CONGRESSMAN DANIEL HIESTER

tells Andrew Shriver to name the postmasters along the new postroads, and adds some Washington news: "A resolution also passed the house this day to designate in future elections the persons to be President and Vice-President—it is expected it will also pass the Senate by a Constitutional Majority. . . ." This became the XIIth Amendment, finally proposed by Congress December 12, 1803.
AMERICAN political campaigns have always had distinct and unusual characteristics, whether they are conducted with television, torchlight parades, or log-cabin and hard-cider celebrations. Certainly the founders of the Constitution never visualized the tremendous amount of activity, energy, enthusiasm and despair which would be displayed by ordinary citizens in every community every few years, as they engaged in the machinations, charges, counter-charges and Machiavellian diplomacy associated with American elections.

A little more than a hundred and fifty years ago, in the first years of Jefferson's administration, a political campaign took place along the Pennsylvania-Maryland border, in the area roughly bounded by Hanover, Westminster and Frederick. From the vast collection of unpublished letters and documents contained in the Shriver Papers, this microscopic section of local political history can be brought into sharp focus, revealing clearly how the great American game of politics was practiced in the first years of our two-party system.

In 1802, Andrew Shriver, living at Union Mills, Md., located on Pipe Creek halfway between Littlestown and Westminster, had no idea that he was going to be a politician. He had...
previously operated a store and tavern in Littlestown (then called Petersburg), and had built a house and gristmill at Union Mills in 1797, hoping that the opening of western territory would bring settlers and trade. His brother, Abraham Shriver, kept a general store in Frederick, but had some experience in the law, and a lively interest in Jeffersonian Republicanism. Their father, David Shriver, could be called a professional politician, having been active in Maryland state politics since the Revolution. He was now a member of the Maryland House of Delegates.\(^2\)

These two brothers, Andrew and Abraham, are the principal characters in this diminutive drama. In the next two years, they both became full-fledged political leaders in Frederick County, working successfully for the Jeffersonian Republicans and for their own interests. It proved to be a very satisfactory combination.

The two brothers did not seek to enter politics—they had it thrust upon them. Andrew’s first experience with political strategy came in January, 1802, when a horseman arrived at his home-stead at Union Mills, delivering a letter from Frederick County’s two professional politicians—Roger Nelson, of the state legislature, and Daniel Clarke, soon to be elected to the same body.\(^3\)

“The Judiciary Bill has just been passed and we name the Associate Justices for Frederick County.” Would Andrew like to be an Associate Judge? This was Friday and an answer was required by Sunday night. A postscript made the letter even more dramatic: “P.S. This is confidential. Don’t tell even your wives!”

Andrew’s reply might have been made by any citizen suddenly picked out for an unexpected political appointment. He was modest, he was not qualified for the position, he had not asked for it, but if his duty as a citizen required it, he would make the sacrifice. He wrote: “There are few men that possess less legal information than myself. I have submitted to loss in most cases rather than redress at court. My appointment cannot, according to my view of the subject, answer any good purpose to me, but may injure the cause.” But, as any good citizen would, he rose to the challenge. “Yet, from the decided language of your letter that one of us must accept, I will leave it with you, and if that

\(^2\)Member, Maryland Constitutional Convention, 1776; House of Delegates, 1776-1803; State Senate, 1806.

\(^3\)Nelson, Maryland House of Delegates, 1800-1802; State Senate, 1804; Clarke, Maryland House of Delegates, 1803-1804.
imperious necessity really exists, I am ready to make the sacrifice. . . . I have from that principle embarked in the cause, and am willing to serve in the post where I may prove most serviceable."

Andrew's first lesson about the fickle behavior of politicians came the next day in a letter from his brother, Abraham, in Frederick. The letter informed Andrew that his noble sacrifice was unnecessary since Messrs. Clarke and Nelson had now selected two other appointees, without waiting for Andrew's reply. Abraham was outspoken in expressing his opinion about the action. "I have had my suspicions of Nelson and they remain as cogent as ever, and with Clarke I too felt often disgusted. There appears to me to be such a disposition of intrigue and insincerity hid under the cloak of prudence and such a convenience of fashion-
ing himself to the will of Nelson, from whom he no doubt expects that a morsel of favor may be dropt to him, that really the thing sickens me sometimes.”

