

Carroll Yesteryears
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Looking Ahead at the Carroll County Historical Society
By Jason Illari

About a month ago, I was invited by Carroll Countian Mr. Galen Roop to sit down with a few of his closest friends at a café in Westminster to hear stories about my father, Daniel Illari, who passed away in 2012. Mr. Roop and his friends grew up with Daniel and attended Westminster High School together in the 1970s. I was born at home in downtown Westminster but we moved away soon after my third birthday. The group reminisced about their youthful days and shared stories which I had never heard about my father. We sat outside on that bright summer morning. Someone in a pickup truck zoomed by and honked their horn to say “hello” to Galen and the group. Galen turned to me, pointed to the truck and said, “that guy was your dad’s friend too.”

My time at the café with Galen reminded me that the Historical Society of Carroll County is one of the county’s important memory-keepers. Our partner historical organizations throughout the county also fulfill this role. Though our missions encompass preservation, education, collecting, research and publications, sharing stories and safeguarding memories is at the heart of what we do. I am excited about the initial meetings that have taken place between HSCC and the other county-wide historical organizations. I look forward to developing more formal partner goals with them in the months to come.

Another important aspect of HSCC’s work moving forward will be developing simpler ways for community members to share their personal history stories. Perhaps we might be able to develop a way through the Society’s website or social media platforms to capture these vignettes. Maybe the development of some kind of digital memory bank can be explored. My time with Galen and my father’s friends made me think about the Historical Society’s role in the community in a new way. Not only should HSCC work toward providing opportunities for all Carroll Countians to share their stories, but safeguarding these stories for posterity is equally as important.

Over the past several months many individuals have reached out to me because they knew my father or my grandparents and wanted to share their memories of them. These connections have made quite an impression on me. Readers may be familiar with the quote “when someone you love becomes a memory, that memory becomes a treasure.” To Galen, and to the many others who have reached out, thank you for giving me the gift of my father’s memory. It is true that history helps us avoid repeating past mistakes, but I believe, more importantly, it motivates us to serve and build up our communities because we are inspired by those who came before us.

Recently, the Society’s Board, Staff, and a handful of dedicated Volunteers met with Dr. Brent Glass, director emeritus of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. Dr. Glass helped kick-start HSCC’s strategic action plan by examining what the Society does well and how it can improve. Cultivating partnerships, enhancing access to HSCC research materials, and optimizing the Society’s historic campus spaces will be key themes in the plan. Yet, my personal connection to Carroll County reminds me that history should also be about storytelling, sharing memories and fostering a sense of place. These elements are crucial to remember as HSCC

strives to engage the community in the fulfilment of its mission. In this regard, all are welcome to offer input about the Society's future by meeting with me in an upcoming virtual chat. Readers can visit the Society's website to learn more and sign up by finding the "coffee with Jason" tab on the Society's homepage.

Jason Illari is the current Executive Director of the Historical Society of Carroll County and formerly the director of the Cumberland County (PA) Historical Society.



Photo Caption: *Jason Illari, current Executive Director of the Historical Society of Carroll County, stands in front of the house where he was born on West Main Street in Westminster.*
Photo credit: Photo by Amber Farran.