

Carroll Yesteryears
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Historical Societies Can Help Uncover Bygone Jackpots by Mary Ann Ashcraft

It's hard to express the good feelings we volunteers at Carroll's historical or genealogical societies get when we help someone uncover new bits and pieces of their family history. Admittedly, there are times when searches turn up nothing, but other times when people hit the jackpot and go home smiling from ear to ear.

The Historical Society of Carroll County has its research library at 210 East Main Street. The hours are posted on the internet and volunteers are always available to help. The Carroll County Genealogical Society's research collection is housed at the Westminster Library, 50 East Main Street. Each Thursday afternoon from 1-4 p.m. there is a volunteer on hand to offer guidance and answer questions.

You may ask yourself what these two local institutions can provide which hasn't already been put on the internet by the Maryland State Archives, Ancestry, GenealogyBank (historic newspapers), etc. There is plenty! After all, the Historical Society has been collecting local material since it was founded in 1939, and the Genealogical Society has amassed many unpublished church records, copied numerous cemeteries, and gathered local bible records besides buying new publications for genealogists with Maryland roots. The volunteers at both institutions will offer pointers for how and where to start your family history search, but strongly advise that you bring whatever clues you have. They can suggest plenty of free websites or books on their library shelves before you resort to paying for information.

Several years ago, a couple from Montgomery County came in search of the property owned by an ancestor. The tract of land was called "Valleys & Hills Toms and Wills" – a rather unusual name. Historian and mapmaker Dr. Arthur Tracey had pinpointed it several miles north of Westminster. Looking through a collection of maps at the Historical Society, we were able to provide the couple with the name of the current property owner. They caught a glimpse of the stone house built by their ancestor and returned to tell us what a thrill it had been. Several weeks later, they were back for another visit, this time bringing a batch of homemade cookies for us. An uncle of mine, a surgeon, used to refer to these as "grateful patient presents." We volunteers refer to them as "grateful patron presents."

Within the past several months, a volunteer who is adept at finding material on the internet tracked down an obituary in a December 1881 issue of the *Baltimore Sun* with details of the burial of Thomas Paynter, a Sykesville copper miner born in Cornwall, England. For years, Paynter's descendants had wondered where he was buried – on the family farm, in a local cemetery? Now they have the answer and can pursue the possibility of having a headstone made for him.

Mary Ann Ashcraft is a library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.

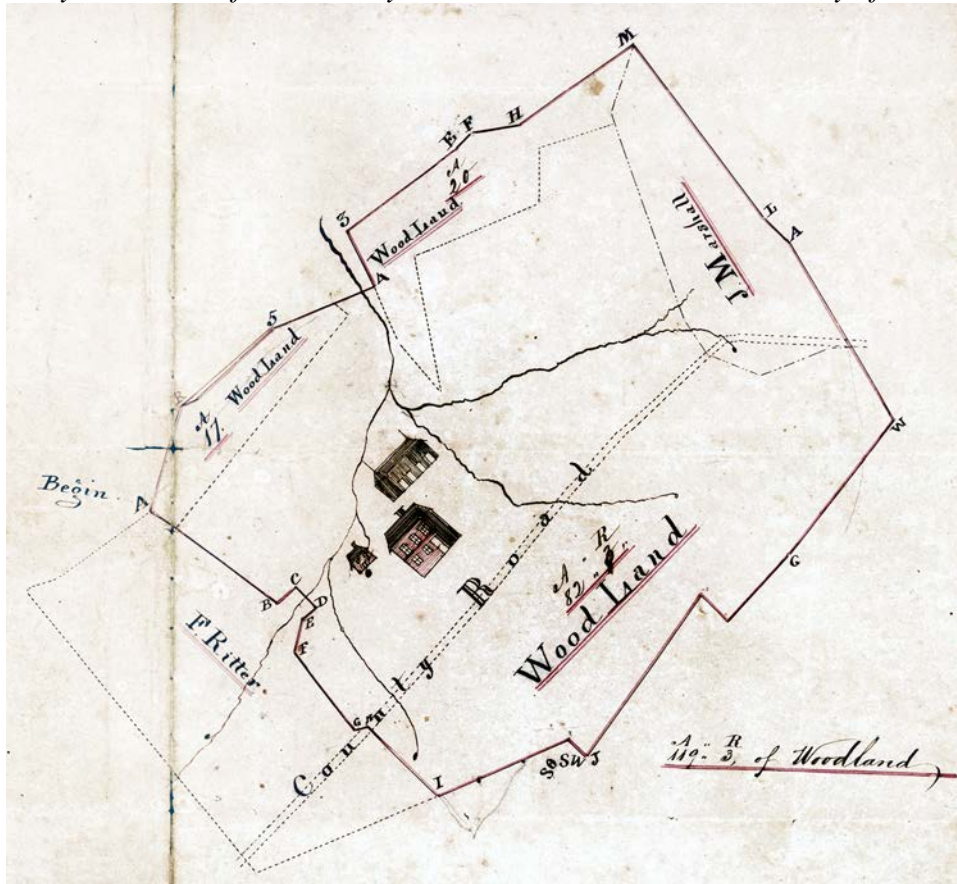


Image caption: Carroll County surveyor Jacob Kerlinger drew this map in 1842 to show the boundaries of Michael Ritter's property in the Manchester District, the stream running through it, and the buildings as well.