log structure was retained as a horse shed.



1822

Thomas Brooke's land was sold to their free Black neighbors for 10c to build the Sharp Street Methodist Church.

1828-1950

Beginning in 1828, and continuing for 122 years, the Quakers of Sandy Spring, along with those in the Baltimore Yearly Meeting, divided into two groups: the Hicksites and the Orthodox. The Hicksites were followers of Elias Hicks, an early abolitionist, who emphasized obedience to the Inner Light over the literal interpretation of the Bible. ¹² This group constituted the majority of Quakers in the Baltimore Yearly Meeting.

Quakers who instead followed the evangelical Orthodox tradition of John Gurney built the Ashton Meeting House (1881), and developed their own graveyard called Woodside Cemetery, and formed the Ashton Monthly Meeting (1887). "The Ashton Meeting was a small, but dedicated group, devoted to helping black Americans during and after the Civil War, and American Indians in later years."¹³

1820s-1850s

Members were "read out of the Meeting" (disowned) for various offenses, primarily marrying non-Quakers, or even spouses who were not members of the Meeting. Even the most stalwart, long-time Quakers families, such as the Brookes, were not immune.

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1840-1846

The Monthly Meeting changed its name to Sandy Spring after the Indian Spring Meeting was laid down in 1840.¹⁴

1859

The Lyceum was built as a lecture hall for public discussions and as a meeting place of various societies and clubs in the Sandy Spring community. In 1883, community members decided to publish the first twenty years of the Lyceum's history and to continue with a yearly chronicle called *Annals of Sandy Spring*. Ultimately, they published six volumes, up to 1962, all indexed in Vol VI.



1864

"Sandy Spring Quakers aided, financially and scholastically, the establishment of the Sharp Street Methodist Church School – the first black school in Montgomery County."¹⁵

1861-1865

In the Civil War, Sandy Spring Quakers were staunch Unionists (having earlier freed their enslaved persons and continuing to press for abolition of the practice), but being in a Southern border state many neighbors were of Southern sympathies, and troops of both sides occupied the area.

1868

The front porch was added to the Meeting House. In later years, an extension was built on the south end to include storage and restrooms. The date of the latter addition is not known.

1883–1921

Known as a historically progressive community, Sandy Spring served as a base of operations for the women's suffrage movement. Between 1883 and 1915, two Maryland Woman Suffrage Association presidents, Sandy Spring Meeting members Caroline Hallowell Miller and Mary Bentley Thomas, helmed statewide campaigns seeking the right to vote for women.¹⁶



Sandy Spring Meeting House as it is today

1917

The community and members held a two-day celebration of the centennial of building the Meeting House.

1925

The Meeting purchased the Lyceum and renovated the building, which became the Meeting's Community House. First Day School classes began sometime later. Prior to this, children attended Meeting for Worship only.

1930

A furnace was installed in the Meeting House. "The venerable wood-burning stoves are missed with regret but the uniform heat...is most welcome."¹⁷

1939

Sandy Spring Friends "finally succumbed to the idea of having the Meeting house wired for electricity."¹⁸

1950

The Orthodox Ashton Meeting and the Hicksite Sandy Spring Meeting combine into the Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting. The new Meeting is a member of both the Hicksite Friends General Conference and the Orthodox Friends United Meeting, as is BYM. The Ashton Meeting House became a Montgomery County public library.

1953

The 200th anniversary of Sandy Spring being formally recognized as a Weekly Meeting was commemorated with a reading of *The History of Sandy Spring and the Friends Meeting from its Early History to 1853*, which was written by Esther Bathgate Stabler, and published by the Montgomery County Historical Society and in the Sentinel newspaper.

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1958

S. Brooke Moore brought a concern for a new Friends school in Sandy Spring to the Meeting. The Meeting supported the idea immediately and formed both guidance and financial committees. Friend Esther Scott donated 55 acres of land for the endeavor. When Sandy Spring Friends School opened in 1961, 77 junior and senior high school students attended. When the school started a ninth-grade program in 1973, students and teachers met in the Community House for several years until there was room on campus. The school continues to operate under the care of SSMM, which provides eight members for the school's Board of Trustees and financial scholarships support.

