

## Revivals And Church History :: Sandy Creek: A Great US Revival (almost forgotten by history)

**Sandy Creek: A Great US Revival (almost forgotten by history) - posted by ravenmolehil, on: 2008/5/7 13:51**

I have never seen a mention of this on SI:  
& I have heard many ref's to this revival;  
Pasted below is a brief summary;

You may not believe this, but the one of the greatest revivals in the history of America, a story of unparallel success and Holy Ghost power, is known by only a handful of Americans.

I am talking about the profound revival of the Separate Baptists of North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina. That revival began in 1755 and did not relent for 100 years. The Separates went out from North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia, and were the first to preach the gospel in Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, and Illinois. Their legacy is responsible for the gospel being preached in Missouri, Arkansas and Texas.

Who began this great revival? An obscure Connecticut preacher, whose heart was stirred for salvation and soul winning under the ministry of George Whitefield. His name: Shubal Stearns. Stearns was a "new-light" congregational church preacher after his conversion under Whitefield. His study of the Bible led him to embrace Baptist principles and so was immersed by Wait Palmer at the Baptist Church of Tolland, Connecticut early in 1751. Stearns was ordained as a Baptist in May of that same year. He felt impressed of God to move to some place in the south and west of New England to preach the gospel to the large number of migrating Americans moving into the pioneer south. He found his place to serve at a crossroads in western North Carolina called Sandy Creek and settled his infant church with 16 members on June 13, 1755.

Within 13 years, 17 men surrendered to the gospel ministry and fanned out across the north and south and west of Sandy Creek. The immediate results were astonishing for the frontier era. There were over 900 baptized in the first three years for the Sandy Creek congregation alone. No one knows how many in the branch churches. At the time of Shubal Stearns death in 1771, there were 47 churches birthed from those original 17 preachers. The Sandy Creek association began in 1758 and was effective in organizing more new churches. By 1772 three associations had formed from the original and the vision and burden of winning the lost, baptizing the saved, and birthing new churches into existence was a part of the make-up of nearly all of the Baptist churches of the south. It is estimated that the Sandy Creek Revival directly resulted in the birthing of over 1,000 churches.

**Re: Sandy Creek: A Great US Revival (almost forgotten by history), on: 2008/5/7 16:12**

This is an example about how God can do a great work that is not necessarily "exciting" in the way we tend to think about a great work of God. In eternity we just may see a lot of gold, silver, and precious stones revealed that most of Christendom had not known of or ignored.

I'm glad you posted this and I think it is a revival worth looking into, because the things that bear fruit over long periods of time (John 15:16) are probably what we can learn the most from (of course remembering that God does new things also). But in terms of how they sought God, dealt with opposition, kept their eyes on Christ there just might be some valuable lessons.  
God bless you.

**Re: Sandy Creek: A Great US Revival (almost forgotten by history) - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/5/7 23:05**

Thanks for bringing this out brother. Went digging around a bit;

"The year was 1758 and God had richly blessed the gospel strategy of the Separate Baptists in North Carolina. Just three years before, a group led by Shubal Stearns had settled at Sandy Creek and constituted a church. Within those short three years with "a few churches having been constituted, and these having a number of branches which were fast maturing for churches," Stearns thought it would be a good idea to start an association. The Separates' remarkable personalities, novel practices, and fiery style of worship and preaching prompted some special attention from the Particular Ba

ptists. Because some gave credit to disturbing reports about these ecclesiological kin, John Gano, who had been commissioned to his work in North Carolina by the Philadelphia Association, attended the 1759 meeting of the Sandy Creek Association. "He was sent, it seems, to inquire into the state of these New Light Baptists." Robert Baylor Semple reports the visit in this way:

He was received by Stearns with great affection. But the young and illiterate preachers were afraid of him, and kept at a distance. They even refused to invite him into their Association. All this he bore patiently, sitting by while they transacted their business. He preached also every day. His preaching was in the Spirit of the Gospel. Their hearts were opened, so that before he left they were greatly attached to him.... This Association was also conducted in love, peace and harmony. When Mr. Gano returned to his own country, being asked what he thought of these Baptists, he replied, that *"doubtless the power of God was among them; that although they were rather immethodical, they certainly had the root of the matter at heart."*

What made the Separates "rather immethodical," and what did Gano mean by "the root of the matter"? At least part of the answer is found in the magnetic life and thought of Shubal Stearns.

