

Carroll Yesteryears

8 May 2022

Social Gatherings, Out-of-town Visitors Were News in 1911

By Mary Ann Ashcraft

When George K. Mather launched “The Times,” now the “Carroll County Times,” in the autumn of 1911, he must have been quite an optimist. Even though he and his brothers owned a job printing plant in Westminster, Carroll County already had five weekly newspapers serving a population of roughly 34,000. The “Democratic Advocate” supported the Democratic Party and the “American Sentinel” was Republican-oriented. Taneytown’s paper, “The Carroll Record,” covered news of western Carroll County and parts of eastern Frederick County. “The Pilot” covered happenings in Union Bridge and vicinity. Residents of Hampstead and Manchester enjoyed “The Enterprise.” In 1911 no newspapers were published in towns across the southern part of the County.

Could Mather’s newspaper survive? Well, it certainly could because you are reading it today.

Price for a year was just \$1.00, paid in advance. Subscribers received eight pages once a week printed at the Mathers’ plant on East Main Street in Westminster. The advertising rate was \$0.50/column inch for one insertion which decreased when ads ran for longer periods. To get in touch with the paper and report newsworthy items, anyone could call the C&P operator, ask for line 106 and she would put your call through. Hopefully, there was nobody else already using your party line.

Glancing at early issues, it appears that coverage of the entire county was good, perhaps better than some of the other papers. There was always news from larger towns like Westminster, Manchester, Sykesville, and Taneytown, but events happening in Sandyville, Bloom, Tyrone, Berrett, Alesia, Lineboro, Bird Hill, and a place called Castle Finn were not forgotten.

Much of the news was social gatherings—parties and visitors arriving from out-of-town. Injuries and illnesses were often reported. There were columns devoted to weddings and deaths because certain items were standard fare for every paper and “The Times” would not survive if it didn’t include them. Politically, the paper was Republican, but stated it would “adhere rigidly to the policy of ‘malice toward none and charity for all.’” The editor felt that “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.”

At one point, “The Times” even published kind words for its rival, the “Democratic Advocate,” saying that paper “will be a welcome visitor to any home with its newsy columns and bright, clean print.”

During the 1911 Christmas season there were ads for sleighs although ads for automobiles were more prevalent than those for horse-drawn carriages when it came to normal means of transportation. Many early issues included line drawings of fashions for men, women, and

children. Women's dresses still reached to the floor at that time. Modern readers can enjoy looking through all issues from 1911 onward by visiting the Carroll County Times Archive on the Carroll County Public Library's website.

George K. Mather served as editor and business manager of the paper until 1914 when he and his brothers sold the paper and the printing plant. John H. Mitten, a Civil War veteran, and H.P. Gorsuch took over as editors of the paper and formed The Times Printing Company. Mitten continued as editor until three weeks before his death in 1931 at the age of 86, one of the oldest newspapermen in the United States. H.P. Gorsuch died in 1944. Another influential early member of "The Times" staff was business manager Claude T. Kimmey. In 1956, the newspaper's name officially became the "Carroll County Times," which is now in its 111<sup>th</sup> year.

Anyone wishing to read some of Carroll County's oldest newspapers can access them on microfilm in the library of the Historical Society of Carroll County. One, the "Engine of Liberty and Uniontown Advertiser," was published from 1813-1815 and is a fascinating source of local history.

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



*Image caption: Advertisement for contacting "The Times" using its C&P telephone number in 1911. Notice that there is no dialing mechanism on the phone!*

*Source: Carroll County Times Archive*