On the same day, the professional politicians, Nelson and Clarke, wrote a diplomatic apology to Andrew for having double-crossed him. “Your letter did not reach us as soon as was expected, but this will relieve you from the embarrassment which the importunity of our letter has placed you in. Your willingness to sacrifice private emolument at the shrine of public benefit commands the warmest respect of every lover of his country. It is hoped that when the Republican interest shall at any time require your services, you will not retract that patriotic principle which is revered by every Republican. In short, it is expected you will serve in any appointments conferred on you by the Executive, and if necessary in any other that you may be advanced to. Accept our best wishes for your welfare and happiness.”

A few weeks later, Andrew found out why he had been treated so unceremoniously. His brother wrote, “In plain English, it was to get rid of you.” Clarke and Nelson were afraid Andrew might run for the Assembly, and Clarke wanted to run for that office himself.

Abraham was right and what was going on became obvious. The Republicans were in power and were scheming and fighting among themselves for the political plums. There was as yet no great danger from the defeated Federalists. If Andrew could be appeased with a small appointment, he might not be a rival for a more important post.

The two brothers decided they could play this kind of game themselves. Andrew Shriver’s mill on Pipe Creek was between Westminster and Littlestown, on the main road from Baltimore to Chambersburg. If he could secure a postal route, it would help trade and business all through his area. He ignored the local politicians and wrote directly to Congressman Daniel Hiester, with persuasive arguments:

“As I expect it would be useless to look for favors from the representatives of our district, I must request your assistance in procuring a Post by way of this place, Petersburg and Gettys-

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4 The original Shriver mill and homestead are still in existence at Union Mills, Md., occupied by the same family since 1797.
burg to Chambersburg. We labor under considerable inconvenience for want of a post. No place stands more in need of information and none in the United States so near the seat of government has less chance of obtaining it.” Then he described the political situation: “Our German friends which form a large proportion of the inhabitants of this county are much pleased with the present state of things, but it is greatly to be lamented that their information is so bad. They are certainly the most useful class of people in our country, but they neglect education too much, and are too eager to make money only, which to be sure is good in its place, and makes them feel that degree of independence which is their pride. But their want of information is a great evil under such a government as ours, where every individual is so frequently called upon. It necessarily makes them dependent in affairs of more importance on the opinions of others. I have labored to make them sensible of this, but most of the Germans have been brought up under such despotic governments, and the doctrine of slavish submission to the will of their imperious margraves and petty princes has been fixed in them by their professors of religion.”

Obviously, Andrew was presenting a strong argument for better communication in his area. He warned his Congressman that the enemy was not taking defeat with humility. “As to the well-born, the change of control sits very uneasy upon them. They are determined not to submit to the present order, be the consequences what they may. They would wade through blood to be again fixed in power. They have no idea of submitting the affairs of government to the direction of those upon whom they have so long been in the habit of talking down with contempt, and as to reconciliation, that is out of the question—they will have all or nothing.”

This was a good letter for an amateur politician, and it set the party machinery in motion rapidly. A short time later Senator Robert Wright informed Andrew that the postal route was in the legislative mill. He also delivered a typical Senatorial exhortation: “I have attended to your letter, the contents of which are worthy of an American citizen, and if the sentiments you so freely expressed were weighed by every American he would soon subscribe to them as a proper creed to preserve the liberties of this
country. I am convinced the Feds will make a great effort to regain their station but I am assured they can never succeed unless the Republicans sleep at their posts. It will not do to relax in the attentions to the people who expect to be attended to, as if indeed their own liberties were not at stake. Indeed, every man ought to act as if the fate of elections depended upon himself!" The Senator then reviewed the accomplishments of the Republicans—most important, the extension of free suffrage in Maryland without property qualification, the saving of $32,000 by the Federal government in abolishing judgeships; the saving of $480,000 in military expenses; abolition of the excise and internal taxes, and, last, the use of our little Navy to reduce the Barbary powers to a decent respect for the American flag without tribute—this was the Republican record, and the Senator indicated that they had better keep talking about it.

By the first of May, Andrew learned that his proposal was successful, and he was even asked for his recommendations for postmasters at other points. He was now a Justice of the Peace, and the sponsor of the new postal route, and was becoming known as a local politician of some importance. His influence was respected and letters like the following began to arrive: "Friend Shriver: Attached to Republicanism, I have ever contributed to support its interest, and I may without fear of the interpretation of arrogance, say that so far as my influence extended, I contributed towards the election. I take the liberty to recommend John Galt as a suitable person for constable of the Taneytown District." Mr. Galt’s chief qualification seems to have been his prompt action during the recent election. "Some high-toned Federal had posted a Federalist handbill at the election window. A small minority of Republicans protested, but Mr. Galt, apparently a man of action, tore it down with marked disapproval!" What better recommendation was needed for a Constable?

