

Conclusion

The Baltimore-Reisterstown Turnpike was a significant infrastructure project that eventually provided a major artery between Baltimore and Pittsburgh. The road and others of its era accommodated the needs of Piedmont merchant millers like the Shivers who were anxious to join a growing industrial-based economy that required the ready movement of labor and products across great distances. Although some portions of the turnpike have been bypassed with modern four-lane highways, other sections continue to follow the turnpike’s original route, winding through Westminster and Union Mills. As part of an expanding web of Maryland’s early road improvements, the turnpike had a lasting impact on Carroll County and helped realize the dreams of a new nation.

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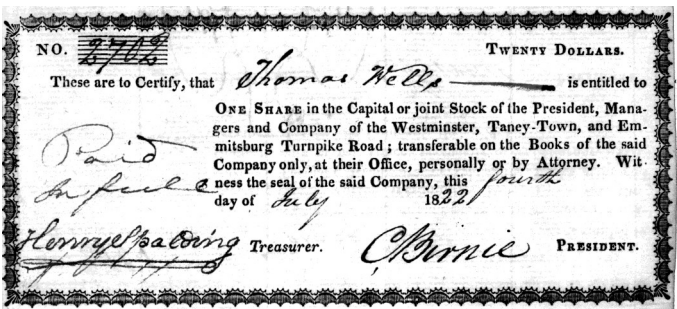
THE ROAD MOST TRAVELED: THE SHRIVERS AND THE TURNPIKE

BY SAMUEL M. RILEY

Until recently, almost 26,000 drivers a day passed by a lonely milestone perched along Maryland Route 97 north of Westminster. Most were unaware of the stone and the history of the roadway it marked or its direct ties to Carroll County’s Shriver family. This early 19<sup>th</sup>-century highway, known originally as the Baltimore-Reisterstown Turnpike, provided an important link between rapidly growing settlements along the Maryland-Pennsylvania border and the expanding port of Baltimore. Its construction not only spurred economic growth for farms, mills, and businesses along the route but also fostered westward migration and expansion as it connected with other roads to Pittsburgh and the Ohio River.

Building Maryland’s Turnpikes: An Innovative Public-Private Partnership

Maryland’s roads in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century were in poor condition. According to historian Robert Brugger, travelers described them as “frightful, miserable, and worst in the union.” In many instances, they were little more than trails established by Native Americans with notched trees to guide the way. Scholar Joseph Austin Durrenberger wrote, “steep grades, deep ruts and seas of mud were the cause of chronic complaint.” Initial efforts at



1822 stock certificate issued to stockholders in the Westminister, Taney-town, and Emmitsburg turnpike road. Selling stock was a common way to privately fund new roads in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. (HSCC collection)

improvement to accommodate growing wagon traffic foundered. Early government records document petitions to the county courts for road projects, but local initiatives to address such concerns were generally unsuccessful.

In January 1805, Maryland’s General Assembly passed an act authorizing the incorporation of three companies to build turnpikes that later became known as the Frederick, York, and Reisterstown Roads. The Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike Company was created “for making a turnpike road from Baltimore, through Reister’s-town, to the Pennsylvania line towards Hanover-town, and through Westminster to the Pennsylvania line towards Petersburg, as shall be agreed upon by a majority of the stockholders.” The road was to be funded by private capital through the sale of stock. The term “turnpike” meant that it was



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to be a toll road with a gate (“turnpike”) used to block travel until tolls were paid.

The shift to private capital to improve Maryland roads paid dividends. By early 1808, U.S. Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin observed that work on the turnpikes extending out from Baltimore was “rapidly progressing.” They were among the first improved U.S. roads to use modern engineering. The legislation had specified an “artificial Road” that was “bedded with wood, stone, or gravel, or any other hard substance, well compacted together, a sufficient depth to secure a solid foundation. . . and so nearly level in its progress as that it shall in no place rise or fall more than will form an angle of four degrees.” Gallatin reported the “Reisters-Town” Turnpike “is 24 feet wide, is covered with a stratum 12 inches thick, of pounded stones not more than 3 inches in diameter.” When completed, the new road was one of the best in the country.

