

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll County Times 80th Anniversary
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Newspaper's founders were civic leaders
by Joe Getty

When the *Carroll County Times* was established in 1911, its founders were prominent citizens of Carroll County. George K. Mather, owner of the Mather Printing Company, was the publisher and first editor. He launched this new venture with H. Peyton Gorsuch and veteran newspaper man John H. Mitten. After the initial success of the *Times*, this group formed the Times Printing Company, Inc., in August 1914 with Claude T. Kimmey as business manager.

At the time of its founding in 1911, Westminster was served by two other newspapers, the *Democratic Advocate* and the *American Sentinel*. This was an era when newspapers were primarily partisan vehicles for communication. Thus the *Democratic Advocate* promoted the Democratic party's policies and politicians in the community while the *American Sentinel* represented the Republican party's perspective. At this time, there were also numerous weekly newspapers in the small towns of Carroll County.

Thus the competition was stiff for the *Times* to enter the local market. A review of its "Forward" in the first issue provides a perspective on the role the *Times* expected to play in the community:

"It is the purpose of the publishers to put out a clean, newsy paper that will be a credit to the community and that will win and hold the support of our citizens strictly on its merits.

"In politics, the *Times* will be Republican, but it will adhere rigidly to the policy of 'malice toward none and charity for all.'

"Biting sarcasm, mud-slinging or fault-finding shall have no place on our page.

"We are firm in our beliefs, and hope to be true to our convictions, but we shall try to be kind and never intentionally give offense.

"First of all, we shall try to print the news, all the news of our city and county and in addition a summary of the most important happenings of the State and Nation.

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"The *Times* will be a home paper. First, last and all the time, it will uphold Carroll County and its citizens. Its publishers believe that they are in the best business, in the best town, in the best county, in the best state, in the best country that the sun ever shone upon.

"We are 'Boosters' trying to improve our town. It is said 'the Boosters sleep sounder, live longer and fight better than any other tribe on earth.' We believe in our home county and our home town and our home people, and we are glad to invest our money here because we believe in them. We are proud of and very grateful for, the generous support that has been accorded us in the past. The remarkable growth of our business from a very small shop, occupying scarcely ten square feet of floor space, to our present splendid plant, in a little over four years proves to us that we are on the right track and that there is back of, and underneath our concern the true elements of success.

"In launching the *Times*, we are striving to meet what we believe to be a popular demand for a new republican paper in Carroll County. A paper that shall be strong, clean and clear cut. The *Times* will not allow itself to be allied with any clique, clan or faction.

"No effort will be spared to secure and maintain an able corps of contributors and correspondents who shall represent the best talent of our county and whose pride and pleasure it shall always be, if it is worth telling to 'put it in the *Times*.'

"We have high ideals and implore the patience of our readers as we strive to attain them. A successful newspaper is not born in a day but is the result of patient, continued effort. In the meanwhile we will welcome our criticisms and suggestions. We invite a free and frank discussion in our columns of topics of timely interest. It is your paper, use it.

"We are conscious of many imperfections and short comings, but our intentions are good and we love hard work. The *Times* will be a paper for the people. It will be your paper, telling the doings of your town and county and your people, and we trust it will awaken in every loyal Carroll countian a sense of honest pride in a growing home enterprise. To even approach our ideal will take time, but with your kind forbearance we feel confident – we shall 'arrive.'

"With this brief introductory work, the publishers leave the *Times* to the tender mercies of its readers with the hope that it may fill a real mission, and that the Loyalty and interest of its constituency may never lessen."

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The founder of the *Times* was George K. Mather who was born in Harford County on October 13, 1873. He was the son of the late Thomas William and Elizabeth Kenly Mather. He moved with his family to Westminster in 1890 when he became a member of the firm T.W. Mather and Sons.

When Mr. Mather was 37 years old, he established the *Times* as a subsidiary of his Mather Printing Company. George K. Mather was the first editor of the *Times* and served in that role until the formation of the Times Printing Company, successors to the Mather Printing Company, in August 1914.

Mather remained active with the *Times* throughout his life until his death at 92 on Nov. 15, 1965. He is also known for many community service activities in which he was involved over his long career.

