

Sandwich HISTORY

Sandwich was the first Cape town, settled in 1637 and incorporated two years later. The original Town House was built on the corner of River and Main Street and both religious and civic meetings were held there until the legislature and the citizens of Massachusetts voted to separate church and state in 1833. Sandwich residents immediately set to work building the present Town Hall, using Greek Revival architecture as representative of democratic values.

The 1650s in Sandwich saw a period of high drama with the arrival of a new faith, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies tried to quell the movement with fines, banishment and finally in 1659 with an execution in Boston. An English Quaker, Christopher Holder, arrived in Sandwich in 1657 and converted many residents. While fines and persecution impoverished the Sandwich Quakers, the movement continued to grow, quietly supported by many of their Sandwich neighbors. Thus, Sandwich has the oldest continuous Monthly Friends Meetings in America.

Sandwich primarily favored independence during the Revolutionary War, but there were enough Tories around to lead to several local incidents. When a Liberty Pole was erected in the Village in 1775, thousands of men gathered from surrounding towns and marched to the Barnstable Courthouse to demand that officials stop acting in the King's Name. They were led by prominent Patriot Doctor Nathaniel Freeman. When word reached them that the Liberty Pole had been cut down, some rushed back to Sandwich to apprehend the perpetrators who were forced to re-erect the pole. A few days later Dr. Freeman received a message that a patient needed him. As he passed the Newcomb Tavern he was severely beaten by six Tories, then rescued and carried home. Because the culprits were in danger of being lynched, they were quickly tried, and fined. The Newcomb Tavern was well known as a Tory meeting place. It was owned by Brigadier General Timothy Ruggles who was third on the official 1778 list of the 300 most despicable Tories in the State. By this time he had left Sandwich and later fled to the British sanctuary of Nova Scotia.