

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"The Motor Messengers of World War I"

Carroll County Times Article for 20 March 1994

By Jay A. Graybeal

The unprecedented demand for volunteers during World War I provided many opportunities for local women to support the war effort. One of the lesser known organizations was the Motor Messenger Service, a group composed of women who provided their own automobiles. Their rule book provides a description of their mission:

The object of the Motor Messenger Service is to provide motors [automobiles] during the continuance of the war for emergency service, to be rendered to such organizations as the Women's Section of the Maryland League for National Defense, the Navy League, the Red Cross and also recruiting purposes and to answer any emergency demands from the Government.

Thirty-two local women joined the Carroll County division. Their wartime activities were described in a report of the Women's Section of the Council of Defense for Carroll County:

Under Volunteer Service came the Motor Messengers. After the appointment of Miss Marian N. Shriver as Captain and Mrs. Charles O. Clemson as Adjutant, the Service was organized in April, 1918, with the following members: Lieutenants: Mrs. C. Lowndes Bennett, Mrs. Frank Bennett, Miss Lola M. Allender, Mrs. H. C. Frankforter, Miss Cora Sappington, Miss Ruth Richardson, Miss Marie Senseney, Mrs. Myers Englar, Mrs. Howard Koontz, Mrs. William Young, Mrs. Mabel Shauck, Miss Lilly Maus, Mrs. Norman Hood, Miss Clara Bowersox, and Mrs. Frank Barnes; Aides: Miss Adell Harris, Mrs. Charles W. Adams, Mrs. Horace Reese and Mrs. Ada Witter, Miss Marie Smelser, and Mrs. William Parrish, Miss Helen Englar, Mrs. David Geiman, Miss Emily Hull, Mrs. Martha Shaw, Miss Elizabeth Billingslea, Mrs. Morris W. Mitten, Mrs. Joseph T. Hunter, Miss Marjorie Yingling and Miss Thelma W. Littlefield.

These Motor Messengers brought in the District Leaders to the County Conferences, took speakers to address patriotic meetings, took members of committees out in the country districts in the house to house canvasses in the Food Conservation, Liberty Loan and War Savings Stamps Drives and for weighing and measuring babies, went to Baltimore for speakers to address County meetings, distributed posters throughout the County in the United War Work Campaign, and carried the Demonstrators to meetings in the interest of canning and food conservation. They also put themselves at the disposal of the Red Cross and carried Instructors to classes and work to and from the auxiliaries. They also took members of the Home Service Committee on their investigations. These patriotic women donated their time and the use of their cars, furnishing their own gasoline.

Photo Caption:

Miss Thelma Walden Littlefield of Middleburg, Md., c.1915. Miss Littlefield served as a Motor Messenger while her husband to be, Lt. F. Earle Shriner trained as an Army Air Service pilot. Promised bequest of Mrs. Thelma Walden Littlefield Shriner.

Sidebar Caption:

The activities of local women during World War I will be the topic of the Women's History Month lecture at the Historical Society of Carroll County. Director Jay A. Graybeal will describe the activities of women on the homefront and in uniform. The lecture will be held in the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 E.

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Main St., Westminster at 7:30 p.m.. Admission is free. Attendees can also view the Society's Special exhibition "Carroll County and the Great War for Civilization, 1917-1919." The exhibition closes on March 31.