

"David Shriver, Jr. Co-founded the Union Mills Homestead"

Carroll County Times Article for 12 January 1997

By Jay A. Graybeal

On January 19th The Historical Society will sponsor an observance of the 160th anniversary of the founding of Carroll County. At this year's event we have invited representatives from the Union Mills Homestead Museum to talk about their upcoming Bicentennial Year. The event is open to the public and will be held from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. in the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 E. Main St., Westminster.

The Historical Society and the Homestead are historically linked. David Shriver, Jr. (1769-1852), who co-founded the Homestead with his older brother Andrew in 1797, also once owned the Historical Society's Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House in Westminster. The Society's house was built by Jacob Sherman (1757-1822), a local tavern keeper.

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 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.

Earlier writers have noted an oral tradition that Jacob Sherman built the house as a belated wedding present for his only daughter Eve (d. 1854) and her husband David Shriver, Jr. It is far more likely that Sherman, who was at the typical retirement age of fifty, was building a new residence in order to retire from innkeeping. In this period it was not uncommon for a successful man of his age to share a large residence with a child's family. In most cases, the property passed to the child's family at the death of the parents.

David Shriver, Jr., probably had a significant role in designing the house. The lead sash weights, which are embossed with his name and the date 1807, suggest that he was responsible for the selection of counter-balanced windows. A built-in clothes cupboard was installed in the front west bed chamber where the Shriver's are believed to have slept. Both features were unusual for this region in 1807 and point towards the well-travelled Shriver who was familiar with trends in architecture.

The Shriver's were already living in the house in May 1807 when Jacob Sherman deeded the property to David. David was born at Little Pipe Creek, near Westminster, the second son of David Shriver, Sr., (1735-1826) and his wife Rebecca Ferree Shriver (1742-1812). The younger David constructed the grist mill and tannery complex at Union Mills, Maryland, in 1797 in partnership with his older brother Andrew (1762-1847). David relinquished his interest in the mill in 1803 to accept an appointment to superintend the construction of the Baltimore-Reisterstown Turnpike. In the same year he married Eve, the only child of Jacob and Elizabeth Sherman. Their marriage united two of the most prominent local Pennsylvania German families.

David Shriver, Jr., became active in public service during his residency. He was elected in 1807 to represent Frederick County in the Maryland Assembly and was also commissioned in 1808 as Paymaster of the 20th Regiment, Maryland Militia. Shriver had previously served as the rifle company captain and major in this regiment from 1794-1799.

The Federal Census of 1810 provides evidence that the Shermans lived with the Shriver household. Jacob Sherman does not appear as a head of a household which suggests that he was living with another family. The Shriver household included David and Eve, their two sons Jacob Sherman Shriver (1805-1876) and William Wagoner Shriver (1808-1880), their daughter Elizabeth Sherman Shriver (b. 1806), two adults over forty-five who were undoubtedly the Shermans, a white man and a woman, both aged sixteen to twenty-six, and six black slaves.

Several letters written by David Shriver, Jr., to his brother Andrew reveal the probable identity and occupation of the young woman. On 2 February 1808 he wrote, ". . . I cannot now leave home Betsey Maxfield is on a visit to her mothers - Eve has had a bad spell and is not yet over it." Betsey may not have remained with the Shrivvers since a letter dated 26 October 1810 mentions another woman. "Polly Day the girl that lives with us has the bilious collick and is dangerously ill I do not now expect her to get over it in Consequence Eve and the Child are Sick the house is constantly full of nurses." Both women were probably nannies for the Shriver children.

David Shriver, Jr., completed his work on the Reisterstown turnpike in 1810 and soon became a somewhat reluctant candidate to superintendent the proposed extension of the National Road from Cumberland, Maryland to Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia). Shriver felt that he was being poorly treated and, therefore, hesitated to seek the position. In a 16 February 1811 letter to his brother Andrew, who was in Washington, D.C., pushing David's candidacy, David stated that he would "be d---d if he would beg for" the position.

In the same letter, David Shriver reported a family tragedy, "while at Frederick, Eve was taken sick while alone, fell against the stove and lay in that way until she came to, with her face immediately against the plate. She has burned herself in a shocking manner. The roasted part is not yet separated from the sound. It is impossible to say how bad the wound will be as yet, but at best is shocking in the extreme. She will in a day or two be taken with her disorder again with the wound I fear will be attended with bad consequences [sic]." Eve Sherman, who may have suffered from epilepsy, was permanently scarred.

Despite his reservations, David Shriver accepted the appointment to superintend construction of the National Road from Cumberland. His decision required the family's removal to Cumberland. Shriver sold the house to his father-in-law Jacob Sherman for \$3,250 on 4 August 1812. The Shriver's departure appears to have caused or widened a rift with the Shermans. Unfortunately, the rift between the two families never healed. When Jacob Sherman died in 1822, he left the bulk of his sizable estate to the Shriver's children.

David and Eve Shriver contested the will by questioning Sherman's sanity since the will was executed shortly before his death. The Orphan's Court of Frederick County rejected their motion and directed the Shrivvers to pay court costs of over \$550. A Maryland Court of Appeals decree required the estate of Jacob Sherman to pay slightly less than one-half of the court costs. These divisive cases between family members were the culmination of differences between Jacob Sherman and the Shrivvers.

Photo Caption: The Historical Society's Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House, 206 E. Main St., Westminster was once owned by David Shriver, Jr. who cofounded the Union Mills Homestead in 1797. The Homestead celebrates its Bicentennial this year with a series of special events. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.