1965

By 1965, a growing First Day School was a well-established part of the Meeting's culture, with classes held in the Community House, and in a classroom addition that was attached to the Lyceum building. This community of activities enriched children's and families' lives, creating close ties to each other and to the Meeting as a whole. By 1974, the Christmas pageant had moved into the Meeting House, where it continued for 56 years, until 2020, when it was interrupted by the Covid pandemic. The pageant in the Meeting House featured live animals, including sheep, goats, and alpaca, and when available, a real baby.

1967

The 150th anniversary of the Meeting House was celebrated with a pageant to honor those men and women who erected the building as a symbol of their determination to make this place a center of spiritual purpose.

Friends House Retirement Community was built on land donated by a Sandy Spring Friend Esther Scott to provide affordable homes for low- to moderate-income seniors, particularly Friends who had spent a life in low-paid service. Many residents are part of SSMM, with a worship group that meets at Friends House under the care of the Monthly Meeting. Meeting members are always sought to serve on the Friends House Board.

1968

After a three-year discussion about whether to alter the historic Meeting House, a balcony was added. Resistance from members was overcome when the idea of using the old partition panels as facing for the balcony. The increased space allowed Sandy Spring Friends School to hold graduation and other events in the Meeting House.

1970

The Prison Visitation Committee was begun, and was active for more than 40 years. A Prison Journal and Prison Pen Pals have been some of the other Prison Committee endeavors.

1972

The Meeting House was declared a National Historical Site.

1980s

The Meeting House Hearing Assist system was installed. The sidewalk ramp into the Meeting House's north door was completed.

1983

Montgomery County gave the former Orthodox Ashton Meeting House to Sandy Spring Friends School. The building was moved to campus to serve as the school's Meeting House.



1987

Martha Nesbitt & Mary Reading Miller wrote the *Chronicles of Sandy Spring Friends Meeting and Environs*, our best history.

1985 -1993

Sandy Spring Friend Annette Breiling started Friends Elementary School in a church basement in Layhill, since there was no elementary level school at Sandy Spring Friends School. In 1992, the school moved onto the Sandy Spring Friends School campus and became its Lower School in 1993.

1994

Friends designated an area on the south side of the cemetery within the grove of trees behind the Meeting House for use as a Memorial Grove, where family members might spread the ashes of individuals. The names of those

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whose ashes are spread there may be listed with a plaque on the entrance plinth. In the early years, only members and longtime attenders of the Meeting could have their ashes so designated.

A Sandy Spring Friend donated 7.5 acres on which the new Sandy Spring Museum building was built.

1994-2015

First Day School thrived during the years 1994 to 2015, with 130 students regularly attending in 2008 and up to 250 registered. The Religious Education Committee adopted the Friendly Seed curriculum of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and partnered with other Meeting committees to enrich the curriculum, held pizza parties, camp-outs, stream monitoring, Quakers in Trees at Sandy Spring Adventure Park, and walks to raise money for the homeless. The Halloween Party was a long time well-loved event complete with a hayride and a spooky house made by the Young and Junior Young Friends.

Mid-1990s

SSMM launched its website, www.sandyspring.org, which has become a staple in outreach and communication.

1997

Friends Meeting School in Ijamsville, MD, was founded by Annette Breiling. The school continues under the spiritual care of the Meeting as Sandy Spring regretfully did not feel it could hold two schools fully under its care.

1999

Two Preparative Meetings were established under the care of Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting. A worship group became Patapsco Preparative Friends Meeting, at Mt. Hebron, MD. In August 2002 Patapsco became a full Monthly Meeting. Another Worship Group became Seneca Valley Preparative Meeting, at Boyds, MD. It was laid down in 2013 after the loss of several key members.

2000

Sandy Spring Friends in Unity with Nature (FUN) formed and became the Meeting's environmental action group. Members celebrated Earth Day, held special events for children and families, and organized picnics and other outdoor activities. With growing regional and national awareness of environmental issues and the need to broaden citizen education, the group became a committee of the Meeting.