By July, Andrew was involved with other Republican patronage seekers. A stage-coach operator named Shorb wanted the mail-carrying contract for the new postal route to Chambersburg, and Andrew found logical and patriotic reasons to act in his behalf. He informed his Senator that Shorb might carry the mail all the way to Pittsburgh if he secured a contract, and pointed out that the experience which he and his brother had had with western
trade since 1783 indicated that the growth of Philadelphia commerce was due to western travel, and that Baltimore would develop if they could connect with the Pennsylvania road.

By the end of the year, Andrew's political influence was well established. His brother, Abraham, in Frederick had been even more active. Abraham was becoming a pamphleteer, working energetically with newspapers.

The first Maryland newspaper outside of Annapolis and Baltimore was established in Frederick in 1786 by Mathias Bartgis. Bartgis called his paper the Federal Gazette in 1794, but after Jefferson's election changed the name to the Republican Gazette, expediency being apparently more important than political consistency. A Federalist paper, the Fredericktown Herald, had been established by John P. Thompson, formerly of Carlisle, and Abraham Shriver and Bartgis decided that a special political newspaper, devoted entirely to the Republican cause, was necessary to counteract the Herald. Their new paper, the Hornet, was printed in English and German, to reach the German population so important to the Shrivers, and its masthead bore the ominous motto: "To true Republicans I will sing, but aristocrats shall feel my sting!"5

Abraham assumed chief responsibility for the stings in the Hornet. He wrote, "Between you and myself, the existence of the Hornet depends on what I do from week to week. I have not had a leisure Sunday since its origin and I have every reason to conclude that as soon as my superintendence is withdrawn it will fall to the ground. Although the Hornet itself is truly insignificant, yet it keeps the Federal papers confined to certain limits, and exasperates their supporters so that their own personal feelings predominate and fill their columns. The Herald has by the Hornet been driven not only into intemperance, but personality and absolute falsehoods innumerable, all of which have had a good effect, and have given the Herald its character of defamation and lying. It is now the general observation that both the Herald and the Hornet will sink into insignificance, which the friends of the latter consider a great point indeed."

The Hornet did not sink into insignificance immediately, and Abraham complained frequently and bitterly to his brother about

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5 The Hornet was started in June, 1802, and continued until 1813. W. D. Scharf, History of Western Maryland, Vol. I, p. 528, gives the date as 1803, which is in error.
his problems and responsibilities. In August, he wrote, “The Feds intend to make a great and powerful effort. They seem to be sanguine. It becomes necessary to leave no stone unturned.” He urged Andrew to send articles to the German paper in Hanover —Die Pennsylvanische Wochenschrift—and to translate campaign material into German for the Hornet. “We have no person here who can translate English into German, therefore, it is necessary to have the pieces put into German through your German paper so that they may be set in the papers here.”

Abraham also was having trouble with his editor Bartgis, who was becoming alarmed at the violence of Abraham’s articles. Abraham complained of Bartgis’s “mulish disposition” and was annoyed because the Federalists had discovered that he was wielding the Hornet’s sting. “Hitherto, I have been suspect, but with so much uncertainty that no attack has been ventured upon me. But circumstances not to be avoided have led to a confirmation of their suspicions. I do now suspect the whole aristocratic herd will now bear down upon me, since they now blame me for what they had thought proceeded from Nelson and others.” As Abraham used the Hornet’s sting more frequently the editor became more alarmed. “I encounter much difficulty from Bartgis’s cowardice. He starts and shrinks at everything. I have been obliged to become formally responsible for the consequences, and on application to Neale and Nelson, I have found them shrink as well as others. Such characters great in threats but little in deeds is quite sickening.”

The October election was a Republican victory, but Abraham based his hopes for the next year on a new Republican editor, John Colvin, of Baltimore, whose chief liability was lack of funds, a characteristic which he maintained throughout his life. Abraham organized a meeting to raise $500 for Colvin, and pledged $10 himself, but he was not impressed with political boss Nelson. “Nelson, intoxicated with success and with inebriating draughts, says he will give $100, but it is easier to make extravagant promises than to make even reasonable performances.” During 1803, Abraham based his campaign on Colvin’s Republican Advocate and W. D. Lepper’s German paper in Hanover. He hoped the Advocate would be better than the Hornet. “My

* Published by W. D. Lepper from April, 1797 to 1805.
The Republican Advocate; 
AND
Frederick-Town & Country General Advertiser.
(to be published every Friday morning—price two dolls. a year.)