#### Biographical Information

Stearns was born on January 28, 1706, in Boston. His parents' names were Shubal and Rebecca Larriford Stearns. Early in his life his parents moved to Tolland, Connecticut, where they joined the Congregational church. Stearns remained a Congregationalist until 1745 when he heard the evangelist George Whitefield preach. Stearns was converted and adopted the New Light understanding of revival and conversion. William G. McLoughlin summarizes the dynamic: "Religious zeal spilled over into very bitter quarrels about doctrine, church government, and ritual. By the end of the 1740's many fervent New Lights were ready to conclude that it was impossible for them to reform established churches from within." They must, therefore, start new churches. Their favorite verse was 2 Corinthians 6:17--"Come out from among them, and be ye separate"--from which they received the stigma of "come-outers" or "Separates." Stearns followed suit and subsequently separated from the main stream, or Old Light, Congregational church. David Benedict states:

Soon after these reformers, who were first called New-Lights, and afterward Separates, were organized into distinct Societies, they were joined by Shubael Stearns, a native of Boston, (Mass.) who, becoming a preacher labored among them until 1751.

In 1751 Stearns' church became troubled with the pedobaptist-antipedobaptist controversy. In rapid succession, Stearns rejected infant baptism, received baptism from Reverend Wait Palmer, minister of Stoneington, and by March 20, 1751 was ordained into the Baptist ministry. Palmer and Joshua Morse, the pastor of New London conducted the ordination. The epithet "separate" remained with those that moved to the Baptist position, thus denominating them the Separate Baptists. The Separates brought with them the zeal and spirit of first leader, George Whitefield. By emulating his example, a fast growing body of Separate Baptists, fervent in evangelism and strong in heart-felt religion, began in New England. They were immensely different from established Baptist churches in New England. Stearns ministered as a missionary preacher to New England until the year 1754."

Quite a bit more <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/journal/fj44/article3.html>

#### Re: - posted by ravenmolehil, on: 2008/5/8 8:56

I actually lived in Liberty for several years growing up, & I have just heard of this revival about a year ago... It is sad that this heritage has seemingly been swept under the rug.

Crsschk,

If your interested in a bit more on the subject (in audio)

Bro. Jeff Faggart, (from the Baptist History Preservation Society)

has a great series on the History of the Baptist, & goes in-depth on Shubal Sterns.

Here is the info off of Sandy Creek's website:

In 1755 God led a man named Shubal Stearns, and 15 others, to Sandy Creek, located just outside of what now is known as Liberty, North Carolina. Stearns and the others with him did not take long to "have church" at Sandy Creek, as David Benedict is quoted in Church records:

"As soon as they arrived, they built them a little meeting house, and these 16 persons formed themselves into a church

, and chose Shubael Stearns for their pastor, who had, for his assistants at that time, Daniel Marshall and Joseph Breed, neither of whom were ordained.Â”

The original Â”meeting houseÂ” that Benedict refers to was built where an Obelisk now stands in the ChurchÂ’s graveyard. This Obelisk (pictured at lower right) was placed by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina in 1955 and the plaque on the North side reads:

#### Original SiteSandy Creek Church

On this site, in November-December 1755, Rev. Shubal Stearns, his wife, and those with him, seven other families, 16 souls in all, built their first meeting house, where they administered the LordÂ’s Supper.

Â”It is a mother church, nay a grandmother, and great grandmother. All the Separate Baptists sprang hence, not only eastward towards the sea, but westward towards the great river Mississippi, but northward to Virginia and southward to South Carolina and Georgia. The Word went forth from this sion, and great was the company of them who published it, in so much that her converts were as drops of morning dew.Â”

No pictures are available of the first or second meeting houses, but the third is pictured at right. This building was constructed in 1802 and is now the property of the Sandy Creek Primitive Baptist Church. Hal Younts, a member of the Primitive church, has worked faithfully and tirelessly restoring this building and he is to be commended for preserving a significant part of

HIS Story at Sandy Creek. This third meeting house was where Sandy Creek was meeting when God split the branch, as Church records note:

In 1830, a protest arose by some of the members of Sandy Creek congregation concerning the support of missions and the new institutions being formed by the newly organized Baptist State Convention, causing a split in the church. The members who were opposed to the missionary movement of the Convention continued to hold services at the original site, and adopted the name of Sandy Creek Primitive Church . . .

The members who desired to support the missions program and the Sunday School ministry of the Baptist State Convention sought out a new location. They settled near a school known as Shady Grove and continued to be known as Sandy Creek Baptist Church. Then in 1905, some of the descendants of those who had left, under the leadership of W.H. Eller returned to the original location, and once again established worship services. The name of the group who had left in 1830 then became known as Shady Grove Baptist Church.

