

## Union Mills Homestead exhibit views democracy through one family's eyes – June 9, 2024

The Union Mills Homestead is happy to host a new temporary exhibit exploring the Shriver family's political history. "Living Democracy" is a look at the day-to-day of campaigns and elections through the words and eyes of the Shrivvers. The Homestead was home to the Shriver family for six generations over more than a century and a half. They were an influential family in what would become Carroll County and deeply involved in politics. Utilizing rarely seen documents and artifacts, "Living Democracy" explores both what it was like to live through democracy, and how democracy itself is a living thing that changes over time.

The co-founder of the Homestead in 1797, Andrew K. Shriver was a postmaster, justice of the peace, and a local luminary for the Jeffersonian Republicans in the early 1800s. He could be vociferous in his defense of Republican principles and in attacking his Federalist opponents through the partisan newspaper he co-published, the *Frederick Hornet*. His grandson, Louis E. Shriver, carried on the tradition as a member of the Carroll County Anti-Prohibition Committee, and spoke before Congress on behalf of local farmers pressing their own hard cider.

In an original 1802 letter written to Andrew K. Shriver, a fellow political influencer discusses potential candidates the opposing party is considering, and how they might maneuver to select an opponent.

Strong supporters of William Henry Harrison, the Shrivvers were disappointed when he died only 31 days after assuming the presidency. Unhappy when Vice President John Tyler took his place, they supported Henry Clay in the 1844 election. Their enthusiasm for Clay is expressed in a handwritten draft campaign poster, complete with a lengthy patriotic song or poem.

Among the rarest objects on display are party tickets from the 1852 and 1872 elections. These bookmark-sized objects list the candidates running for local offices in Carroll County's 3rd Election District (Myers). On some the Shrivvers tallied vote counts for specific candidates, and on the 1872 Republican Party ticket they poked fun at Ulysses S. Grant's defeated opponent for the presidential campaign: "Who cares for Greeley now!"

Diaries also give us a glimpse at the Shriver family's thoughts on elections. Mary Winebrenner Shriver recounts in her 1900 diary the celebrations following the election of President McKinley. In red ink, she emphasized, "Joy every where., a tremendous rejoicing – every where." Her son, Harry, and brother-in-law, Louis, "went to Westminster, was there until two, came home, was so hoarse from Hurrahing could scarcely speak loud." That same Louis E. Shriver who shouted himself hoarse in 1900 lamented in 1912 that Teddy Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party spoiled the ticket for his party: "More than the election, of [Woodrow] Wilson I regret the apparent ascendancy [sic] of the Roosevelt element. The Republicans will evidently be at sea for some time."

An original portrait hangs in the exhibit showing the stately T. Herbert Shriver. As a teenager, young Shriver rode with J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry to Gettysburg and later fought with the Virginia Military Institute cadets (Confederate) during the Civil War. As an adult, he became far more

famous as a state politician for the Democratic Party. A presidential elector, legislator, and briefly considered for governor, T. Herbert Shriver earned the honorific "General" for his support of Democratic governors in Annapolis.

How we cast our ballots can reflect our values and our concerns. An original glass ballot box did little to give privacy to the individual voter, but multiple seals on both the box itself and the wooden box it was transported in show that election integrity was a priority in years past. Only with legitimate rising concerns about voter intimidation was the privacy of the voter protected and glass ballot boxes were retired.

For centuries our nation has prided itself on allowing the people to exercise their right to self-determination. Following an imperfect path, our democracy has changed through the years, and we continue to strive for a more perfect system that truly reflects the will of the people. The Shrivens of the Union Mills Homestead give us a rare opportunity to follow that path. Join us throughout 2024 to explore our “Living Democracy.”

*Guest columnist Kyle Dalton is the Executive Director of the Union Mills Homestead Foundation.*

*Image 1: Source - Union Mills Homestead*

*Caption: 19<sup>th</sup> century glass ballot box, part of the Union Mills Homestead Foundation collection.*

*Image 2: Source - Union Mills Homestead*

*Caption: Detail of header to 1872 Republican Party election ticket from the Union Mills Homestead Foundation collection.*