

Spotlight: Sandy Spring Gardens

by Judy Newton

Turn off New Hampshire Avenue, sneak behind the strip shopping center, beyond the townhouses, to Lethbridge Court, the cul-de-sac named for the erstwhile 300-acre hay, beef and dairy farm that used to be there. Find the driveway that leads to the old barn still standing (newly restored by Mennonite craftsman), and you will find 10 acres farmed by Tom Farquhar and rows of dryland rice being raised by Nazirahk Amen of Purple Mountain Organics. (The rice is available at the Olney Farmers Market from Somerset Produce.)

Tom was a music major in college, and went on to become headmaster of several private schools in this country and abroad, including Sidwell Friends School. Locals will recognize the name Farquhar as one of the old original families of Sandy Spring. The oldest public middle school in the county is named after William Farquhar.



High Corn

Tom took over Lethbridge Farm in 2018, and converted it from a conventional farm to an organic one. He farms beans, tomatoes, corn, squash, and other crops. Last year he raised a stand of Golden Cross Bantam, an heirloom variety of corn, by request of the members of the Sandy Spring Friends. They wanted it to make corn pudding, a specialty from the 18th Century.

Tom is proud of his prize collection from the Montgomery County Fair. His vegetables took 5 Firsts, 2 Seconds, and one Fifth Place. Who says organic vegetables aren't pretty?

In the old barn, there is documentation that dates it to at least 1810. The landowner is using it to display his collection of old tools and other artifacts he finds locally. History is being maintained, and farming is alive and well in Ashton.



Restored Old Barn

Say hello to Tom at the Olney Farmers and Artists Market.