

Another related development was a 2019 upgrade to Master’s grave. In the years since he died, the ledger stone atop his grave at Ascension cracked, becoming a matter of much discussion and local lore. Each time the church repaired the ledger it would crack again, reinforcing various ghost stories and other unfavorable legends related to Master. In 2019, Ascension Church finally replaced the ledger stone and donated to HSCC the large, original portion of the stone containing the inscription as to Master’s place of birth and date of death.



Tombstone, David Shriver. (HSCC photo, 2022.)

In contrast to the indignities surrounding Master’s remains, David Shriver has enjoyed a much more peaceful interment. Shriver and his wife, Rebecca (Ferree) Shriver, were buried in the Pennsylvania German tradition with their feet towards the east – facing the rising sun for their resurrection with the Second Coming. As directed in Shriver’s will, a substantial brick wall surrounds the cemetery, affording prominence and protection. Buried in the same cemetery are two of their sons, including Andrew, who founded the Union Mills Homestead, their spouses, and other descendants. Also of note are the graves of African Americans believed to have been enslaved or employed by David Shriver.

Selected Sources:

Riley, George Donald, Jr. *David Shriver, 1735-1826*. Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 2003.
Riley, George Donald, Jr. *The Ghost of Legh Furnace*. Westminster: The Historical Society of Carroll County, 2009.

About the Author: G. Donald Riley, Jr., was born in 1924 and died December 18, 2016. Riley graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1946 and was commissioned as an ensign. He earned a master's degree in economics from American University in 1961. After a distinguished military career, and subsequent career in the oil pipeline industry, Riley retired in 1989 and became an avid researcher and writer. He was an active volunteer for the Historical Society of Carroll County. Riley authored several books, including detailed histories of both Legh Master and David Shriver. His son, Samuel M. Riley, is a local attorney and member of the Historical Society of Carroll County. Note: At the time of this writing, Riley and his wife lived at *Farm Content*; his daughter and son-in-law, Helen & Michael Hecht, lived at *Avondale*, formerly *Legh Furnace*. Both houses remain in the Riley family today.

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THE ENGLISH TORY AND THE AMERICAN PATRIOT

BY G. DONALD RILEY, JR.

In early 1776, Legh Master, a 59-year-old English ironmaster, and David Shriver, a 41-year-old Pennsylvania German farmer, lived on adjoining tracts on Little Pipe Creek in eastern Frederick (now Carroll) County. Master arrived in Maryland from England in 1770 with a wife and daughter and three ships laden with possessions, leaving his 15-year-old son behind to finish his schooling. He purchased 6,400 acres of land in 1773 from William Buchanan and built a blast furnace named *Legh Furnace*. Educated at Oxford University, Master descended from a wealthy, aristocratic English family from Lancashire. In contrast, Shriver, the self-educated son of a German immigrant, moved from a farm in southern Pennsylvania to Little Pipe Creek by covered wagon in 1760. There he personally cleared part of his 300-acre property for farming and erected a log cabin.

Revolutionary War

The year of the Declaration of Independence, 1776, found the citizens of Frederick County voicing strong anti-British sentiments at public meetings. Citizens throughout Maryland had objected to taxes levied by Parliament’s Stamp Act and Townshend Acts. They particularly disliked paying fees ordered by the royal governor of Maryland to support the Anglican Church. Showing support for independence, Frederick County organized and dispatched two companies of infantry in 1775 to reinforce General George Washington’s Continental Army opposing the British forces at Boston.



David Shriver, c.1800, watercolor attributed to Jacob Maentel. (HSCC Collection.)

The anti-British feeling in Frederick County forced Legh Master to walk a fine line. He faced a dilemma. If he fled to England he risked confiscation of his property by Maryland. On the other hand, if he remained at *Legh Furnace* and took the oath of allegiance to Maryland, Parliament would confiscate his considerable property in England. Master decided to do neither.

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He left his wife, Katherine (Hoskins) Master, and daughter, Katherine, with a servant in Baltimore to find their own way back to England and fled to the Bahamas in 1776.

