

be unmindful of the great benefits which are to be derived from the adoption of such a policy.²⁷

Hanna ascribes the legislature's unwillingness to take concerted action during this early period to political dissension within its ranks, a dissension that arose in large measure from competition and distrust among the various geographic regions of the state.²⁸ The Eastern Shore, southern Maryland, the central and western counties, and Baltimore City were beginning to develop along different lines, and that engendered selfish and myopic thinking.

Legislators from each of these areas recognized that benefits could be derived from internal improvements. Unfortunately, however, they tended to sponsor works that would benefit only their locale and to oppose projects designed to aid other areas. The effect, of course, was to preclude state support for a number of proposed ventures, although from time to time the General Assembly did appoint commissions to examine the practicality of certain improvements.²⁹

The exception to this rule against state aid was the Potomac Company. As noted, the General Assembly had initially subscribed to fifty shares of that company in 1784—an investment of a little over \$22,000. By 1822 the state owned \$120,444.44 of Potomac Company stock, and to protect this investment the legislature had authorized a \$30,000 loan to keep the company in operation.³⁰

Making the Potomac River navigable for any meaningful distance was a major undertaking—more substantial than anyone realized at the time—and thus any benefits accruing from that project were a long way off. In the meantime the effect of the legislature's inability to develop a coordinated improvement policy was a continued reliance on the existing turnpike system developed largely by the banks. In 1817 the General Assembly directed the banks to submit to the executive department information on these turnpike roads and ordered the governor to assemble the information and submit a report to the next session of the assembly.³¹

When in 1819 Gov. Charles Goldsborough reported to the General Assembly on the turnpike system in the state, he closed with the following observation:

The creation of a board of commissioners of public improvements, would probably give a stimulus to the public and produce much good. It might be advisable to give no salaries, but being elected by the legislature, the distinction would be coveted by those willing to give their attention to subjects of this nature. An appropriation for the expenses of a surveyor or engineer would however be necessary, and an examination of the means and sources of internal improvement made throughout the whole State, which could not fail to be useful. The official reports of such a body would be entitled to credit, and its very creation be beneficial, by encouraging a turn for useful improvement in every county throughout the State.³²

27. Gov. Samuel Sprigg to the General Assembly of Maryland, 4 December 1820, Executive Letter Book, 1819-34, p. 66.

28. Hanna, *Financial History of Maryland*, p. 74. See also James S. Van Ness, "Economic Development, Social and Cultural Changes: 1800-1850," in *Maryland: A History, 1632-1974*, ed. Richard Walsh and William Lloyd Fox (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1974), pp. 156-238.

29. See, for example, Acts of 1816, res. 76 (dealing with the Susquehanna River); 1822, res. 28 (relating to a Baltimore to Susquehanna River canal); 1822, res. 33 (relating to a Baltimore to Potomac River canal). See also William Howard to Thomas Culberth, Esq., Clerk to the Council, 18 January 1826, Maryland State Papers, ser. A, MdHR 6636-124-7, in which Howard offered to return to the state surveying equipment purchased by the commission to survey the Baltimore to Potomac River canal.

30. Fisher, "Internal Improvement Issues," p. 15; Acts of 1813, res. 8, extended by Acts of 1818, res. 29; 1822, res. 43. See also Acts of 1818, ch. 154, sec. 18, which directed the treasurer to set aside certain lottery funds for later appropriations to canals and other improvements and which Sanderlin, *Great National Project*, p. 38, indicates was passed for the benefit of the Potomac Company.

31. Acts of 1817, res. 64. See Gov. Charles Ridgely to President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Delegates, Letter Book of the Council, 1819-34, p. 5, MdHR 1892, in which he indicated that the report was not ready at that time. The report was submitted by his successor, Gov. Charles Goldsborough.

32. Gov. Charles Goldsborough to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Delegates, 1819, Letter Book of the Council, 1819-34, pp. 8-16.