

## Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

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Carroll's Yesteryears  
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Paper trail charts Sherman's life  
by Jay Graybeal

Most researchers working on an early family or a property must rely heavily on public records, such as deeds, wills, estate inventories and assessments, since family papers even when they survive rarely include sufficient information. Land records are one of the best sources for learning about 18<sup>th</sup> century settlers such as Jacob Sherman, the first owner of the Society's Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House.

Deed indexes at the Frederick County Courthouse show that Sherman and his father, George Jacob Sherman (1724-1812) of Littlestown, Pa., were involved in nearly fifty land sales from 1775-1821. These transactions provide a fairly clear picture of the Sherman's business and investment activities. The earliest deeds refer to George as a farmer and to Jacob as an innkeeper.

George Jacob Sherman purchased an improved lot (now the Midtown Service Center at 205 East Main Street) in the New London section of Westminster in 1775 and established Jacob as a tavern keeper. Operating a tavern in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a relatively easy and lucrative occupation, especially in a growing community such as Westminster.

Jacob Sherman purchased his first land, a 60-acre part of "Timber Ridge" and a 12-acre part of "Bedford Resurveyed" from his father-in-law Michael Wagner (1723-1795) in 1787. The "Timber Ridge" property, located at the west end of the original plan of Westminster, had been divided into lots by Captain John White in 1765. Sherman acquired some unsold lots and the valuable annual ground rents due on lots which has been sold in leasehold. Sherman's lots stretched from present day Court Street westward to Longwell Avenue.

George Jacob Sherman began disposing of his properties in 1787. Jacob received the Westminster tavern property and two adjacent lots and his older brother George (1748-1822) of Littlestown, Pennsylvania received a tavern in that town.

Over the next two decades Jacob Sherman acquired additional land holdings near Westminster. In 1794, he patented a 136.5 acre tract he called "Discovery" located near Bachman's Valley. Four years later he was assessed for parts of "Brown's Plague," "Hard Grubbing," "Neglect" and "Timber Ridge," a 143-acre parcel near Westminster. "Timber Ridge" was improved with a log house and barn. Sherman patented his Westminster area properties as "Sherman's Retreat" in 1799. Sherman was also assessed for two and one-quarter lots in Westminster and was due annual ground rents from fifty-two lots. Most of these lots had been surveyed off of "Timber Ridge."

Jacob Sherman purchased a small addition to his lot opposite his tavern in May 1806 from William Winchester, Jr., (1750-1812), a son of the founder of Westminster. Construction of his

new residence, now known as the Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House, probably began almost immediately and was substantially completed a year later when Sherman sold the property for a token fee of five shillings to his son-in-law David Shriver, Jr., (1769-1852).

Transactions other than land sales can also be found in land records. The earliest document recorded by Jacob Sherman was a bill of sale for a slave:

At the request of Jacob Sherman the following Bill of Sales was recorded 15<sup>th</sup> March 1785 to wit.

To all it may concern this is to Certify that I have this eighth day of December one thousand seven hundred and eighty four for the Sum of fifty eight pounds ten Shillings to me in hand paid, sold unto Jacob Sherman in Westminster Town and delivered her unto him one Negro Girl named Sally a Negro girl that I bought of Thomas Dillion on Little Pipe Creek. Witness by hand the year and date here above written. Witness Henry Wikeman, William Pepple, James Wells.

Sally Key was the progenitor of several generations of black slaves and free blacks who lived in the Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House. Their story will be featured during February as part of the Historical Society’s contribution to Black History Month.

*Photo credit: Courtesy of George Welty*

*Photo caption: This notebook was probably kept by Samuel Duvall and Joel Wright who surveyed “Sherman’s Retreat” patented in 1799. The brass compass made by Goldsmith Chandlee of Winchester, Va., is inscribed “S. Duvall” and was probably used to survey the property.*