

WEST RIVER QUAKER BURIAL GROUND - 350 years' timeline

- 1657** - Friends or "Quakers" first organized in the 1640s in England. By 1657, Quakers first arrive in Maryland. **(George Fox, founder of Quakerism, "greeted" slaves in Barbados epistle.)**
- 1659** - Quaker evangelists traveling through the colony urge others to avoid military service and not to swear oaths. Md. General Assembly passes a law directing that *"Justices of the Peace [should] apprehend and cause them to be whipped from constable to constable until they should reach the bounds of the province."*
- 1660s-1670s** - Despite difficult start, Quakers impress other colonists with their faith, morals and hard-work, earning converts including prominent planters and professionals. **George Fox, visiting Barbados, urges slaveowners to "train them up in the fear of God and eventually to set them free."**
- 1672**- West River is the site of the first, "very large ...Yearly Meeting" of Quakers in Maryland, lasting 4 days. By chance, Quaker founder George Fox arrives from England. By 1697, the colony's Provincial Governor, justices of peace, and others regularly attend Yearly Meetings.
- 1683**- Quaker Thomas Hooker excludes from bequeath to his son "one acre and one-half previously laid out for ye people known as Quaker to meet and to bury their dead...at their service forever."
- (Quakers, during this time, commonly buried their dead in plain coffins without markers and without the cost & formality of service by an Episcopal priest. They objected to priests and the pretense of social inequality. Contemporary Episcopal officials describe practice, saying Quakers are "buried like a dog." —In West River, most unmarked graves currently are found near the intersection of Galesville and Muddy Creek Roads where, it is reported, the original and later-expanded Meeting House was located.)**
- 1688**- Considering the Bible's "do unto others" standard, a local (Germantown, Pa.- near Philadelphia) Quaker Meeting calls upon other Quakers to stop the practice of slavery, set black slaves free, and oppose the practice of slavery by others. (Several Marylanders free slaves in wills before 1700.)
- 1724**- Md. General Assembly bans sale of liquor within 2 miles around Meeting house.
- 1726**- Quaker Sam Brownas' journal entry: *Yearly Meeting includes 3 days worship and 1 day market where ship captains and planters "settle their affairs." Other accounts suggest slave-trading may have occurred as well.*
- 1723-1747**- Md. General Assembly bans sale or giving of liquor **"under any pretense whatsoever, to any Servant, Negro, or other slave at annual meeting time"; also to "prevent running of Horse-races near the yearly Meetings of People called Quakers, and to prevent the the tumultuous Concourse of Negroes and other Slaves during the said Meetings."** Reading between the lines of this legislation, slave-owning neighbors had adopted a boisterous strategy to discourage Quaker's quiet worship and consideration of their slavery controversy.
- 1762** - West River's Annual Meeting concluded it was members "solid judgment that **no member of our Society shall be concerned in importing..., buying..., [or selling] negros...without consent and approbation of the Monthly Meeting they belong to.**"
- 1777**- Finally, **Maryland Quakers completely disavow slavery, stating "It is our solid sense and judgment of [the Yearly Meeting] that the continuing practice is become burdensome such that persons must be disunited from our religious Society."**

West River, having been located in the heart of Maryland's tobacco-plantation region and where operations' profitability depended on use of slaves, progressively lost local membership as planters left Quakerism (or were "disunited" from it) and joined the older Episcopal or newer Methodist churches. Remaining Quakers, mostly further north, found it more convenient and hospitable to gather in Baltimore.

- 1778-** Johns Hopkins (grandfather of the university founder) frees his personal slaves, per Yearly meeting guidelines. However, other family members continue to own slaves.
- 1788-** Baltimore Yearly Meeting, successor to West River Yearly Meeting, declared "***Friends seem clear of holding slaves.***" Other sources suggest that Monthly Meetings still permitted some exceptions for according to members' needs. (See 1807.)
- 1797-** Quaker Richard Jordan's letter reports, apparently describing *the abandoned meeting house and burial grounds, "no regular meeting" now is held among the "city of their fathers' sepulchers [that] lay without walls, gates, or bars ...[in] desolation."*
- 1807-** Quaker Samuel Hopkins, to comply with the requirements of his Monthly Meeting, emancipates all his able-bodied slaves, continuing to care for those disabled. He also withdraws his 12 year-old son Johns Hopkins to have him work on the tobacco crop.
- 1812-** Quaker Joseph Hoag visits a nearby-Meetinghouse (Herring Creek), now used for curing tobacco, and argues with planters about their practice of slavery. He travels on to West River finds it "*a desolate spot, the Meeting House almost rotted down—the graveyard lying common and briars and bushes growing over the bones of the dead and many of the graves rooted down with swine so that mournful were my feelings and heavy was my heart.*"

Samuel Hopkins sends his 17 year-old son Johns Hopkins to work for his Baltimore- based uncle Gerard Hopkins' wholesale grocery business.

