

“Daniel F. Shipley, Landscape Architect”
Carroll County Times Article for 10 February 2002
by Jay A. Graybeal

Significant landscaping and ornamental garden projects were undertaken by only the wealthiest American property owners until well into the nineteenth century. By the 1850s, American architects and popular publications were encouraging Americans to make improvements to the grounds around their homes. The field of landscape architecture was a natural outcome of the movement to beautify domestic, public and commercial properties. An undated 1930s clipping in the Historical Society’s vertical files describes how one local man’s gardening and landscaping hobby became his vocation:

“The Jeffersonian, published at Towson, last week had an interesting story of the success in landscape work of a former Westminster boy, Daniel F. Shipley. Mr. Shipley is a son of Mrs. Daniel F. Shipley and the late Dr. D. F. Shipley, one of Westminster’s highly esteemed citizens and for many years a practicing physician. Dan, as he was known here, spent his boyhood and school days in this city and until he enlisted for service in the World War. Many of his school mates and others who know him will enjoy reading of the reputation he has won and success he has attained in a work he loves and has always been his hobby.

We are publishing extracts from The Jeffersonian article.

This is another story of a man who rode his hobby into a paying business, made his pleasure and his vocation one and is now enjoying himself and making a good living out of it.

That isn’t saying he doesn’t take his business seriously; he does, and works hard at it. Nobody could be more in earnest in what he is doing than he, or more enthusiastically dedicated to success in his undertaking. But the dull prose of work, labor, drudgery is eliminated from his job because it is the source of his greatest happiness and accomplishment in it the food of his greatest pride.

Daniel F. Shipley was born an artist. He might have been a successful painter, or sculptor, or architect. He was endowed with a sense of beauty and artistic values which enabled him to see the general fitness of things that contributes to and builds towards harmonious and picturesque ensembles. That which thrilled him most, however, was a beautiful landscape, a trim, well-planned garden, an effective stretch of lawn. Flower, trees, shrubbery and green swards in artistic relativity constituted his greatest enthusiasm. And he knew what that relationship should be—knew instinctively and from careful study.

But he was some time cashing in on his bent. He rode his inclination and preference as a hobby for a number of years before deciding to take the way they pointed out as a serious means of livelihood.

Mr. Shipley is still a young man. His life story is not a long one when measured in years. He was born in Westminster, Maryland, thirty-some odd years ago; was educated in the public schools of his home town and had no more than finished his course when the World War broke out [and] he volunteered for service, going to France as a Private with the Twenty-ninth Division of Infantry, and after a year, winning a commission as a Second Lieutenant. He spent two and a half years over-seas, taking part in many of the major engagements of the American forces, and returned home in November, 1919.

The next couple of years were spent at sea, on tramp steamers, traveling the world over and seeing the ‘wheels go ‘round’ in all the countries of the globe. It was a great opportunity for him to study

landscaping and garden architecture and construction in every land. He had made the most of his chance to study the gardens of England and France while abroad as a soldier, and his tramp steamer jaunt opened those of Spain, Italy, Greece and the Orient to him.

But even on his return from his world cruises he was not yet ready to take up landscaping and garden construction as a serious business. It was still his hobby and hung in his mind only as his pleasure and recreation. He was not through with looking around and roved over America for a time, landed a job in a Southern saw mill and eventually drifted into the lumber business, returning to Maryland and connecting with Joseph Thomas & Sons, of Baltimore.

But by 1930, the urge of his bent had grown so strong that the big decision was made. He left the lumber business, took up a place of twenty-two acres on the Satyr Hill road, just south of the railway trestle, in the Loch Raven section, and began to develop it, in a small way, as a nursery. He remodeled the little house that was on the property and made it into a most attractive home, built a small greenhouse for the culture of the rarer plants, set out flowers and shrubbery about the premises and opened his door as a landscape architect and specialist in garden construction.

That was the start, and today he is well established in his line, with a reputation for efficiency in his work that keeps him constantly on the run to meet the demand for his services. Mrs. Shipley, his capable wife, takes care of the office management, while Mr. Shipley and an assistant do the outside work, and the arrangement seems to go along fine.

Mr. Shipley is a modest man. He is cold towards talking about himself, but warms to a glow in discussing his work. He says he doesn't know just what to call it—it is more than landscape architecture, for he both plans and constructs landscapes and gardens, doing the actual work of setting out the plants, laying the lawns and walks, building walls, dove cotes and other contributing details to the pictures he produces.

Somehow the impression got out that Mr. Shipley was a rock garden expert. He, however, protests that he is nothing of the kind, and he has torn out more rock gardens than he has built; that he has built only two since going into the garden business. He says a rock garden isn't suited to every place and shouldn't be built unless it conforms to the general scheme of a home's surroundings. He can build it; oh yes, and will take pleasure in doing it—if it fits into and contributes to the art scheme of the picture.

Mr. Shipley is a member of the South Atlantic Section of the American Rock Garden Society, the American Horticultural Society and a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society of England."

Mr. Shipley continued in the landscape and garden business until after World War II when he became a contractor and builder. He passed away in 1988 and was buried in the Shipley family plot in the Westminster Cemetery.



Daniel F. Shipley of Westminster served in World War I and later made a career out of his gardening and landscaping hobby. Courtesy of Daniel F. Shipley.