Meanwhile, David Shriver had been appointed to the Committee of Observation in Frederick County to enforce the Continental Congress policy for non-importation of British goods. In 1776 Shriver was elected as a delegate to the convention in Annapolis where they wrote the Maryland Constitution and Declaration of Rights. Shriver also volunteered to serve as a field officer in the Linganore battalion of the Maryland militia. In 1777 he resigned his commission in the militia after his election to the Maryland House of Delegates. Throughout the war, Shriver played a key role in supplying the men, guns, ammunition, clothing, and materials to fulfill Maryland's contribution to the war. His support of the Revolutionary War was so intense that his friends were alarmed for his safety, and his clergyman emphatically warned him that he would be hanged for treason and his family made beggars. Shriver treated the admonition with contempt and continued to urge his countrymen to vindicate their rights.

Not much is known of Master's activities until he returned from the Bahamas in the fall of 1780 aboard the Bermuda sloop, *Experiment*. Owned and captained by Master, the ship carried a white flag of truce and 33 American prisoners of war under a prisoner exchange program. Master did not receive a warm reception in Baltimore. Thomas Sollers, naval officer of the port, seized the *Experiment* and her cargo because the vessel belonged to a "subject of the king of Great Britain and an enemy of Maryland and the United States." In December 1780, however, Master received good news from the governor's council that he had not violated the flag of truce, and the *Experiment* with her cargo was restored to him. But it was not until April 1781 that the council issued a permit to the naval officer in Baltimore allowing Master's return to the Bahamas. His journey was not smooth. First, on April 21, in the lower Chesapeake Bay, the British privateer,



David Shriver's second house on Little Pipe Creek, built c.1795, named *Farm Content* by his son, Jacob Shriver. (HSCC photo, 2011.)

Jack in the Lantern, captured the *Experiment*. Four days later, the American privateer *Antelope* commandeered the *Jack in the Lantern* and returned the *Experiment* to Master. Then a British privateer captured the *Experiment* and escorted it to British headquarters in New York where Master was tried and released. He set off again for the Bahamas, but an American privateer captured his sloop once more and put Master ashore in Georgetown, SC.

In January 1782, the 64-year-old Master wrote to Governor William Paca that he was sick and destitute but planning to take the oath of allegiance upon returning from South Carolina to his plantation in Maryland. In response, the General Court removed his name from the list of persons indicted for high treason, and his property was not confiscated. Intentionally or not, Master waited until America won the war to take the oath of allegiance and prevent the loss of his Maryland plantation.

David Shriver divided his time between his farm on Little Pipe Creek and his duties in Annapolis as a delegate in the General Assembly. In 1782, he and his neighbors filed a complaint with the Commissioners of Confiscated Property against James Smith, Master's plantation manager. The complaint charged Smith with being a Tory and an enemy of the American revolutionary government. Smith allegedly allowed large quantities of grain to



Original grave ledger of Legh Master in its former location at Church of the Ascension Cemetery, Westminster. (HSCC photo, 2008.)

bare, and my son on examin[in]g one day the premises some fifty feet below, found that some of the small bones had fallen from above, loosened, I suppose, by the concussions occasioned by the blasts of gunpowder. I immediately stopped all further quarrying and gave orders to open the grave and carefully collect all that remained of the skeleton. I then wrote to my daughter, who was then staying in Westminster, a letter, containing an account of the whole occurrence, requesting her to show it to Mr. Nicholson. This gentlemen, from the very first took the liveliest interest in the matter – sent out to transfer the tombstone and every brick belonging to the grave to the churchyard in Westminster – The bones were also nicely boxed up and sent in to the same locality – You know the rest, and we all know how much we are indebted to the energy and Christian spirit of our rector.

But why was all this not done years before? – I will tell you in all candor. Whilst the Ashland Co. were working the mine, they worked far down below water level, so that that subterranean springs sending up their waters, the pond became at last 30 feet deep. . . . When, however, the Company ceased their excavations the steam pump was removed, and the water in the pond aroze to their altitude. Then the grave hung so picturesquely on the brink of the precipice, with the vines and pendent shrubbery below it, that it was an interesting object to look upon. At one time we had a gaily painted rowboat on the pond, and then who were wafted in the same, never failed to have the site of the grave pointed out to them, and it always excited their admiration.

I recollected the IXth Eclogue of Virgil (near the end) where the poet adds so much to the interest of the scene by alluding to the tomb of Bianor "Hinc adeo media est nobis via; namque sepulcrum Incipit apparere Bianoris" – and remembering this, I said to myself 'I will let the tomb of the Englishman, around which there is so much interest and mystery, stand' – he must have given orders before his death to be buried in that particular spot. There it has been since my earliest recollection – Avondale without Legh Master's grave would not seem like itself.