At the time it was proposed, the Baltimore-Reisterstown pike was to start in Baltimore City and continue northwest to Reisterstown where it would fork into two legs, one toward Petersburg (today’s Littlestown) and the other toward Hanover. A 1794 map shows that roads following these two paths already existed, and the turnpike was to follow their established routes. However, the old road from Westminster to Littlestown ran west of the area that became Union Mills, passing Groff’s Mill and Erb’s Tavern, not Banker’s Mill where Andrew and David Shriver, Jr., would establish Union Mills in 1797. Court records dating as early as the 1760s reflected that residents of the area along Big Pipe Creek had petitioned for that road from “Peter Erbs’



Portrait of David Shriver, Sr., by Jacob Maentel, c.1800. (HSCC collection)

mill into the new road near the head of Little Pipe Creek.” Would the new turnpike follow this established path? The Shrivvers, namely David and sons Andrew and David, Jr., had another plan in mind.

**A Shriver Family Affair**

The ultimate route of the turnpike reflects the influence of the Shriver family. It exercised a considerable degree of political power as one of the most prominent German-speaking families in Maryland at the

beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was actively involved in the state’s affairs—including the routing of early roads.

David Shriver, Sr., (1735-1826) rose from humble origins to play a leading role in Maryland’s early state government. Born to German immigrants in the remote Conewago settlement near present-day Hanover, PA, Shriver cleared and settled a tract of land at the juncture of Little Pipe Creek and Cobb’s Branch in 1760, in what was then Frederick County, MD. He married Rebecca Ferree the following year, and this property became the family’s homestead, subsequently known as “Farm Content.” The couple had eight children, including five sons: Andrew (1762-1847), David, Jr., (1769-1852), Abraham (1771-1848), Isaac (1777-1856), and Jacob (1779-1841). With their well-regarded father as patriarch, the family became a force in the local community.

Shriver was one of the most distinguished German-speaking leaders of Revolutionary War-era Annapolis, overcoming prejudice directed at those not of English descent. He was outspoken in supporting the break from England and was elected in 1776 to Maryland’s

Shriver’s son William, also prospered. The mill was converted into a roller mill in the early 1880s, among the first in Maryland. William Shriver’s son, B.F. Shriver, eventually formed a business at the site to can local farm produce. The operation grew into the B.F. Shriver Company, with factories in six locations including Union Mills and Westminster. By 1921, the company farmed over 5,000 acres and had an annual production capacity of over a million cases of canned goods.

**David Shriver, Jr.’s Legacy**

The Baltimore-Reisterstown Turnpike cemented David Shriver, Jr.’s reputation as a respected civil engineer and road construction manager. In January 1810 he was named a commissioner for a turnpike between Westminster and Hagerstown. The next year, through the intercession of his brother Andrew during a trip to Washington, DC, David was selected as Superintendent of Construction for the National Road, from Cumberland to Wheeling—the first federally-funded interstate highway in the United States.

Among the notable improvements associated with Shriver’s work on the National Road was the construction of the Casselman River Bridge in Grantsville, MD. Built between 1813 and 1815, the bridge spans 80 feet—at the time the largest single-span stone arch bridge in the nation.

The National Road connected to Baltimore via a series of turnpikes including the Frederick Road, one of the three turnpikes authorized by the 1805 Maryland legislation. They provided yet another significant link between Baltimore and the Ohio River. With the addition of the National Road, the turnpikes built under the 1805 state law were a potent factor in the economic development of the young nation, providing thoroughfares between Baltimore and the waterways of the Midwest.

**Marking the Road**

The Act of 1805 required the turnpike companies to “cause milestones to be placed at the side of the said road or roads, beginning at the distance of one mile from the bounds of the city of Baltimore, and extending thence to the termination of each or either of the said respective roads, whereon shall be marked, in plain legible characters, the respective number of miles which each stone is distant from the city of Baltimore.” The turnpike companies were also to post similar signage wherever tolls were collected.

Several milestones still exist along the Baltimore-Reisterstown Turnpike’s route. One is particularly well-preserved and until recently was visible along Route 97 north of Westminster, just above Magna Way. The marker, Milestone 31, is clearly marked “31 M TO B.” The State Highway Administration (SHA) removed the milestone in May, 2019 as part of a road-widening project in the area adjacent to Carroll County Regional Airport. Once the road project is complete, the SHA will re-install Milestone 31 in a safer location east of the original spot.