One Dollar to be paid at the time of subscribing, and the remainder at the end of six months—the paper to be a large demy; and of a good quality—Advertisements inserted on moderate terms.

To its friends the REPUBLICAN ADVOCATE will be as an Achillean shield; virtue and worth shall find a shelter under its protecting influence, secure from the vengeful attacks of detruction, malice and slander. It will seek amidst corruption for truth, and present it in proper form to the world, free from any bombastic tinsel whatever—for truth, like beauty, is, "when unadorn'd, adorn'd the most."

To the Inhabitants of Frederick County, in general, and the Democratic Republicans, in particular, the foregoing is submitted,

By their obedient, humble servant,

JOHN B. COLVIN.

As soon as 500 subscribers are obtained, the first number will be issued, and served or forwarded as may be directed.

Part of broadside announcing the new Jeffersonian newspaper in Frederick in 1803. Abraham Shriver contributed much of the political material to this paper, alarming publisher Colvin by the force and vigor of his attacks on the Federalists.

own opinion is this new paper ought to be decent and dignified. The Hornet has answered several good ends. By it the Republicans have shown that as much filth could be thrown on the Feds as they were endeavoring to throw on the Republicans. The Herald has been driven to extremities that have damned its character. Now I think the Republicans ought to set them the example of decency."

Thus, as Andrew distributed the patronage and Abraham conducted the newspaper campaign, they became experienced political leaders. But the most interesting part of any campaign is the method used to get the proper ballot into the box. The Shriver Papers contain a vast amount of significant information about campaign activities in the border area.

Campaign propaganda for the Republicans consisted largely of charges of class distinction. Federalists were always referred to as "the wellborn, the aristocrats, the high-toned, the rich, the old Tories." Most of the charges against the Federalists had to do with their "insidious, treacherous, dishonest" methods. Andrew wrote: "We have people to deal with that would send us all to the Devil if they could thereby gain their point, and they are making a mighty effort to gain power again. They are too rich for us, and now the Sedition Law has expired they have got all
the public papers in their hands that cash could buy, and if they succeed they will crush us in the dust for what we have done, and then, farewell Liberty in America, too. It is gone everywhere else. But we will contend with them as long as we can stand—inch by inch will we dispute the ground.”

However, even the Jeffersonians sometimes found themselves in embarrassing company, as when Tom Paine, released from prison in France, returned in the fall of 1802 to continue his frenzied attacks on the Federalists. Nelson wrote, “I suppose Tom Paine is a fine subject for the Federalists to discant upon. I wish myself he had went to Hell rather than to have come to this country in the present state of the public mind.”

Interference with the mail was frequent, and Andrew wrote to Postmaster General Gideon Granger, complaining that post-office officials in Taneytown, “the hot-bed of Federalism,” were reading his political correspondence. Confidential letters were hidden in parcels, or handed to a trusted passenger on the stage.

The campaign involved three essential steps: preparing and printing newspaper articles, handbills, circulars and ballots; the distribution of this information by volunteer riders—horsemen who would visit every voter of the area; and mass meetings shortly before election, with attendance encouraged by a public barbecue.

Andrew had the handbills and circulars printed in Hanover, to keep the Federalists from getting hold of them in advance. One interesting comment about handbills came from Abraham. When his brother said that he thought the handbills were too lengthy, Abraham replied, “Your ideas, I think, are wrong. The people that can read will read them, however long, and those who cannot read will be much impressed by their appearance!”

Each party printed its own ballots, and distributed them in advance. The necessity of getting riders to travel all the country roads a few weeks before election was a difficult problem for the committee, and Abraham wrote that he dreaded the thought of all the riding, but he was getting himself in training for the task. He also planned “to have 5 or 6 active characters at each hus-tings on election day to distribute tickets and see that the voters were not imposed upon.” It was common strategy for the opposition to try to secure and destroy as many of their opponents’ ballots as possible, so that they would run short on election day.
W. D. Lepper, Hanover printer, adds a postscript in his letter to Andrew Shriver, January 29, 1803, asking advice about using Thomas Paine's writings:

"Please also inform me, whether Thomas Paine's Letters to the People of the U. S. will be acceptable—He is not much liked amongst our Rep's, as he is too fond to boast of himself, but notwithstanding if you think that my subscribers in your County should read them, I will publish them."

Lepper published Die Pennsylvanische Wochenschrift.

Their energy and efficiency got out the vote. In the 1803 election, 4,800 out of the 5,600 eligible voters cast ballots, leaving only 800 non-voters in the county.?