2008-2012

The Meeting launched the Sandy Spring Religious Education Building Project with a contract for a capital campaign feasibility study to determine whether the Meeting could fund the proposed 2½-story building. Member Miche Booz was chosen to serve as the architect. Meeting approved the recommendation to go forward and fundraising for the new project began in earnest in 2009. A subcommittee was formed with FUN to address sustainability issues for the new construction. An energy audit was performed on the existing buildings on the campus. The auditor's report guided the Meeting's next steps in refurbishing our old buildings.

2009

The Marriage and Family Relations Committee raised the question whether the procedures for marriage under the care of SSMM were available to all couples, regardless of sex or gender. This query was brought to the Meeting House for an extended process of discernment and listening.

2000-2010

The Meeting included a troubled Friend whose actions were disruptive to worship and business meetings, even threatening to some gathered. Many loving efforts were made to support this Friend, whose messages at times felt spirit-led, including a year of worship in a small group separate from the Meeting. After years of discernment during which the traditional Quaker practice of disownment was thoroughly considered (partly to fulfill legal requirements for community safety), there came a sense of the Meeting that this Friend must be removed from membership in the Meeting. This was the first disownment for many years, and sadness that we were unable to solve this another way is still felt among us.

2011

A minute on same-sex marriage was approved: *"Friends regard marriage as religious in nature, being a solemn covenant made between two people in the presence of God. We apply the Procedure for Marriage under the care of Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends to all couples, regardless of sex or gender."*

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2012-2013

Meetings for listening were held to consider a building development fund and a full renovation and addition to the Community House. The Meeting approved authorization to proceed with the Community House Renovation and Addition project, with the allowance of spending up to \$2 million plus financing costs.

2014

FUN expanded activities to include research and advocacy for high-impact regional and national issues, including fracking, water quality monitoring, divestiture of stock in fossil fuel companies, and mountaintop removal mining.

The floor of the Meeting House south porch was raised to facilitate wheelchair access to the restrooms.

2015

Many Friends joined together to empty the current buildings and prepare to move First Day School to the Sandy Spring Friends School campus, where Meeting for Worship would be held for the next two years during construction activity on the Meeting campus.

Representatives of the Social Concerns Committee met with the Women's Group of the Sharp Street United Methodist Church and together they produced a cookbook of recipes from the two congregations. Titled *A Feast of Goodness*, the cookbook included a brief history of each church and 240 recipes. Cookbook sales began in 2018, and a joint potluck in the Community House celebrated this collaborative effort, from which strong friendships developed.

2015-2018

The Stormwater Management Working group considered ways to manage stormwater responsibly, including the use of a rain garden and of cisterns. FUN received grants from Montgomery County Rainscapes and the Chesapeake Bay Trust for this work.

2016

A working group on refugees was formed and many Friends became friendly visitors to recently arrived Syrian families. SSMM coordinated with other Monthly Meetings to support more than thirteen families.

SSMM's annual Lee Stern Peacemaker Awards, presented to local high school students starting in the 1990s, evolved into the first all-day Youth Peace Conference. The conference, held at Sandy Spring Friends School, became an annual student-run social justice and community-building event for grades eight to twelve, involving other schools and organizations (such as the Muslim Community Center) in the planning and implementation.

2017

The Meeting held a celebration to recognize the 200th anniversary of the Meeting House and the grand opening of the new building. The Meeting also produced a booklet, *Elegant Simplicity*, to recognize the anniversary and to record details of the building Meeting House.



Renovated Lyceum, left and new Classroom Building of SSMM Community House

The restoration of the Lyceum was awarded the 2016 Montgomery County

Award for Historic Preservation. The County Council issued a proclamation recognizing the work of SSMM in the design of the new Community House.

Despite its traditional appearance, the new building is a green building, with passive solar design features, a highly efficient zone heating and cooling system, low-flow plumbing fixtures, linoleum floors, and LED lighting. The building is powered, heated, and cooled by 100 percent electric power, which allows all of its energy use to be either

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generated onsite or offset through the purchase of green power. Improvements addressed a range of accessibility issues, including outside ramps, railings, door widths, handicapped parking, restrooms, and the lift to the second floor. The new building also includes a small art gallery that regularly features artworks by Meeting members and the broader public, and provides the basis for art-related lectures and receptions.