Local, West River families (many with Quaker roots) begin burials with engraved stone monuments in the Burial Ground - stones facing north.

- 1823-1847-** More family plots are laid out in the West River Quaker Burial Ground -stones facing north and south. Notable family burials with Quaker ancestors include Arnold, Beard, Chew, Franklin, Galloway, Hammond, Harwood, Hopkins, Johns, Mears, Talbott, Thomas, White, and more.
- 1861-1865-** Journal of Maryland Confederates confirm that West River plantation area strongly favors the Southern cause. A confederate soldier is interred in the burial ground, as well as a Union soldier from the N.Y. Cavalry. Decades later, local family member named "Robert E. Lee" (born in the 1870s), is interred in the Burial Ground. In Baltimore, Quaker Johns Hopkins, now wealthy and owning much of the B&O Railroad, actively supports President Abraham Lincoln's war effort, offering the railroad for movement of Union troops. Lincoln accepts the offer.
- 1867-** Local landowner files confirmatory deed (again) conveys West River Quaker Burial Ground to trustees for continued use and maintenance of burial ground.
- 1885-** Baltimore resident Margaret Cathell conveys a Baltimore City lot to WRQBG trustees in trust for their maintaining family burial lots in West River for Cathell, Denny and Gale families.
- 1888-** Perhaps resolving a dispute as to control, the MD General Assembly passes legislation recognizing "West River Quaker Burial Ground trustees"

Later 1800s-present- Local, West River families continue burials, but now with stones facing east and west. Modern day trustees speculate that new family lots may occupy the former site of the West River Meeting House, near the top of the hill, as well as occupying spaces of forgotten, unmarked Quaker graves from the 1600s and 1700s.

Notwithstanding Quaker testimony against military service, dozens of local families honor those buried after service in World War I, World War II, Korea and Viet Nam.

1960s- A Quaker (monthly) meeting is reestablished in Annapolis, first meeting at St. John's College. Members are active in civil rights protests and opposing the Viet Nam war. Land in Annapolis is acquired and a new Meeting House is built in 1993.

1994-present- West River Quaker Burial Ground trustees, then aging members of local families, approach area Quakers ("Chesapeake Quarterly Meeting") and request members to join and support Trustees in maintaining the Burial Ground. Current trustees group is composed of more than half active Quakers.

2022- With most burial sites full and arrival of the 350th anniversary, WRQBG trustees agree to transition the Burial Ground to a primarily historic site.

-WEST RIVER QUAKER BURYING GROUND (WRQBG) AND HISTORIC SITE

The first Yearly Meeting session were convened (under then-existing calendars) on the 23rd day of Fourth Month, 1672, in West River, Maryland, about 10 miles south of Annapolis with George Fox coincidentally arriving to preside.

-Approximately 350 years later, on 4/23/2022, Quakers and members of the local community gathered near the same spot--now known as Galesville-- for a commemoration. The program was video-recorded and links to the videos (cited below) can be found online on the BYM anniversary website (<https://www.bym-rsf.org/anniversary/events.html> .)

Introduction - welcome and citation from the MD General Assembly on the 350th anniversary

The history of West River Quakers and the challenge of slavery - How Quakers' opposition to slavery changed society and the Yearly Meeting itself over time

Quaker Burying Ground - aerial view in 2022 of the site where Quakers first met in 1672 with music - "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?"

Silent Worship with messages as to past and present roles of Quakers in our society

Gertrude Makell, an organizer discussing the local African-American community and Quaker connections

Lyndra Marshall, a local historian also discussing African-American and Quaker connections

Other links for written information on the WRQBG can be found here and WRQBG trustee can be contacted with donations or further suggestions for preservation of the historic site at westriverquakerburyingground@gmail.com