In 1944 he received the Westminster Chamber of Commerce's Outstanding Citizen Award for his many local contributions. He served as chairman of important committees during World War I, including the United World War Campaign, Community Sings, YMCA campaign, and Council of Defense Chairman for the Carroll County Red Cross chapter. He was active in promoting education in Carroll County and served as committee chairman for the bond issue of a new Westminster High School and president of the Westminster Chautauqua Association.

For thirty years he was a Methodist Sunday school superintendent and he was instrumental in the unification of the Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal churches in 1939. He contributed his talents to the community by service on the Board of Governors of the Westminster Theological Seminary, president of the Board of Trustees of the Westminster Methodist Home, and president of the Westminster Library Association.

His later contributions to the *Times* included a series of travel articles based on his extensive visits to other countries. In 1930, he ran a series called "Seeing Europe." In 1936, his six month journey around the world was also published serially in the *Times*.

Mather was well known in Carroll County for his gardening hobby. He built his home at 121 Willis Street in 1915 and began planting trees and shrubs at that time. In 1934, he began expanding the planting scheme for an extensive iris garden that was renown in this region. He opened the garden for tours and held frequent garden parties there.

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When the City of Westminster bought the Longwell Mansion to use as a City Hall in 1942, George Mather proposed the creation of memorial gardens on the grounds. He designed and supervised the landscaping of the gardens which included flowering dogwoods, hydrangea, dutzia s well as a number of trees. In 1963 he was honored by the City of Westminster for his volunteer labor and donation of plant materials in creating the municipal gardens which were named "Mather Gardens" in his honor.

In his reminiscences about the history of the *Times*, Mr. Mather gave much of the credit for the early success to John H. Mitten, who would ride from farm to farm in his horse and buggy selling annual subscriptions at \$1 per year. Mitten was also involved in all aspects of the newspapers' production serving as compositor, pressman, editor and manager.

With the formation of the Times Printing Company in 1914, Mitten and H. Peyton Gorsuch were appointed co-editors of the *Times*. Mitten continued his role as editor until his death on Sept. 4, 1931, at age 86.

Mitten was well-known in Carroll County for his service in the Civil War and his work in the newspaper business. He was born Spt. 12, 1844, the son of Henry G. and Catherine Mitten.

In 1862 he enlisted as an 18-year-old in Company A, Sixth Maryland Regiment of the Union Army. Many soldiers from Carroll County served in this unit which was led by William A. McKellip, captain; Charles N. Kuhns, 1st lieutenant; and William H. Burns, 2nd lieutenant.

Mitten served at the battlefield in Virginia and was wounded at the Battle of the Wilderness on May 5, 1864. He was a charter member of the Burns Post, Grand Army of the Republic, and was the oldest local veteran at his death.

His newspaper career began in 1856 when he worked as a printer for the Westminster newspaper, the *Carroll County Democrat*. After the Civil War, he worked for another Westminster newspaper, the *American Sentinel*. In 1909, he began a printing business with C. Levine Price.

His obituary briefly describes his career at the *Times*, "In 1911, when George Mather began the publication of the *Times*, he accepted position with the Mather Printing Co., and his wide acquaintance throughout the county and knowledge of newspaper work aided largely in the immediate success of the *Times*. In 1914 when the present Times Printing Company was organized, Mr. Mitten became a stockholder and later a director of the company. He continued

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his duties as editor and until three weeks before his death, was rarely absent from the office, happy in his work and always busy, preparing copy, reading proof, assisting in mailing publications and other duties."

Mitten was also greatly respected for his work with other organizations in the community, especially the Westminster Fire Company. He was claimed as the oldest active volunteer fireman in the state at his death. He served on the Westminster City Council. He also served in the leadership of St. Paul's Reformed Church, Door to Virtue Lodge A.F. and A.M. No. 46, Charity Lodge of Knights of Pythias and Independent Order of Mechanics.

Mitten's co-editor, H. Peyton Gorsuch, was highly esteemed in Carroll County for his writings as well as his community service. Through much of his career, he wrote a "First Page Editorial" that provided a commentary on current events, politics, community activities, and local history. These editorials were a key feature of the *Times* during its early history.

