

Jane Sewell

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It was important to have mills back in the 18th century for the development of the community mainly because the people needed to have a place to take their grain and their lumber to have it ground into flour and to have the logs made into boards for their building purposes. And so definitely mills played a very important part in the growing communities in this area.

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Andrew and David Shriver chose this particular area because of the very strong water flow of the Big Pipe Creek and the deep run. And they needed that strong flow of water to operate their mills. Also this was going to be a farming area and they had wonderful fields for the growth process.

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David and Andrew had first the grist mill and the saw mill, but they had also chosen this area for farming purposes. They were a very self sufficient area, they had their own farms, the fields here were wonderful and of course the two mills. And after that they began to expand with a cooper shop where they built the barrels for transporting the flour and the blacksmith shop and the tannery.

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Union Mills became a very thriving crossroads settlement because of the road that ran past the, through the area, actually between the Baltimore area and Pittsburgh eventually. So we had a lot of travelers on this road and it was necessary then because of that for the settlers to come and set up their own little houses and begin to work. This was the westward expansion we might call it.

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When you have the increased good roads you have more settlers coming into the area. That served a lot of different purposes because you would have the good labor force at that point and when you have an industry like Union Mills began to have you needed more workers. And the settlement that grew up around here became larger and David and Andrew then expanded with the tannery, with the cooper shop, the blacksmith shop and of course their farming. It was a big farming venture also.

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They set up barns and carriage houses, whatever, all around this house. At this point David had become a very talented engineer and began to work on what became Reisterstown Road became the National Road and because of the large family, the house became expanded and the whole venture at this site became larger.

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When David and Andrew came here and settled and had their dream of their industrial settlement beginning with the mills and ending, you know, and including the tannery it

was a union of their ventures because of the union of their venture with these mills that seemed to be the perfect name, Union Mills and it was the beginning of an industrial complex here right in Union Mills. The name Union Mills has been retained, the town here is Union Mills and this site is the Union Mills Homestead.

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The settlers who lived in this area of course used the mills and the tannery but also people came from around the county and of course you had the travelers that were traveling the road as it got expanded to the west. So the facility also entertained some travelers when they couldn't keep going because perhaps of bad weather, so along with the businesses that were already here, we ended up having a little inn where the travelers could stay, and have lodging and some food and probably some entertainment from the family.

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In the early part of the 1800s Union Mills remained a very vital and kind of exciting area because of the mills, the tannery, a cannery was actually added at that time; it was a bustling community. There were political speeches that were made here; the community could get their information here. There was a little general store, the post office was here. This was a very bustling community and the mill produced a tremendous amount of flour which was transported into the port of Baltimore.

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But in the second half of the 1800's after the Civil War with the beginnings of the railroads, things began to change. This was not near a railroad depot and that became a problem. The larger mills that access to the railroads flourished. Here at Union Mills of all workings of the mill were wooden and after the Civil war the need to change to metal turbines and all this had to be bought, the metal had to be, had to be bought, and the wood was no longer efficient. So this particular mill became not as big and flourishing as it had been in the first half of the century.

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During the Civil War the Battle of Gettysburg was fought near by. If General Meade of the Union Army had had his way the battle would have been fought right here. He had set up what we call the Pipe Creek line. He was hoping to cut off Lee's troops who would be heading south into Washington, and the battle would have been here. However, Jeb Stuart's troops came in from Westminster, the Union knew they were coming, and Stuart's troops came and camped here on the hillsides, they were thousands of them throughout the whole site here. They were fed pancakes that hadn't even been fully cooked because they were very, very hungry.

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And here on this side of the road Andrew Kaiser Shriver was a Union man. He was a Union sympathizer and his brother William, who lived across the road, was a Confederate sympathizer. Of course Jeb Stuart camped on this side of the road but was entertained for breakfast on the other side of the road. As they moved out the following morning Jeb Stuart took his troops, took some of the Union Shriver's horses with him.

They did pay for them; we still have some of Confederate money that Jeb Stuart left in good faith to pay for the horses that he took on his way to Gettysburg.

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After Jeb Stuart left, within hours, General James Barns came and he was of the Union Fifth Corps, he came in and set up a headquarters here in the house and his officers; he had probably about 12 officers in his unit that actually were entertained by the ladies in the house with some music and entertainment. At that time however the mill and the farming was not interrupted at all. Everything continued on as usual; they could hear the cannons in the background, but there was no trouble right here at Union Mills, for which we're very grateful. There was however the retreat from Gettysburg where there were the wounded, and the stragglers, and the soldiers coming back down the road, but again the mill and the tannery continued on as regular business.

