

"Artifacts Reveal Carroll's Past"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

When the Historical Society was founded in 1939, the founders envisioned an institution whose purposes were "to collect and preserve all papers, books, documents or other matter of things pertaining to the history of Carroll County..." and "to create a public interest in the History of Carroll County." The organization quickly began to amass a wide variety of artifacts donated by local residents. Sixty years later, the Society owns an extensive collection representing all areas of the county and spanning three centuries. Each artifact in the collection tells a story about the people who made and used it and helps us document our rich past.

The Historical Society recently created a new changing exhibition gallery in the Kimmey House, 210 E. Main St. in Westminster. The first exhibit in the new Shriver-Weybright Gallery is Doorway to the Past featuring 160 objects from the Society's permanent collection. The exhibition received generous financial support from the Carroll County Times, other local businesses and the Community Foundation of Carroll County. The accompanying photographs show a selection of the objects now on display.

Photo caption 1: Miniature on Ivory of Capt. John More, 1790.

Before the development of photography, the only way to capture someone's likeness was to paint or draw a portrait. In the 16th century, Italian artists began creating miniature portraits on materials such as parchment or paper. Later, British artists developed a method for using ivory as the base material. Miniaturists required great skill and special tools to produce detailed images on the slippery, uneven surface of a tiny piece of ivory. The finished portrait was enclosed in a case, usually of gold or silver, with glass to protect the fragile image. Miniatures reached the height of their popularity at the end of the 18th and into the early years of the 19th century. By the 1850s, photography had replaced portraiture as the preferred method of capturing a person's image and miniatures almost completely disappeared. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Margaret Whittlesey Werling, 1996.

Photo caption 2: Adam Good Tavern Lock, 1760-1790

Americans have always attached great value to any object associated with George Washington. This door lock was removed from the Adam Good Tavern in Taneytown where Washington and his wife spent the night on July 1, 1791. Local tradition maintains that the President was amused by the tavern sign which appeared to read "A dam Good Tavern Entertainment for Man or Beast." Regardless of whether the story is true, there can be no doubt about the importance Americans placed on objects associated with the first president. Therefore, it is not surprising that this lock was among the very first objects given to the Historical Society. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Wirt Crapster, 1939.

Photo caption 3: Carroll Guards Shako, 1860.

The Carroll Guards were one of many local militia companies that formed in Maryland and elsewhere following John Brown's raid on nearby Harpers Ferry. Formed on June 5, 1860, the 50-man unit was commanded by Captain George Edward Wampler. Most of these men had Union sympathies. The Carroll Guards were disarmed following the bloody Baltimore Riot in April 1861. During Colonel Lafayette Rosser's September 1862 occupation of Westminster, the Guards meeting room in the Odd Fellow's Hall was broken into. The rebel soldiers destroyed the company's books, framed roster and carried off a drum and flag. The original owner of this shako is not known but it may have been worn by 1st Lieutenant Thomas Bond Gist or Private Joseph Gist. It was made by Canfield Bro. & Co., Baltimore's

leading jewelers and military outfitters during this period. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Mrs. Robert Gist.

Photo Caption 4: Eli Bentley Tall Case Clock, 1815.

Eli Bentley (1752-1822) of Taneytown made the works for this tall clock inscribed with his name and the date June 1815. Both the clock case and dial are neoclassical in proportions and ornament. The use of mahogany and veneers, the high scrolled pediment, French bracket feet, and the fluting of the chamfers, collonettes, and plinths are typical of the finer cases made in western Maryland. The painted moon dial covering the eight-day works features ovals in each corner similar to the central motif of the mantelpiece. Joseph and Mary (Kalb) Biggs the original owners of the clock built a handsome stone house in Keysville in 1814. Bentley charged \$95 for this impressive clock the following year, evidence that the Biggs' clearly wanted the best furnishings for their new home. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Victor Weybright, 1969.

Photo caption 5: Silhouette, Mrs. John Ross Key, 1820-1830

Prior to the invention of photography in 1839, silhouettes were a popular and relatively inexpensive form of portraiture. This example of Mrs. John Ross Key (1755-1830) is typical of the period. It was once owned by Francis Scott Key, son of the sitter. The silhouette was reframed in the 1850s using a gilt brass mat designed for a daguerreotype or ambrotype photograph. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Misses Elisabeth & Amelia Annan, 1971.

The Historical Society's new exhibition Doorway to the Past is open Tuesday-Saturday (except holidays) from 1:00-4:00 p.m. The Shriver-Weybright Gallery is located at 210 E. Main St., Westminster.