His obituary states that he was "for many years widely known as a public speaker and the demand for his services in this capacity took him to many sections of the state. His wit and philosophy made him popular wherever he was heard. He was well known, too, for his activities in politics, having always been a staunch Republican, and was one of the recognized leaders of his party in the country over a long period of years...Mr. Gorsuch was interested in all municipal matters and always worked for the betterment of his city and county. He was liberal to all worthy causes, and was especially concerned in War Veterans affairs and their organizations.

"He had always felt deeply disappointed that the people of Carroll County had failed to provide a fitting memorial for the men and women of the county who had served in the First World War. In 1937, he personally paid for and had erected a beautiful memorial gateway at the Center street entrance of the municipal grounds."

Gorsuch was born near Dennings on November 15, 1863, to Robert D. and Sarah Ann Gardner Gorsuch. He attended the Warfieldsburg school and New Windsor College. At the age of sixteen, he began a seven-year clerkship at the dry goods store of Orndorf and Sharrer in Westminster. He continued in sales for John T. Orndorf in Westminster and Moulton Brothers of Baltimore.

In 1888, he worked as secretary at the Catocin Mountain Iron Company in Fredrick County, until the company dissolved in 1896. He also served a six-year term as postmaster of Catocin.

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He returned to Westminster in 1896 and formed Sharrer and Gorsuch, merchant tailors and retailers of men's clothing and accessories, with Jesse C. Sharrer. He retained a financial interest in this business until 1936 when he sold his shares to Harry J. Starr and Edward G. Little. President Taft appointed Gorsuch as the Westminster postmaster where he served from 1910 to 1914. In the election of 1918, he was elected to a four-year in the Maryland House of Delegates.

Gorsuch was active in a wide number of community and fraternal organizations. In 1943, he received the first Outstanding Citizen Award from the Westminster Chamber of Commerce for his many contributions to Carroll County. He was active in all of the war campaigns of World War I and president of the Westminster Cemetery Company. In addition, he was a charter member and president of the Westminster Rotary Club, director of the First National Bank of Westminster, and served on the Board of Visitors of the Maryland School for the Deaf.

Gorsuch died on June 18, 1944, at his home at 131 East Main Street. His will provided funds for a number of benevolent causes including a trust fund of \$20,000 to stimulate support for the creation of a hospital in Carroll County. He also contributed to the scholarship funds of Western Maryland College and the Carroll County Board of Education.

Another influential partner during the early history of the *Times* was Claude T. Kimmey. He was the first business manager of the Times Printing Company, and he worked in the printing business at the *American Sentinel* and the Mather Printing Company.

He was born February 17, 1889, the son of William T. and Rachel L. Kimmey. He was married to Anna Yingling and had three daughters. He was known throughout the Baltimore area printing business for his work with the Baltimore Typothetae and the Graphic Arts Association.

He was a leader in many civic and fraternal organizations including the Carroll County War Memorial Committee, Westminster Rotary Club, Charity Lodge Knight of Pythias, Westminster Forest and Stream Club, and Door to Virtue Lodge A.F. & A.M. He also served as chairman of Carroll County Draft Board No. 1 and was a life-long member of the Westminster Methodist Church.

Before his death, he was named Secretary-Treasurer of the Board of Directors of the Times Printing Company. He died at his home at 44 Longwell Avenue on February 13, 1947.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County

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Photo caption: George K. Mather founded the Times in 1911 at the age of 37. He became well-known in later life for his philanthropic contributions to the community, especially his work on the Mather Gardens at the Westminster City Hall.

Photo caption: Claude T. Kimmey worked for the Mather Printing Company when the Times was founded and became the business manager of the Times Printing Company in 1914.

Photo caption: John H. Mitten was a veteran newspaperman whose experience greatly contributed to the Times’ success in the early 20th century.

Photo caption: A popular feature of the early years was the “Front Page Editorial” written by co-editor H. Peyton Gorsuch, shown here in costume depicting Charles Carroll of Carrollton for the 1937 Carroll County Centennial celebration.