

"Mills in the Myers District"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

Carroll's fertile farmland has produced an abundance of agricultural products for generations of farm families. Numerous creeks provided ample water power for dozens of grist, saw and textile mills for nearly 200 years beginning with the settlement period in early eighteenth century. The mill complex, which sometimes contained a general store and post office, often became the commercial and social center in small localities. L. Miraud Nusbaum wrote an interesting history of the mills in the Myers District in 1952:

"In order to picture the milling industry in Myers District we must have a background of a few early dates. For example – Maryland was settled in 1634 but Carroll County was not organized until 1836-1837. In that same year (1837) the County was divided into nine districts and Myers became District No. 3.

But this was more than a century after the first settlers came to our district (1729). What were those settlers doing in this long span of time? They were building houses, establishing homes, raising crops and following the regular daily routine of work. With all the drudgery in this new country they keenly felt the need of grist mills and saw mills.

Our first record of mills in this area is as follows:

On July 27, 1755 Dr. Charles Carroll sold to Jacob Banker a tract of land called 'Jacob's Lot', 48 acres; which said lot is located at the mouth of Bear Branch, or somewhere between that and the mouth of Deep Run Creek. It is also shown on Griffith's map that Banker's Mill was located there but no evidence can be found of its existence.

In the November Court of 1761 of Frederick County is the record of the making of a road from Westminster to Littlestown, Pa., into a public road and further it mentions that Erb's Mill was located at the mouth of Bear Branch a small stream coming up from the south. It also says that this mill was at the point where the road crossed Big Pipe Creek. This area was patented to Peter Erb and the only land owned by an Erb at that time was located at Union Mills. Later Erb's Mill became known as Groff's Mill.

However, these mills cannot be too accurately located due to the fact that our old maps were very imperfect and since these were land marks in Revolutionary days, they most likely stand corrections.

The brick mill on Big Pipe Creek at Union Mills was built in 1797 by Andrew and David Shiver, Jr., on the site of an earlier mill. It has been owned and operated by the Shriver family, now under the title of B. F. Shriver Co., for 130 years or more. This mill ground the 'Staff of Life' of a very fine quality, not only for local consumption but it found a ready market in distant places.

It was shipped in barrels made in the cooper shop in the rear of the mill. It was also shipped in paper bags on which was printed the name of the flour and the firm and Benjamin Franklin's motto, 'In Union There is Strength.'

Due to the failing water power in 1928 the grinding of flour was discontinued but an auxiliary engine was used and the building leased to grind cattle feed for neighborhood consumption.

This building is now a relic of working days, minus doors and windows, housing pigeons, rather an eerie structure.

During the late 19th century this milling area was a busy center. Another industry just opposite the mill was that of a tannery operated by A. K. Shriver & Sons and a Post Office – the first in the Mills, was established in their home.

It is also interesting to know that the wooden sun-dial which was placed on the tan shop about 1860 remains there and the dial still records the hours on sunny days from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. approximately accurate.

In this century the B. F. Shriver Co., set up their first canning factory in a small shed opposite the mill.

Our interest is next directed to Marker's Mill, located about 3 miles west of Silver Run on the road leading to Mayberry. The first correct knowledge of its ownership was by the late John Maus who was killed by a falling stone when he was rebuilding this mill in 1887. This property was then taken over by his son-in-law, Jacob Wiest, and operated by his son Peter Wiest, together the Wiests milled for a period of 28 years. For a number of years the Maus and the Wiest families also conducted a store in this mill.

In 1900 John H. Marker purchased this property from the Wiest estate and continued to grind a very fine quality of flour which not only found a ready market at home but also in distant localities.

This mill was established not only where water power was available but where the surrounding fertile valleys and hillsides yielded other grains abundantly besides wheat. Wagon loads of these grains were hauled to the mill where Mr. Marker and his predecessors ground cattle feed.

In 1910 this mill was burned down and Mr. Marker erected a modern frame structure which remains intact. In 1920 Mr. Marker retired and the mill was purchased by William Jesse Halter and later by his son, Paul M. Halter. Together the Halters milled for a term of 12 years. William Ingram the next purchaser milled for a term of 6 years. At present (1952) William C. Nevins, Sr., is the owner but the mill lies idle. However, it continues to be called Marker's Mill.

Other milling landmarks, feed mills and saw mills, are those of the late Christian Erb – Jeremiah Myers Mill, Pius Wolf Mill, Jesse Myers, R. Nelson Koontz, Elmer King, Homer Hook Mill, Grove's Mill now known as Arter's Mill all on Big Pipe Creek. On Silver Run Creek could be found the late Peter Kump Mill, the Harvey Maus Mill and the late Wesley Hawn Mill. Besides grinding feed and sawing lumber, Mr. Hawn boiled applebutter and made ice cream.

Of the nine mills which were operated in Myers District, three have been razed. The other six remain standing but no splash of the water wheel or hum of the machinery can be heard.

This ends the milling industry in Myers District with the exception of one which is being operated by Ralph D. Bowman in Union Mills since June 1, 1945. This feed mill is modernly equipped and runs by electric power."

Since the article was written in 1952, a great deal of research has been done about local mills and their importance in Carroll's agricultural history. The Shriver Mill at Union Mills has been restored to

operating condition and is no longer the “eerie structure” described by Nusbaum. The restored mill and related structures are an outstanding example of Carroll’s milling heritage.



Marker's Mill, photographed in the 1980s, was one of several gristmills located in the Myers District. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.