Milestone 31. (Courtesy of the author)

*Below: Finksburg's 20 Mile toll house, c.2009; since demolished. (Courtesy of Ann Horvath)*



link between Baltimore and Pittsburgh and are represented today on Carroll County's seal. The turnpike provided an important overland transportation route, connecting Baltimore to the resources of the West, and encouraging the region's economic growth.

## The Turnpike's Legacy

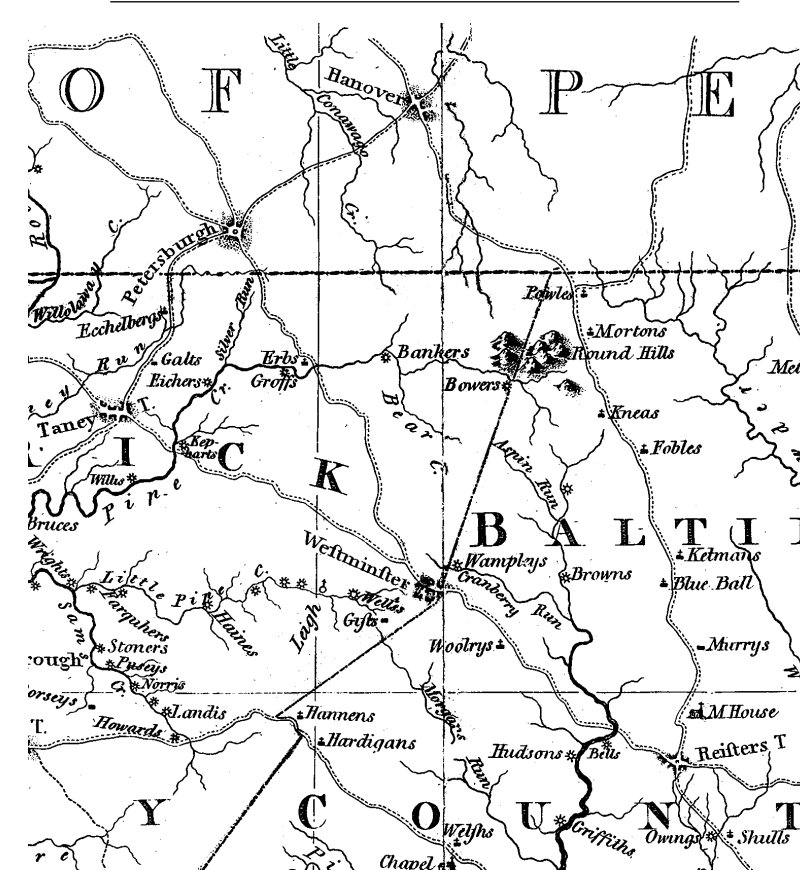
The Baltimore-Reisterstown Turnpike has continued as a major thoroughfare, with Reisterstown to Westminster to Littlestown remaining a regional traffic artery. In places, new highway construction has skirted portions of the original route because of heavy

traffic flow. Bypasses include Interstate 795 from Interstate 695 (the Baltimore Beltway) to Reisterstown and Maryland Route 140 between Reisterstown and Westminster. Route 140 around Westminster has the heaviest traffic flow of any road in the county, with over 55,000 vehicles a day coursing the highway.

The Littlestown Pike portion of the road, between Westminster and Littlestown, has remained a major thoroughfare along the road's original route. From 1926 to 1979, Littlestown Pike was part of U.S. Route 140, which followed the original turnpike route from Baltimore to Littlestown. Littlestown Pike, now Maryland Route 97, remained an important connection between Baltimore and Pittsburgh through the 1930s and 1940s, with Greyhound bus service connecting those two cities and passing Union Mills along the route.

Communities adjacent to the turnpike's original route thrived. Businesses flourished to provide services to travelers. An extensive survey of historic sites along the turnpike's route between Baltimore and Reisterstown, prepared in connection with the construction of Interstate 795, identified numerous properties that were once taverns, inns, stables, and other service providers along Reisterstown Road. Westminster too experienced rapid growth and was eventually selected as the seat of Carroll County government when it was formed in 1837. Innkeepers in Westminster prospered, including David Shriver, Jr.'s father-in-law, Jacob Sherman, and brother Isaac Shriver.

