

and became a long-lasting tradition in Maryland. An act of 1704 also required roads to be made passable but was more specific: the roads were to be cleared and grubbed to a width of twenty feet; substantial bridges built where needed; trees alongside notched to indicate if the road led to a ferry, courthouse, church, or to Annapolis or Williamstadt; the public roads recorded annually in the county records; and fines set for any person failing to do his road duty. Despite the volume of road legislation in the eighteenth century, travel on Maryland roads remained a harrowing experience according to contemporary accounts. Plenty of roads were cleared, but few had improved surfaces of any kind. In 1787, Baltimore County was called upon to fund and oversee several turnpikes leading to Baltimore Town (Chapter 23, Acts of 1787). The movement westward depended upon roads able to bear heavy wagons; the French and Indian War required a military supply road to Fort Cumberland; post roads were needed for efficient communication and trade between colonies. County labor and tax levies were unequal to growing demand. In 1793, convicts and vagrants were sentenced to work on public roads (Chapter 57, Acts of 1793).

*Private Turnpikes.* Turnpikes played an important role in road development in Maryland. Although more turnpike companies failed than succeeded, the best roads in the State were turnpikes. Some fell into disuse, others reverted to the counties, but Maryland was unique in the number of private turnpikes surviving into the twentieth century. In 1921, the State Roads Commission purchased the last one. Turnpikes relieved the counties of the financial burden of building and maintaining roads by investing private capital in what had proved to be a monumental task and by making road users pay for upkeep. The legislature chartered any number of private turnpike companies between 1787 and 1804 with limited success, as indicated by an act of 1804 which mentions "the public expectation almost entirely frustrated" (Chapter 51, Acts of 1804). The companies incorporated under the 1804 act compensated Baltimore County for work accomplished under the 1787 act and succeeded in building most of Maryland's major routes west. No company, however, sought incorporation to build the last connecting link to the National Road in Cumberland without which trade from the interior would be lost. The legislature came up with a complex scheme linking the renewal of bank charters, construction of the Cumberland Turnpike, and funding for free schools (Chapter 122, Acts of 1813). By 1825, the major turnpikes in Maryland were completed and, in their heyday, Baltimore was the terminus for seven pikes. In 1834, the federal government turned over to Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland those sections of the National Road within their respective borders to become turnpikes. Maryland's legislature, in anticipation of federal action, already had set tolls and authorized one of the earliest State transportation officials, the Superintendent of the National Road (Chapter 85, Acts of 1831).

*Canals and Railroads.* Paralleling the turnpike movement was a national craze for internal improvements, i.e., canals and railroads. George Washington himself was instrumental in setting up the Potomac Company to open navigation on the Potomac River up to Cumberland by means of canals around the worst rapids. In 1784, Maryland confirmed the Company charter issued by Virginia, and although the Potomac Company overcame obstacles to navigation, it soon ran into debt (Chapter 33, Acts of 1784). A bi-state commission in 1821 recommended abandoning riverbed and charter, and instead, perhaps inspired by the near-completion of the Erie Canal, building a canal in the river valley from the Potomac to the Ohio River. Hoping to recoup in part its financial investment in the Potomac Company, the General Assembly chartered the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company in 1823 (Chapter 140, Acts of 1823). Baltimore interests expected no benefit from the proposed canal, although a feeder canal to Baltimore had been considered. On July 4, 1828, as ground was broken for the canal, however, it also was broken for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which Baltimore entrepreneurs hoped would bring them western trade (Chapter 123, Acts of 1826). In both ventures, Maryland owned huge blocks of stock; previously the legislature had invested heavily in the defunct Potomac Company, the Susquehanna Canal (chartered by Chapter 29, Acts of 1783 and fallen into disuse by 1812), and the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal (begun in 1804, abandoned, then completed in 1829). Internal improvements brought Maryland to the brink of bankruptcy. From 1826 to 1840, the State went an additional fifteen million dollars into debt financing canals and railroads, hoping for a return on the investment. In 1840, Maryland was unable to meet interest charges on its debt. Skillful juggling, retrenchment in government, and new taxes averted a crisis, and by 1848, the State resumed debt payments, never again to plunge into internal improvements on such a scale.

Railroads dominated the last half of the nineteenth century. They spread over the State, made canals obsolete, and maintained Baltimore's prominence in trade. While State involvement in railroads and canals had waned, Maryland still owned significant amounts of stock, and the Constitution of 1867 provided for the Board of Public Works to review tolls, appoint directors for certain railroad and canal companies, and vote the State's stock in the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company. The legislature was swamped with requests for railroad legislation to amend railroad charters, grant rights-of-way and track extensions, and deal with other operational details. Despite rail dominance, the State Railroad Administration was not created until 1978.

*Highways, Bridges, and Tunnels.* At the beginning of the century, the emergence of the automobile posed problems for the State. Roads were inadequate for car traffic, and a system of regulation became necessary. As of