But when the metatarsal bones were shaken out by the blasting and began to fall among the rubbish below, my conscience began to accuse me, and I acted as I have told me. Blame me, therefore, where you think my conduct was blameable, and give me credit where it appears praiseworthy. I feel relieved, having made a clean breast of it.

The remains now rest in the centre of the "gottes-acre" of the beautiful little ivy-covered church of the Ascension, an object of interest to all visitors; even correspondents of city newspapers have lately been writing about it.

Today there is a road named Legh Masters Lane in the Wakefield Valley development near Westminster. Ironically, it was dedicated many years before Shriver Lane at Carroll Lutheran Village. The names of Master and Shriver – the English Tory and the American Patriot and past adversaries – live on, less than one mile apart.

EPILOGUE by Samuel M. Riley

My father authored this article before his death in 2016. Developments since then recommend its posthumous publication. In 2018, the Historical Society of Carroll County received a transcription of a remarkable letter sent by a member of the Master family in the United Kingdom. Written on July 4, 1879, by Thomas Van Bibber at *Avondale* to Rev. George Streynsham Master, Rector of West Dean, Wiltshire, the letter recounts how Legh Master came to be buried at Ascension Church long after he was originally interred at *Avondale*. The letter is worth repeating in substantial part:

How often in my boyhood have I, with my brothers and sisters, sported under the willow tree which overshadowed the tombstone which was then in one corner of our garden, weaving dandelion chains, as children weave daisy-chains in England[.] How often did we shout the name of Legh Master to wake up a sleeping Echo which answered three times from eastside of the dwellinghouse. Sometimes these early recollections come back very vividly – so much so as almost to draw tears – so delicious are they! . . . That tree was to all of us, for many years, an object of unusual interest. It was one of the largest and most graceful specimens of its kind I have ever seen – which is the more remarkable, as there was no stream or fountain near to nourish it. On its branches the Baltimore bird (oriole) delighted to suspend its hanging nest in summer, and it was even beautiful in winter when the same branches were sheeted with icicles. So things went on from year to year, until at

last – one perfectly calm and quiet day in mid-summer (I think in the year 1830) all suddenly, with a loud crash the old willow tumbled to the earth, splitting open in the fall and exposing to view the hoards of hickory nuts which had been garnered there by the squirrels.

The tombstone, with the remains under it, were not removed until the spring of 1876.² Mr. Nicholson made a slight inaccuracy in the account of it, which he wrote to you. I will tell you exactly how it was, although some might think I myself did not act in the matter exactly as I should have done. It was not the Ashland Iron Company that was to blame, for they had ceased then to work the mine. You must know that contiguous and parallel with the vein of iron ran also a vein of limestone of the kind called metamorphic, of a very superior quality – in fact, a kind of marble, which would answer well for tombstones, slabs for tables &c &c – This limestone, as it turned out, stretches up nearly to the higher ground on which lay the tombstone. The man who was working it, continued his operations of quarrying until the east end of the grave was actually laid

² Church of the Ascension’s records date the reinterment to 1877.



Avondale, late 19th century. (HSCC Collection.)



Legh Master’s Coat of Arms.
(Courtesy of James E. Moss Collection.)

be destroyed by rats rather than accept current money for it when the Continental Army desperately needed provisions. He was also accused of defrauding the state by conveying valuable property to Master, a British subject, when he was restricted to Baltimore harbor aboard the *Experiment* in late 1780 and early 1781. The commissioners dismissed the complaint, noting the complainants, including Shriver, were primarily interested in acquiring part of Master’s property.

Master Fights to Keep His Land

The family motto in Legh Master’s coat of arms reads: *To defend what you have gained is no less valor than to gain*. In 1795, Master proved that he lived by these words. As early as 1793, he had concerns that his English children would not qualify under Maryland law to inherit his estate after his death. Accordingly, he filed a petition with the House of Delegates which passed a bill, 29 to 25, in early

1794 empowering Master’s children – Legh Hoskins Master and Katherine Master – to inherit his estate. Surprisingly, Shriver, not an admirer of Master, voted in favor of the bill. It passed the General Assembly in December 1794, and Governor John Hoskins Stone signed it into law, ensuring Master’s English children would inherit his Maryland property.

