

one year and that specified progress be made within three and ten years, upon pain of forfeiting the rights granted under the act.²⁰

Three years later the legislature sought to improve the road connections between Baltimore and the West by authorizing the building of a turnpike fifty-two feet wide, "grubbed and stoned forty feet wide," with a six-foot drainage ditch, from Baltimore to Frederick. To pay for the road a one-year tax of £0.3.9 was imposed on every hundred pounds of property in Baltimore County, of which the tax collector could keep 5 percent "for his trouble." Tolls from the road belonged to Baltimore County, which was to maintain the road.²¹

In 1796 the General Assembly established the Pocomoke Company for the purpose of improving the navigation of the Pocomoke River from Snow Hill in Worcester County to the Delaware River. This, too, contemplated a series of canals and locks, and except for a state subscription the act was similar to that chartering the Potomac Company. The Pocomoke Company was capitalized at \$11,000.²²

In 1799 the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company was chartered. It was authorized to "cut such canals, and erect such locks, and perform such other works, as they shall judge necessary for opening, improving and extending, the navigation between the bay of Chesapeake and the river Delaware." The company was capitalized at \$500,000, and actual incorporation was made contingent upon subscription to half the shares.²³

Thus by 1800 the state was already looking to internal improvements to the east, north, and west. Yet, with the rapid development of the West these early efforts soon proved inadequate, especially in comparison with the more ambitious steps undertaken by Maryland's neighbors to the north and south.

In the West, trade on the Mississippi River was facilitated through steam-powered riverboats. These boats enabled New Orleans to attract trade from merchants who had previously utilized the waterways to the east.²⁴ In response to this competition, Virginia coordinated its internal improvement policy in 1816 with the creation of a board of public works.²⁵

To the north, both New York and Pennsylvania made concerted efforts to improve their trade routes. Those states had concluded that substantial internal improvements could not be accomplished solely through private ventures but would require the active participation of the state itself. To that end New York created a Public Works Commission that had the power to borrow \$400,000 annually from the state and to begin construction of the Erie Canal. Similarly, by 1820 Pennsylvania had invested \$1 million in transportation improvements.²⁶

Maryland was not unaware of its competitive position with other states. On 4 December 1820, Gov. Samuel Sprigg wrote to the General Assembly:

Upon the subject of internal improvements we would only remark, that while our sister states by the means of creating and increasing the facilities of navigation, and transportation by land, and by calling into action all their physical advantages, are endeavoring to draw within their bosoms the wealth of the extremities of the union, we ought not to

20. The act required that navigation between Great Falls and Fort Cumberland be completed within three years (by 1787). This was later extended to 1790, then 1795, then 1798, and finally to 1803. Acts of 1786, ch. 2; 1790, ch. 35; 1794, ch. 29; 1797, ch. 13.

21. Acts of 1787, ch. 23.

22. Acts of 1796, ch. 17.

23. Acts of 1799, ch. 16.

24. Charles E. Fisher, "Internal Improvement Issues in Maryland, 1816-1826" (Master's thesis, University of Maryland, 1972), p. 6. See also Gov. Charles Goldsborough to the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, 3 December 1819, Executive Letter Book, 1819-34, p. 36, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis, accession no. 1892 (hereafter MdHR followed directly by accession no.), in which the governor states that "the general preference given to the conveyance by Steam Boats has caused travellers nearly to abandon [the turnpike road] for 8 months of the year."

25. Sanderlin, *Great National Project*, pp. 49-50.

26. Fisher, "Internal Improvement Issues," p. 2.