The Meeting opened the Memorial Grove to members of the larger community.

2018

SSMM participated in efforts that addressed the threat of nuclear war. The Meeting joined the “Back from the Brink” campaign. SSMM approved a minute offered by the Peace Committee to become a part of the New Sanctuary movement of the D.C. metro area.

2020

The Meeting echoed the statement by Baltimore Yearly Meeting declaring itself an antiracist faith community and encouraging Meetings to form Change Groups. A group of concerned Friends met to provide leadership to lower barriers to Friends of color and actively work on becoming a beloved and antiracist community. The Change Group was formed as a working group and began meeting bi-monthly with book discussions, discussion sessions, and leadership in guiding the Meeting toward increasingly anti-racist perspectives.

2020-2022

FUN collaborated with Sharp Street United Methodist Church on a rain garden grant for the church’s property, which was then planted. The Social Concerns Committee supported Olney Help, the STRIDE inclusiveness camping program, and assisted Afghan refugees that have settled in the community. In 2022 the Meeting established a Refugee Assistance Fund.

In March 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic struck, and public gatherings either halted entirely or went virtual. Nearly everyone donned masks and practiced social distancing. Activities shifted online. First Day School became virtual or outdoors, and all meals in the Meeting House were discontinued along with associated activities and meetings. Still, many activities continued. Virtual Meetings for Worship continued and were well-attended. Hybrid Meetings were held, with some attenders online, and others in person in the Meeting House when conditions allowed. Virtual Monthly Meetings for Worship with Concern for Business continued well-attended, with reports circulated via email. There was some decrease in member financial contributions, and some decrease in regular attenders. Memorial Meetings were held variously, many postponed, some virtual, a few in person. In March 2022, there were twelve children active in First Day School, with ages 5-16 all in the same class. Committee and special group work was pursued as possible.

2021

The Meeting celebrated its first Juneteenth event in-person and virtually, a holiday commemorating the official end of slavery in the USA, with plans for it to be an annual event. In 2022 the event again had strong participation and acclaim.

In spite of the pandemic, in fall 2021 the Meeting proceeded with plans to hire a Meeting Coordinator, to serve the Meeting community through administrative support and coordination of activities, with the goal to draw the community together as well as to increase awareness of Quaker presence in the wider community.

2022

The Meeting approved plans for the installation of solar panels on the Community House and Art Gallery roofs with RE-Volv, a company that helps nonprofits acquire solar panels for renewable energy. The Meeting will pay nothing for the panels on its roof, and will pay RE-Volv a fixed price for energy for twenty years. The panels will provide nearly 70% of the energy the Meeting uses for the year in all three of its buildings. The Historic Preservation Commission signed off on the project, which will commence in summer of 2022.

On April 17, 2022, the Meeting celebrated Easter in person, with an Easter breakfast, egg decorating after the Ukrainian fashion, Meeting for Worship in the Meeting House and on Zoom, and for the children an Easter egg hunt in the graveyard. It was a bright sunny day, full of joy.

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- ² Kimberly P. Williams (1999) *Quaker-related Historic and Architectural Properties of Montgomery County, 1753-1900,* M-NCPPC, Montgomery County Historic Preservation [Quaker Related Historic Properties](#) . p. 15
- ³ Williams, p. 13.
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- ⁷ Williams p42
- ⁸ Nesbitt, p 80
- ⁹ Heritage Montgomery. (2012) [Community Cornerstones](#), p.3
- ¹⁰ Williams p 23
- ¹¹ Williams p 33
- ¹² Paul Buckley, ed. (2009) *The Journal of Elias Hicks*. Inner Light Books.com [Elias Hicks Journal excerpt](#), p. 14
- ¹³ Nesbitt, p. 101
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- ¹⁵ Carroll, Kenneth, p. 36. "Maryland Quakers and Slavery" in *Quaker History*, Friends Historical Assn. Vol. 72, No. 1, Spring 1983, pp. 27-42
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- ¹⁷ *The Annals of Sandy Spring*, Vol. V, Ch. 1 (April 1929-March 1930), p. 4
- ¹⁸ *The Annals of Sandy Spring*, Vol. V, CH. 10 (April 1938-March 1939), p. 142