However, Master still owed William Buchanan for the 6,400 acres of land purchased in 1773. Buchanan obtained a court judgment against Master in 1786, and Shriver would play a key role in the litigation. The court decreed Master delinquent and directed him to settle with Buchanan. Master could only blame the war and his six-year absence from Frederick County for his delinquency. The judgment would be released if Master paid £2,239.7.7¹ with interest from the purchase date, July 18, 1773. The Frederick County Court in 1787 issued a writ of *fiery facias* directing Thomas Beatty, the Frederick County sheriff, to levy and sell Master’s property to satisfy the debt. Summoned by the court, Shriver and three of his neighbors appraised the land at £8,558.10.0. For unknown reasons, the case remained dormant for eight years until Buchanan intensified his effort to settle the debt. As a result, Sheriff Beatty seized Master’s property and held a public auction on June 4, 1795. The sale included 6,728½ acres of land, a gristmill, sawmill, and several other valuable improvements. Master’s personal property, consisting of 30 enslaved people and 45 head of black cattle, rounded out the sale. Buchanan became the high bidder for the sum of £5,035, and the sheriff conveyed the property to him.

In keeping with his family motto, Master did not take the loss of his property without a fight. He filed a complaint against Buchanan, Beatty, Shriver, and Joseph Wells on June 11, 1795, with Alexander Contee Hanson, Chancellor of Maryland. Master accused Buchanan of raising the money for the sale

¹ This sum is in pounds, shillings, and pence and in 1786 was then equivalent to about \$10,000. Currency exchange rates fluctuated until July 31, 1789, when Congress established that a pound sterling be rated at a value of \$4.44 for the purpose of computing tariffs on British goods.

with the help of Shriver and Wells, to whom Buchanan promised some of the land. Master charged that Beatty, Buchanan, and Shriver went to Shriver’s house after the sale, followed by two justices of the peace, where they executed a deed of conveyance. Master petitioned the court to order Buchanan to submit the original deed he received from Beatty and order Shriver and Wells to produce their contracts with Beatty and disclose the amount of money they had given Buchanan for his bid. Master asked the Chancellor to subpoena the defendants to appear in court to answer his complaint and petitioned the court to order Buchanan to release the property back to him and declare the sale void.

Buchanan testified in July 1795 that Shriver and Wells had offered to lend him money for his bid on the day of the sale. Wells had given \$50, and Shriver had sent his servant, Sam, on horseback, to his nearby house to bring back several hundred dollars. Buchanan then paid Beatty the bid amount minus Master’s debt. Buchanan admitted that, after the sale, he had gone with Beatty and the two justices of the peace to Shriver’s house to execute the deed because they had been neighbors for 30 years. He described Shriver as a “hospitable and kind man.” Shriver and Wells did not submit their joint answer until January 1796. Shriver confirmed he had gone to the sale at *Legh Furnace* with Sheriff Beatty and Buchanan. Wells said he had carried a small amount of money to the sale to pay Shriver for wheat he had previously purchased, but since Buchanan had immediate need for the money, Wells accommodated him. Before the court had a chance to act on the complaint, Legh Master died at his home on March 22, 1796, at age 79.

End of an Era

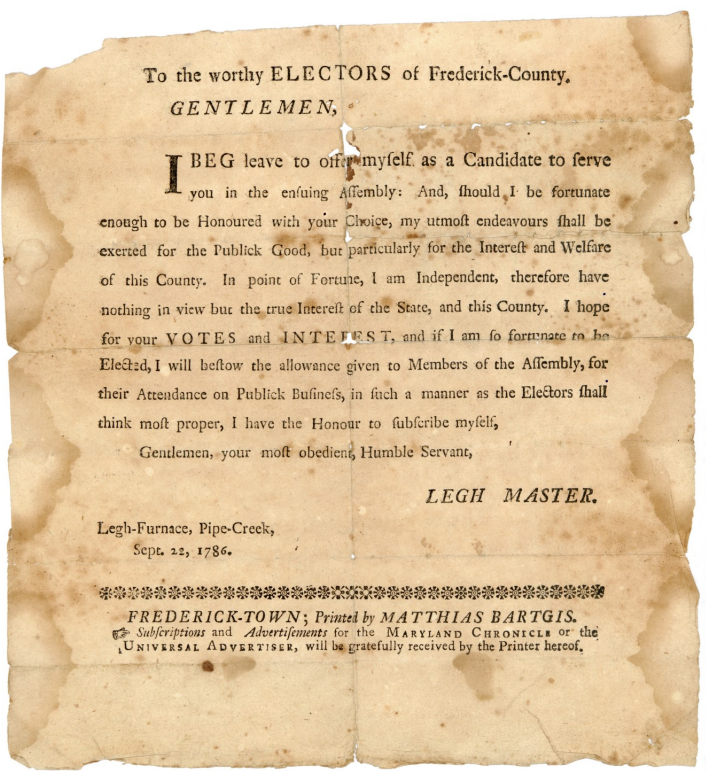
Master’s death marked the end of the family’s presence in Maryland. He bequeathed his real and personal estate to his grandson, Charles L. H. Master, son of Rev. Legh H. Master of Great