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When the 20th century came along obviously a lot of progress had been made with the railroads, the mill became more of a community operation and a convenience for the settlers and the people that lived right here in the area. It was no longer the major milling complex that it had been in the early 1800s. The mill began to fall into disrepair and it actually, the back end of it had actually collapsed, and in 1942 the mill was closed and there was just not the need for it here to continue operation and it was prohibitly expensive to put it back into repair at that time.

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The mill actually lay in disrepair from 1942 until it was restored in the early 1980s. The Klein brothers who had inherited the facility, the mill, tried to restore it to a point. Fred Klein in particular had tried to clean it up, replaced some of the windows, and tried to make it look nice, but there was no way that he was going to be able to completely restore it. He did also here on the place try to do some of the farming that had been done years ago, but only, only as a hobby more for him. The mill itself, once it was restored, it was restored to a demonstration type mill; it is a working grist mill in the style of the Oliver Evans mill. The large wooden wheel is back water-powered. We do grind cornmeal, whole wheat, buckwheat and rye here today and the mill does operate. We have a miller on site and the mill is used for demonstrating but it is also a working mill. And its one of very, very few in the area and so it is something that is... a site that people love to come to see.

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When Andrew and David first came here they each built a little, a little log house connected by a little porch and each house had two little rooms, one downstairs and one upstairs. Now Andrew's family grew and grew; he ultimately had 11 children. David was a bachelor at that time. It worked fine for him but he became a superintendent of the road and he moved on. Andrew bought out David's interest in the business and began to expand the house and as generations came along the house increased in size; the number of people increased, the size of the house increased. So it went from the very beginnings of the two little log houses to today it has 23 rooms. The rooms in the house have all been

used for different things over the years. The very formal dining room at the west end when it wasn't needed for a dining room any more was a business room, a storage room, and a smaller dining room was set up in the east side of the house. So the rooms all as many of them as there were different, different things. Some bedrooms, some offices, some rooms for travelers so the house itself has quite, quite a history of its expansion and when it was expanded, each expansion was like a separate house. It actually is like three separate houses; the beginnings being log and then each addition being constructed a little bit differently.

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David and Andrew were very politically inclined and they big supporters of Thomas Jefferson. They actually modeled their little balcony upstairs and their staircase after railings at Monticello, the Chinese Chippendale latticework. As a gesture of this support, Thomas Jefferson allowed the post office to be built at Union Mills and Andrew Shriver was made the postmaster here. There were notable visitors here at Union Mills that made speeches from that balcony to the community. This is a lot of how they got their news....

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Some of the notable people who came and made speeches from that balcony were Francis Scott Key and Chief Justice Roger Taney. This balcony served as a spot where the community could come and listen and there were political rallies held here and speeches made. Andrew was very fluent in German and if some of the settlers who came here did not understand a question, Andrew was able to translate for them.

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In the most recent times there are lots of Shriver's who have maintained a close relationship with Union Mills. I myself am a descendant of Andrew and I have become the Executive Director here at Union Mills and my cousins, Jim and James Shriver moved directly across the road. We still have many other Shriver relatives in Carroll county and in nearby communities as well as many throughout the United States and even over in Europe who have maintained a relationship as members of the Union Mills Homestead Foundations and are great supporters of the foundation.

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One of the most interesting scenarios here during the Civil War was that Andrew Kaiser Shriver was a Union man and had several slaves here as house slaves here on the place and his brother who lived across the road was a Confederate sympathizer and he had no slaves. This was an interesting scenario for that time. William had several sons who fought on the Confederate side during and Andrew also had several sons who fought for the Union side.

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After the Civil War many of the young people at Union Mills moved into more urban areas and away from this agrarian type of lifestyle. And it becomes more of a quiet, rural area here at Union Mills. Eventually with Louis Shriver, who lived into his 90s and his

widowed niece, Bessie Shriver who was in her 70s, they were the only two that lived in this house at this time when it had been previously lived in by so many family members.

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Union Mills had always been much of a bustling almost community within itself because of so many family members living here; they loved parties, they had people here visitors here, it was just a very exciting place to be. But as they began to move on to the cities, the younger ones and some of the older ones following along, it came down to being just a quiet, rural home.

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Union Mills was a major part of the community for many, many years and it was a popular place. The settlement that grew up around it, the people were very involved with Union Mills and I think that is why it was such a vital part of the area for such a long time. But then the decline of course because of the railroad made it a much quieter area and yet today what its revitalization and its restoration it's a very popular historic site and it draws a lot of visitors because of the fact that the mill being restored to an original demonstration of Oliver Evans mill is very unique for this area as a working mill. There are just not a lot of working mills around. And I think that the house having been lived in by six generations of Shrivvers has so many artifacts in it that were all just passed from one generation to another. The house was always lived in by Shrivvers and they never threw anything away, they just would go from one era to another and just add to rather than subtract from the things that were already here. So we do have an amazing collection of artifacts that span the early 1800s right on up through the 20th century.