The next meeting house was constructed upon the return of those representing the Â”MissionaryÂ” side of Sandy Creek and was located close to the location of Sandy CreekÂ’s current sanctuary.

Due to significant decaying of the fifth building, Sandy CreekÂ’s current sanctuary was constructed in 1942, utilizing some of the timber from the fifth building. Two additions were added to the current sanctuary which houses a library, two restrooms, a small office, a nursery, and five classrooms. This building is no longer able to meet the current needs of Sandy Creek and a

building committee was formed in 2003 for the purpose of providing adequate space for worship and education.

In addition to the meeting houses at Sandy Creek, a parsonage was built directly across the road from the Church in 1971 and a fellowship hall was constructed in 1995.

The parsonage was built, in large part, due to the generosity of Ms. Ida Williams, as the plaque at the front door reads, Â”This parsonage is dedicated as a memorial to Miss Ida Williams, 1882-1967, who gave herself as well as her substance in loving devotion to ChristÂ’s service to help make its construction possible.Â” Pastor Carl Garner, his wife, Ann, and their children Andy, Joy, James, and John were the first family to live in the parsonage and it has been well used since that time.

The fellowship hall replaced the parsonage basement for events such as fellowship meals, holiday dinners, wedding receptions, and all other church gatherings. It was constructed while Pastor Terry Hinson was serving at Sandy Creek and few, if any, would express any regret over the funds spent to construct this building. Space for large gatherings, a baptismary, a kitchen, two classrooms, and an office for the pastor are all provided in this building and it is indeed a true blessing to the body at Sandy Creek.

God obviously ordained the establishment of Sandy Creek Baptist Church and an attempt to recount all that He has produced in and through this church would indeed be futile. Denominations of a wide variety under the umbrella of "Baptist" have sprung forth and churches have been planted in areas all around the globe that all can trace their roots back to Sandy Creek. As one of the memorial markers placed by the Baptist History Preservation Society on Sandy Creek's property in 2005 reads, "There are thousands of Baptist churches as the result of the labours of Shubal Stearns and the Sandy Creek Baptist Church." Pastor Jeff Faggart of the Society summed it up this way, "I believe God has done more through the ministry of this church than any other church since Pentecost." God has indeed blessed and sustained the ministry of Sandy Creek.

Three years after Sandy Creek was established, Stearns organized the Sandy Creek Association, making it the third Baptist Association in America. Sandy Creek is considered to be the seed God planted, nurtured and blessed as a fruit-bearing branch, with fruit such as that Association and the most notable fruit, the Southern Baptist Convention. Established in 1845, the SBC is one of the largest protestant denominations in the world today with more than 16 million members, more than 5,000 home missionaries, and more than 5,000 missionaries serving around the globe.

**Re: - posted by ravenmolehil, on: 2008/5/9 9:04**

Quote:

-----  
crsschk wrote:

Thanks for bringing this out brother. Went digging around a bit;  
Quite a bit more <http://wwwFOUNDERS.org/journal/fj44/article3.html>  
-----

Conclusion (from the link)

It is a deep regret that the Separate Baptists were not methodical enough to keep more records. Though they probably would have considered such recording a sacrilege, would not contemporary Baptists benefit from a bold amanuensis daring to smuggle a verbatim of sermons by Stearnes? Solemn aspects of the story, in light of this absence, "have been only vaguely apprehended by Baptist historians." This fact is quite unfortunate. Despite the lack of sources, a fair assessment of what is already known would enhance our understanding of the Baptist foundation.

Gano's statement was a perfect description of the Separate Baptists. As noted before, he said that, "doubtless the power of God was among them; that although they were rather immethodical, they certainly had the root of the matter at heart." As their methods have been briefly examined, one can understand why Gano said what he did. Despite this, Gano assured his fellow Baptists that the Separates had their doctrine correct. Overarching all of this, he proclaimed that, "doubtless the power of God was among them."

As for Stearns, "he was zealous but also sane, and his followers have been such; he knew how to gather, and knew how to conserve; he built upon a solid foundation, Jesus Christ, and his work abides." Charles Taylor concludes:

He was undoubtedly one of the greatest ministers that ever presented Jesus to perishing multitudes. Had he been a Roman priest, he would long since have been canonized and declared the patron saint of Carolina. Fervent supplications would have ascended and stately churches would have been dedicated to the holy and blessed saint Shubael Stearns, the apostle of North Carolina and the adjacent states.

-----  
It sounds like those involved early in this movement were not concerned with keeping records, but simply to arise & go, preaching the gospel to a lost & dying world.