The Shriver enterprises at Union Mills also thrived. An inn and tavern established by Andrew served travelers along the road. The tannery at Union Mills grew into the A.K. Shriver & Sons Tannery which continued to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The farming and milling business, inherited by Andrew



Detail from the 1794 *Map of the State of Maryland* showing the original wagon routes from Reisterstown to Westminster to Petersburg (Littlestown) to Hanover and from Reisterstown to Hanover. Note the Petersburg route passed by Groff's mill and Erb's tavern. (Library of Congress)

Constitutional Convention where he served as a framer of the state's first constitution. Eulogized as a "sage of the Revolution," Shriver was among those who opposed the expansion of the federal government into state affairs, and later formed the core of Maryland's Jeffersonian Republican party.

A farmer, miller, and tanner, Shriver represented the interests of other German farmers whose families comprised the bulk of Frederick County's population. The cohesion of this group, their adherence to religious denominations alien to the Anglican majority, and their use of the German language made them a strong and distinct political unit.

Shriver was a member of the Maryland House of Delegates and later the Maryland Senate.

Over 34 years (1776-1810), he held elective office for at least 20 of them, representing the interests of Frederick County. This allowed him to achieve positions of power not just for himself but his children. Among the plum jobs for the Shriver family was the federal appointment of Andrew as a local postmaster.

The 1805 legislation authorizing turnpike construction directed that “said roads shall be made in, over and upon, the beds of the present roads, as laid out and confirmed by the commissioners of review, and the several acts of assembly relating to the same.” One critical section of the turnpike was the road from Westminster to Littlestown which became the subject of considerable dispute in the years leading up to the turnpike’s authorizing legislation.

## A Controversial Decision

As early as 1798, Andrew Shriver was advocating for a postal road from Littlestown or Hanover through Union Mills and on to Westminster and Baltimore. His lobbying in Annapolis continued with entreaties for a state route between the Union Mills property and Hanover. Subsequently, he also lobbied the Maryland General Assembly to authorize a new road that would in effect connect his grist mill directly to Westminster. His entreaties fell upon sympathetic ears: his father's.

Maryland's legislative proceedings are replete with the Shriver family's involvement in laws relating to roads. For instance, in early December 1801, Shriver, Sr., was named to serve on a committee to consider a road to Carlisle, PA. On December 12, the House of Delegates appointed him to a committee to consider a petition of residents of Montgomery

and Anne Arundel Counties for the construction of a road from Washington, DC, to Taneytown.

The surviving documentary record indicates that the road Andrew Shriver advocated between Union Mills and Westminster was fully intended to divert road traffic from his rival merchant, Peter Erb. In November of 1801, Andrew wrote his father that he wanted the road legislation “pushed through as quick as possible for fear the Erbs should get wind of it and oppose me.” He continued, “I am afraid if I do not get it passed this session when we have so many friends in both houses I never will.” Later that month, he again wrote his father, “I wish you to use your utmost efforts to get it passed for I see every day the disadvantage I suffer for want of it.” This was specifically because he was missing out on wagon traffic from Conewago and sales of grain products – both of which were enjoyed by Peter Erb.

In 1801, the Assembly enacted legislation advancing Andrew Shriver’s petition, “to lay out and open a road, passing by the Union mills to the Marsh creek road.” That same year, the Assembly also enacted a bill for a new road connecting the Littlestown Road and the Hanover Road. This created an important crossroads at Union Mills, with the roads to Littlestown, Hanover, and Westminster all intersecting there.