The highlight of the campaign was, of course, the barbecue—a much more interesting type of gathering than is provided by the cold artificiality of the TV screen. One illustration will have to serve as an example of the problems of holding rival barbecues in the same town on the same date.

7 Fredericktown Herald, October 8, 1803.
It is September, 1803, and Abraham describes events in Frederick to his brother. A Federal barbecue had been announced for Saturday, so the Republicans promptly scheduled their own barbecue for the same day, a few hours earlier. They announced two political speeches at the Court House, and warned Republicans not to visit the Federal barbecue, because that might make the Federalist assemblage look respectable. "Never had Frederick on any former occasion witnessed in the streets so many of their lordlings. Our political discourse was to begin at 12 o'clock. The hour approached. Nelson deserted us, he said from necessity. Clarke was our only hope. Fresham, with bell in hand, proclaimed in every square that the hour was come and that the Republicans would be precise. We appeared and the meeting collected instantly to the amount of about 400. The Feds divided, part went to the Federal Cue with Taney at their head; about 30 remained at the Court House with a determination of defeating us. Generalship and spirit was necessary. Clarke mounted the rostrum, i.e., the table where the judges sit and harangued the people for about two hours. When concluded I informed the people that the barbecue awaited them and that their company would be received with pleasure. The Feds saw how much depended on the moment and flew into action. A scene of confusion ensued. The Republicans however attended to the voice of their friends, and marched off with at least 300 to the sound of fife and drum, leaving the little band of Feds deserted. We partook of our barbecue in good spirits.

"The Feds came in with fife and drum—they marched 180 men and boys into town. They marched to the Court House with a view of having their friends harangued—Republicans were in action in a moment and were almost as soon on the Court House grounds. Old Thomas proclaimed silence,\(^8\) young Thomas mounted the rostrum, throws out his arm and exclaimed, 'Fellow-Citizens,' and down he went! Some say it was to save himself from falling, others say he was thrown down. A scene of uproar now takes place. Neale headed the Republicans and we soon made Federalism scarce about the Court House. From this time till four o'clock Sunday morning the streets were filled with companies of Republicans huzzaing for their cause." At this point Abraham

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\(^8\)John H. Thomas, Federalist candidate for General Assembly.
remarked confidentially that the breaking up of the Federalist barbecue was all part of his plan because he was sure they were going to say things about Andrew’s connection with the County Road which perhaps his Republican friends should not hear. “To keep our friends away was a prime consideration!”

Then, some instructions to Andrew about organizing a barbecue: “Observe particularly to have your barbecue on Friday before the election—be vigilant, determined and alert in your efforts. You will need at least 10 shotes and 10 lambs besides other necessaries of smaller moment. You must have a long hole dug about 1½ feet deep and 4 feet wide. This you must have 1/3 full of coals. Have the ribs of the animals cracked so that you have them spread out flat, then have them fixed each animal on two poles on which it is to rest across the hob where the coals is, and by which it can be turned by two men, one on each side. You will need a wagon load of boards of which your tables and seats must be made. Have them well made or they will all be thrown down before the purpose is answered. Above all, make use of nothing but whiskey!”

This brief microscopic examination of the activities of amateur politicians in the nineteenth century presents a rather optimistic picture. We could easily conclude, for instance, that the great game of American politics can be played as well by the amateur as by the professional, if not, indeed, better. Andrew Shriver became one of the principal political figures of the area which was to become Carroll County, and Abraham Shriver became a distinguished Associate Judge in Frederick for many years.

It is also apparent that the German population of Western Maryland and Southern Pennsylvania was important to the Republican party. The politician who could speak German, write handbills in German, who could praise the simple democratic character of the German people, had a good chance of success.

The most unusual aspect of the political scene in this area in 1802 is that there seems to be nothing unusual about it. Our microscope has revealed almost the same practices which are taking place a century and a half later: legislative investigations, the patriotic assurance of the professional politicians, the feverish and energetic activity of the amateurs fascinated by opportunities for leadership and possibilities of personal advancement, constant
watchfulness for trickery and sneak attacks, and dependence upon a free press for party persuasion or propaganda. The Shriver brothers could have made good use of telephones, radio, television, and mimeograph machines, but their procedures would not have varied by as much as a single aristocrat.

Finally, as every good historian knows, these few extracts from a tremendous mass of documents reveal that to understand the human side of history, as if you were there when it happened, there is nothing to equal local history in its most minute form: the personal documents, private papers, collections in historical societies and cobwebbed attics. The Shivers may never appear in a textbook or a definitive biography, but those who have come to know them will always remember their experiences as enthusiastic pioneers in the great game of American politics.