250th Anniversary

Friendsville, Maryland

The town of Friendsville as it appeared in the 1880s.
The B&O train crossing the Youghiogheny River trestle approaching Friendsville. Small insert picture: lumber train in Friendsville.
Man with oxen crosses the old Friendsville/Youghogheny bridge coming into town.
Maple Street, Friendsville, looking west toward Yough Bridge in the 1890s.
W. W. Savage Furniture Store with a welcome arch on Maple Street along the Youghiogheny River.
Ryland’s General Merchandise Store and Custer’s Furniture Store on Water Street. (Insert—Ryland’s Store interior.)
Early 1900s looking west on Maple Street toward downtown Friendsville.
First National Bank of Friendsville. Maple Street looking east.
B&O Depot, Friendsville, MD, in the 1890s.
The Thomas Cuppett family in front of their Store/Hotel.
Leslie E. Friend in front of his department store in the 1890s.
250th Anniversary of Friendsville, Maryland

Bear Creek Iron Works Furnace, built in 1822.

Hiram Forsythe was the first white man who came to Friendsville. He was the great grandson of Old John, the first settler, and a grandson of Gabriel, the village patriarch.

According to Hiram Forsythe, his grandfather Gabriel told him the Friends (John Friend, John’s son Gabriel Friend and Andrew, John’s brother) came from below Oldtown, Maryland, went up the Potomac River until they came to Ryan’s Glade, crossed over Backbone Mountain and on into the Glades. Gabriel was just a boy and not old enough to carry a gun, just a tomahawk. From there they crossed the river, and found an Indian town and cornfield. The Indians told them they were the first white men to come to that area.

The Friends liked the surroundings and found the Indians to be very friendly. They stayed several days. But before they left the vicinity of Friendsville they bought the land and Indian possessions. They left for Oldtown and told the Indians that they would return at a later date.

On their return trip they went to Cumberland and up Will’s Creek, following Washington’s old trail to Keyser Ridge and the Indian trail to what is now Friendsville.

Records of Hampshire County, Virginia (now West Virginia), show that in 1765 John Friend sold property at the site below Oldtown, which is near the present village of Paw Paw, West Virginia.

Around 1800 people were stirred up with the great plans of their Canal Way from the Chesapeake to the Western Flowing Waters, and it was the time to take up land. So Gabriel Friend, more a businessman than some of the Friends, had considerable property all around Friendsville. His son, Jacob B., received from him Captain Friend’s place and the fields extending back to the mountain. This was the Old Fort Field.

Abraham Steele, the son of Gabriel Friend’s second wife Nancy, received the big portion—“For past services and future fidelity in laboring on said premises for support and maintenance of said Gabriel Friend and Clarissa Ann Friend, his wife.”

Warm hospitality has always been a part of the culture of Friendsville. Dolphy Friend lived in an area where the Indians danced the Green Corn Dance. The significance of this entertainment has a lot to do with the importance of Friendsville as a historical center.

The Green Corn Dance figures in 1950s Maple Street looking east.
this country's modes and customs to an outstanding degree. The Green Corn Dance is a prayer of rejoicing and thanksgiving. Indians celebrated it throughout the Americas, from New England to the land of the Cliff Dwellers, and in Mexico. When the Pilgrims gave their noted Thanksgiving feast in the 1600s, they apparently followed the pattern of the Green Corn Dance—insofar as their strict tenets permitted.

In a book "Fast and Thanksgiving Days of New England" by W. DeLoss Lobe, Jr., a scholarly work, the author stated this first Thanksgiving was unique, different from the usual events, even different from the Harvest Home, known by these Englishmen. He attributed this fact to the good harvest, and the beautiful new world shores, but he did not attribute it to the most probable cause: i.e., to the fact it could have been a reciprocal feast to Massasoit and his eighty painted warriors, who were their guests.

Dr. Lobe pointed out that at this memorable first American Thanksgiving, these stern Saints and Strangers had no accompanying fasts, as often was the case. They relaxed, too, for Pilgrims, and it was thought, perhaps, that the younger ones indulged in stool ball, a game of the times, and there were momentous gun salutes. Sociability and high spirits were the order of the day—or rather, days. It is commonly known that these Pilgrim festivities lasted for several days. This long period of celebrating was like the Indian custom. One week was the period for which the Indians issued invitations when the corn was ripe!

The Green Corn Dance was a wonderful celebration to have taken place involving our ancestors, the Friends, and the Lenni Lenape or Shawnee or whatever other tribe may have been here.

At that time. We are mindful of the fact that no other early settlers even found the Indians when they came. But the Friends found the old residents still staying on, still loath to leave their beautiful village where the Youghiogheny sang its songs and the mountain wall curved around in such loveliness.

The Indians knew the values of living. They had awareness and appreciation of forest beauty and wild rivers. That is why the white man so quickly emptied the land of them. They were sensitive souls, well versed in the harmony of nature, who could not maintain life with fences excluding one another from the common benefits.

Based on a story, "The Founding of Friendsville" by Evelyn Guard Olsen.
Most of the photos are provided by the Friend Family Association of America Heritage Museum and Genealogical Library.

Before the Interstate looking North mid 1950s.

Interstate mid 1970s looking west.