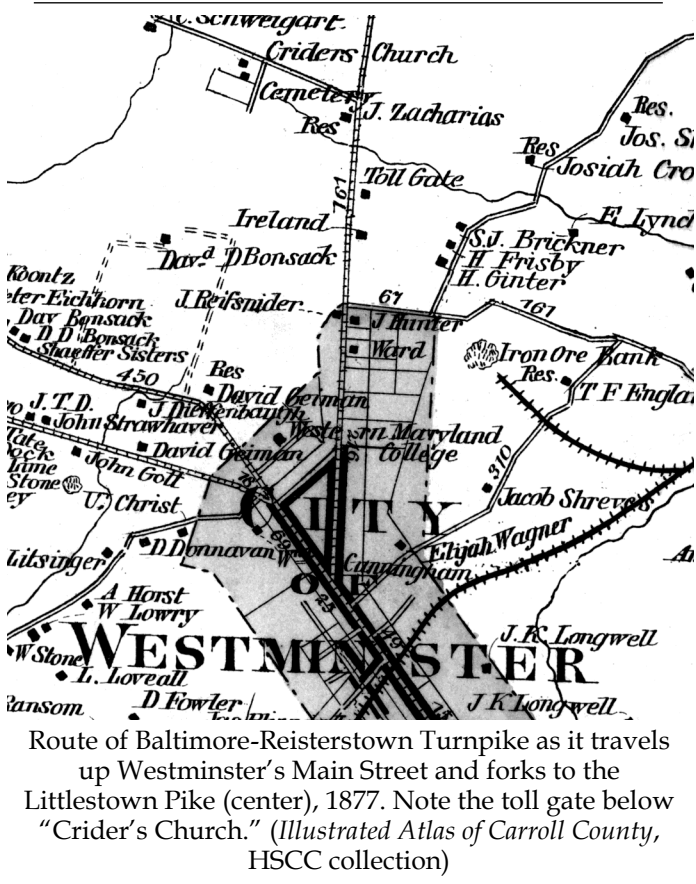
The benefit to the Shriver family of the road did not go without notice. The authorizing legislation for the turnpike was dubbed “Mr. Shriver’s road law” by the opposition Federalist paper, the *Frederick-Town Herald*, even though Shriver seemingly had recused himself from the committee that considered his son’s petition. The *Herald* criticized the “self-serving” David Shriver, claiming he had failed to properly advertise the road, and thus provide sufficient public notice. Moreover, the *Herald* opined, the title of the road was itself

deceitful, referring to the authorization of a “certain road” in Frederick County, when it was obviously one intended to have a specific route, one laid out on the petition of David Shriver’s own son. The *Herald* blasted the road as “unjust and iniquitous,” moving a road from Erb’s mill where it had run since Frederick County was first founded and destroying private property in the process. By 1809, the *Frederick Herald* wryly observed that there was never an election in which a Shriver was running that did not involve a road.

And as if to make the family affair complete, Andrew’s brother David, an experienced surveyor and civil engineer, subsequently was selected as the Baltimore-Reisterstown Turnpike’s Superintendent of Construction. Within a few years of Union Mills’ founding, David withdrew from that enterprise and in 1803 married Eve Sherman, the daughter of Westminster innkeeper Jacob Sherman. Sherman purchased a lot opposite his tavern in May 1806 and, after construction of the building we know now as the Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House, sold the property to his son-in-law in 1807 for five shillings. That same year, David, Jr., was elected to Maryland’s House of Delegates, his father having been elevated to the State Senate in 1804.



Big Pipe Creek Stone Arch Bridge, c.1890. Photograph by Louis Shriver. (Courtesy of the Union Mills Homestead Foundation, Inc.)



### Turnpike Construction

After the authorizing legislation was enacted, road construction moved quickly. On November 16, 1807, the Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike Company reported to the Secretary of the Treasury that “Baltimore and a point in the Pennsylvania line towards Petersburg are united; distance about forty-five miles. The road forks at Reisterstown, sixteen miles from Baltimore.” The road maintains much the same route today.

The Baltimore-Reisterstown Turnpike was completed on January 8, 1810, when its last tollgate became operational. The total cost for the entire 59 miles of the road (both the Littlestown and Hanover branches) was \$638,000. The turnpike included substantial improvements such as bridges, the largest of which were two stone arch bridges – one over the north branch of the Patapsco River and the other spanning Big Pipe Creek at



Tollgate on Littlestown Pike, just south of “Crider’s Church,” c.1900. (HSCC collection)

Union Mills. The bridge over the Patapsco, completed in 1807, remained in use until 1947. Now abandoned and partially submerged in the Liberty Reservoir, the ruins are significant as the oldest stone arch bridge in Maryland. The bridge over Big Pipe Creek washed out in a 1933 flood and has been replaced over the years.

The turnpike companies constructed small buildings along the roads where tolls were collected as well as gatekeepers’ houses where the gatekeeper lived. Records of the period reflect land acquisitions by the turnpike companies for their gatekeepers. In Finksburg, for instance, the Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike Company acquired from William Wheeler an acre or so in 1821 at the “twentieth mile stone” for use by “the Gate keeper his family and servants.” The company owned this lot until 1903, and the tollhouse itself survived until 2009. The Baltimore and Reisterstown Turnpike Company managed the road as a privately-operated enterprise for over a century, finally selling it to the State Roads Commission in 1915.

Building, maintaining, and managing the turnpike created many jobs. Large numbers of Conestoga freight wagons navigated the new