

Research done on Thomas Jefferson links Taneytown to historic 1776 trip

While searching for a possible link between Francis Bishop, one of my ancestors, and Thomas Jefferson, Bishop's neighbor in Albemarle County, Virginia, I stumbled upon a memorandum book Jefferson kept in the year 1774. Jefferson was a prolific writer, journalist, and record keeper. My ancestor was just a common man and, were it not for Jefferson's passion for recording his daily activities and expenses each year in a memorandum book, I would not have known that Bishop was Jefferson's blacksmith.

Among the details I discovered: Jefferson and Bishop entered a blacksmith business together in 1774, splitting the profits down the middle. It was a thrilling genealogical "find."

Jefferson's original memorandum books are scattered in repositories throughout the country from the National Archives, to Boston, and even a library in California. As my research continued, I became enthralled while reading these records. I was looking for more mentions of my ancestor, but also walking through our nation's formative years via the handwriting of one of its founders. I found the books intriguing, even as Jefferson noted mundane daily tasks.

Of particular interest was 1776—a momentous time in American history. That year Jefferson was 33 years old. Some of his fellow Founding Fathers were similarly young. George Washington was only 44; James Madison was 25; Alexander Hamilton was 21; and James Monroe just 18.

In the 1776 Memorandum Book, I found Jefferson's account of a May journey from Charlottesville, Virginia, to Philadelphia where the Continental Congress was to meet and where he would soon draft the Declaration of Independence. Much to my surprise, Jefferson's record of this trip linked right back to Carroll County's early history.

Jefferson traveled on horseback, stopping each night at taverns as he rode north through central Virginia, then east through Maryland and Pennsylvania towards Philadelphia. Jefferson followed well-worn early routes to Philadelphia, including the Great Wagon Road and the Monocacy Road. He paid for meals, lodging, and other expenses in the currency of each colony. What I had not expected to find was an exciting tie to our area – specifically to Taneytown, then part of Frederick County.

Below are Jefferson's journal entries simplified for better understanding but saving his spelling:

May 7 – Left with Mrs. Jefferson 10 pounds (in VA currency) — Set out for Philadelphia

May 8 – Paid for breakfast, etc. at Orange County Courthouse — 3/ (in VA currency)

Paid a [black]smith on the road — 7 ½ d. (in VA currency)

Paid for dinner, etc. at Culpepper County Courthouse — 5/ (in VA currency)

May 9 – Paid for breakfast, etc. at Fauquier County Courthouse — 3/ (in VA currency)

Paid a [black]smith at Fauquier County Courthouse — 7 ½ d. (in VA currency)

Paid for dinner, etc. at Red House — 4/3 (in VA currency) *Note: There was an ordinary at Red House (presently Haymarket in Prince William County, Virginia) at that time. An ordinary was an eating house or tavern that provided food at a fixed price.

May 10 – Paid for supper, etc. at Lacy's Lodging — 10/3 (in VA currency) *Note: Joseph Lacey ran an ordinary at present-day Aldie in southern Loudon County, VA

Paid for breakfast, etc. at McIntire's (Leesburgh) — 2/6 (in VA currency)

Paid for "ferrge" [ferrying] at Knowland's Ferry on Patowmack — 3/9 (in VA currency)

Gave ferrymen — 7 ½ d *Note: Noland's Ferry ran between Leesburg and Frederick, crossing the Potomac River at the mouth of Tuscarora Creek.

Paid a barber in Frederick town — ¼. (in MD currency)

May 11 – Paid for dinner and lodging, etc. at Crush's in Frederick town — 15/6 (in MD currency)

Paid a saddler in Tawny town — 4 d. (in PA currency)

Paid for breakfast at Caleb's in Tawney town — 6/2 (in PA currency) *Note: Joseph McKellop was licensed to run a Taneytown tavern in the 1770s.

Paid a barber in McAllister's town — 1/ (in PA currency) *Note: McAllisters Town was an early name for Hanover, PA

May 12 – Paid for dinner and lodging, etc. at Rhenegher's in McAllister's Town — 11/6 (in PA currency) *Note: Probably Casper Reinecker's Sign of the Horse Inn on Frederick St.

Paid for breakfast at White's in York town — 7 c. ¾ (in PA currency)

Paid for "ferrge" at Wright's Susquehanns — 5/. (in PA currency) *Note: A ferry crossed the Susquehanna River at present-day Wrightsville.

Gave watermen — 1/3 (in PA currency)

May 13 – Paid for dinner and lodging, etc. at Ryckhart's in Lancaster — 17/1 (in PA currency)

Paid for breakfast, etc. at the Bull — 3/. (in PA currency)

Paid for cyder at the Black Horse — 3 d. (in PA currency)

May 14 – Paid for dinner and lodging, etc. at Mrs. Withay's in Chester — 15/6 (in PA currency)

Paid for "ferrge" over Schuylkill — 1/. (in PA currency)

Gave watermen — 3 d (in PA currency)

Got to Philadelphia

In early June of that year when assembled in Philadelphia, the Continental Congress assigned John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston to draft a document of independence. Jefferson did most of the work at his lodgings on 7th and Market Street in Philadelphia, work that culminated in the critical document that announced the independence of our Nation on July 4, 1776.

Studying and researching genealogy has provided me with endless hours of enrichment. In this case, my curiosity about a Virginia ancestor living near Thomas Jefferson connected a Founding Father directly to Carroll County on a historic trip that was truly a “rendezvous with destiny.” The details Jefferson recorded about his trip to Philadelphia also draw attention to Taneytown’s early history as an important stop along a major early route through northern Maryland. Based on this new information, Taneytown now holds the distinction of hosting two of our Nation’s founders and early presidents—as George Washington also stayed overnight in Taneytown in 1791.

For anyone interested in pursuing Jefferson’s papers and records further, they can be found online through the National Archives “Founders Online” –

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/02-01-02-0010>.

At noon on October 15, Sam Riley’s Box Lunch Talk for the Historical Society of Carroll County at Grace Lutheran Church in Westminster will cover taverns in Carroll County’s early history.

Guest columnist Susan Ruddick Bloom is one of the founding members of the Carroll County Genealogical Society.

Image 1: Courtesy of Library of Congress Caption: Portion of the 1755 Joshua Fry map showing Jefferson’s route along the Great Wagon Road to Philadelphia across the southern boundary of Pennsylvania before the Mason-Dixon Line was drawn.

Image 2: Courtesy of Wikimedia Caption: Portrait of Thomas Jefferson by Rembrandt Peale.

Image 3: Courtesy of Library of Congress Caption: Signature of Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States.