Avondale, formerly Legh Furnace, site of the Legh Master and, later, Van Bibber house. (HSCC photo, 2008.)

Britain, and his heirs. However, Charles would inherit his grandfather’s estate only if he emigrated to the United States and became a Maryland citizen within nine months of his grandfather’s death. If Charles declined, the estate would devise to his sister Katherine and her heirs. In 1797, Charles and his father traveled to Maryland to claim his inheritance but did not remain as his grandfather had wished. The Rev. Master agreed to pay Buchanan £6,398 to settle his father’s debt. The property was then deeded to Master’s estate, and between 1801 and 1809, the trustees sold the real and personal property. The latter, including 32 enslaved people, was valued at £2,224.13.6. Part of the plantation, consisting of the house and 750½ acres, was sold to Isaac Van Bibber of Baltimore for £3,101.10.0. Van Bibber changed the name from *Legh Furnace* to *Avondale*, as it is still known.

Shriver continued to represent his Frederick County constituents in the General Assembly of Maryland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. He decided not to run for the Maryland Senate in 1810 because of poor health and spent his remaining years enjoying his farm and watching his grandchildren mature. He died at his home on January 29, 1826, at age 90. The total value of Shriver’s real and personal estate was \$6,609.49. His property included 330 acres of land and 30 enslaved people. He manumitted all enslaved



Political handbill announcing the candidacy of Legh Master for General Assembly of Maryland, 1786. (HSCC Collection.)

males over age 24 who were able to earn a living. Others were to be supported by his estate. Shriver’s son, Col. Jacob Shriver, inherited the farm and named it *Farm Content*. The property was sold out of the Shriver family in 1903 and then purchased by the author and his wife, Helen Shriver Riley, in 1969, returning it to family ownership.

Legacies

David Shriver was a settler as well as a founding father of Frederick County. As a pioneer he cleared woodland, planted, cultivated crops, and



contributed to the growth of agriculture in Piedmont Maryland. His contribution to the State of Maryland in formulating its 1776 Constitution, Declaration of Rights, and early legislation mark his legacy in public affairs. Shriver not only witnessed but also actively engaged in a revolution and the building of a young nation. He gave freely of his time to public service often separated from his family and farm for extended periods. His greatest legacy was his family. At the time of his death he was the progenitor of eight children, 55 grandchildren, and 44 great grandchildren. His gravestone still stands with a Revolutionary War marker at the family graveyard across from *Farm Content*, whose brick house he built about 1795 along Little Pipe Creek.

The entrepreneur Legh Master chose an unfortunate time to invest in his Maryland iron furnace. The war between the colonies and Great Britain placed him in a difficult position. His neighbors in Frederick County disliked him because they considered him a traitor. Nevertheless, he performed admirable service by returning 33 American prisoners of war to their families at the close of the war. As an ironmaster he was part of the growth of the iron industry in colonial Maryland. After returning to Maryland at the end of the war, he successfully managed his large plantation in Frederick County. Master certainly had faults: he was a schemer, litigious, and continually in debt. But the stories that circulated after his death that he pushed an enslaved person into his blast furnace had no basis in fact. In England, Master was remembered as a wealthy and adventuresome country gentleman and progenitor of the Master family of Barrow Green estate in County Surrey. Master was originally buried on a hillside in front of his house overlooking Little Pipe Creek. In 1877 his remains were removed and reinterred in the Episcopal Church of the Ascension’s graveyard in Westminster.

Pig iron from Legh Master’s furnace found at the Steward Shipyard in Anne Arundel County. Photograph by Bruce F. Thompson. From *Maryland Archaeology*, 40(2) [September 2004]. (Courtesy of Archeological Society of Maryland, Inc.)