

Carroll Yesteryears
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Findings in County Record Books
By Mary Ann Ashcraft

Combing through historic records can be very tedious and time-consuming. Then, suddenly, an entry catches your eye and imagination and the whole endeavor seems worthwhile.

This happened a few years ago while looking through a book of Carroll County government expenses for 1863. What should appear but an entry showing payment for several new horses for the Alms House to replace those stolen by Confederate General JEB Stuart when he invaded Westminster. Now, several years later, here are more nuggets from the turbulent Civil War era in other record books that are worth mentioning.

Recruiting soldiers to join the Union Army became increasingly difficult after the initial enthusiasm when the Civil War began in 1861. Everyone thought it would be over in a matter of months until newspapers started publishing lists of those killed, and men were asked to re-enlist for longer stints. The answer to recruiting problems sometimes lay in offering bounties to those who signed up. A private who left a wife and children behind when he was risking his life for \$13/month needed much more incentive.

Congress authorized a \$100 bounty in July 1861 to white men enlisting for three years. Those who enlisted after March 1863 received \$300 and five-year recruits got \$400. These amounts were divided up and paid in monthly installments with a soldier's regular compensation. States and localities offered additional bonuses. The federal draft applied only to congressional districts unable to meet their manpower quotas using volunteers, so wealthy districts might pay in excess of \$1,000 to volunteers from poorer districts in order to entice these men to enlist. The poorer districts were thus inequitably affected by the draft because their volunteers were not counted toward their quotas.

Carroll County was part of Maryland's Fourth Congressional District which included much of the western part of the state—certainly not one of the wealthier districts. In late 1862, the Carroll County Commissioners pondered how they could pay bounties of \$50 to encourage enlistment locally and decided to raise the money by selling bonds. Fast forward to late 1864 when recruiting was more difficult than ever. That year Maryland passed a law requiring individual counties to offer equal bounties and Carroll's commissioners realized they were offering \$50 less than their neighbors. Payment of an additional \$50 was ordered to volunteers still in the service or "those honorably discharged on account of wounds received or sickness contracted while in the Service of the United States." Commissioned officers would receive the additional money under certain conditions. If a volunteer had died during his service, the additional bounty would be paid to his wife if living, or to his children or their legal representatives. That money must have been a welcome gift coming during those last months of the war, especially when the federal government's pension system would have been swamped with applications.

On an even more serious note, Carroll County government record books contain many, many entries showing slaveholders requesting to have their taxes reduced because they no longer owned some of the property for which they had been assessed. In this case, the “property” consisted of enslaved individuals. Sometimes the records indicate the enslaved person had died or been granted his/her freedom. In other cases, the situation was very different. For example, in 1858 Wesley Bennett asked to have his assessment reduced by \$1,275, because the six people he owned had “absconded.” Bennett listed their names—Joshua, Henny, Nathan, Eveline, Jane, and Rachel plus a value for each. Whether he ever succeeded in recovering them is unknown, but 25 years earlier he advertised that one of his slaves, Christopher Harden, had escaped and he was offering a \$50 reward. No local 1858 newspaper has been found showing an ad for Bennett’s six missing individuals.

During 1863, George Patterson, perhaps the wealthiest slaveholder in Carroll County (and brother of Betsy Patterson who eloped with Jerome Bonaparte, Napoleon’s brother), was granted tax relief for “property” he no longer owned—11 enslaved individuals valued at \$3,160. What is unclear is what happened to Frank, Otho, Henry, Frederick, Elick(?), Thomas, Lewis, George, Barney, Matilda and Julia. They don’t appear to have been sold to anyone else, nor do they appear to have been freed. An 1860 Maryland law prohibited manumitting (freeing) slaves, so what was the status of these individuals? A year later his tax bill was again lowered because 17 more enslaved persons whose combined value was nearly \$2,800 no longer belonged to him. If he intended to eventually release all his slaves, he had not finished when Maryland’s new constitution of late 1864 abolished slavery. On November 1, 1864, he still owned 28 individuals; all of them had been slaves for life.

Local lawmakers tackled many matters including very personal ones. In 1860, Joseph Linderer applied for help for his daughter, Helena, who was deaf and dumb. The county commissioners recommended she be admitted to the Columbian Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Washington, D.C., which later became Gallaudet College. Presumably the county paid her tuition and maintenance, just as they paid for local residents who were sent to various mental institutions such as Mt. Hope Retreat or the Maryland Hospital for the Insane.

Although Carroll County’s schools, restaurants, movie theatres, etc. practiced segregation well into the 20th century, in 1862, the county commissioners authorized the steward of the Alms House to admit George Brown, “a Negro man now blind into the Alms House as a pauper.” Since its formation in 1837, the county had been paying small outdoor pensions to the poor of both races to help them live independently. In the case of blind George Brown, he couldn’t have lived on an outdoor pension and the Alms House was an integrated institution.

On a humorous note, lawmakers “ordered that John S. Stoner, a pauper at the Alms House, be allowed the sum of \$5 to pay his way to his friends in Montgomery County on condition that he is not to return again as a pauper, done at his special request.”

Today, 49 separate departments ranging from Accounting to Zoning are listed on the Carroll County government website. They handle multiple issues which were addressed principally by a very small group of men 150-160 years ago. When Joseph Linderer needed help for his deaf and

dumb daughter, he couldn't pick up a phone to contact the Department of Aging and Disabilities, but likely appeared in person before the county commissioners to plead her case.

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



Carroll County boys Winfield S. Drach and Jesse Barnes posed for this ambrotype shortly after enlisting in the Union Army in 1862. Barnes died as a prisoner of war, but Drach survived. He was owed \$75 in unpaid bounty when mustered out of service in 1865, money that must have come in handy because he lost a leg during the war. (Library of Congress)

BURNSIDE & GUSTIN
UNITED STATES
Claim, Insurance and Gen'l. Agts.,
No. 15 South Gay Street,
Opposite First Nat. Bank,
BALTIMORE, MD.

WIDOWS, Mothers and Orphans' **Bounty**
and Back Pay Promptly Collected.
Soldiers' State of Maryland **Bounty** obtained.
Pensions Procured.
Prize Money collected, and all business care-
fully and promptly transacted before the De-
partments of the General, State and Local
Governments.

Burnside and Gustin advertised in the Baltimore County Union newspaper in 1865 that they would help widows, orphans and others obtain the bounties owed to Civil War soldiers which had not yet been paid.

\$1,000 NOTICE.
REWARD.—Ran away from the subscriber, living near Mount Airy, Carroll county, Md., on Saturday night, 19th instant, two **NEGRO MEN**, (brothers,) **LEWIS** and **NACE**.
 Lewis is about twenty years old, rather stout built; about five feet ten inches high; dark copper color, has a downward look when spoken to.
 Nace is about eighteen years old; five feet eight or nine inches high; rather stout made; he is a bright copper color; stammers when spoken to.
 I will give the above reward for both of them if secured in jail so that I get them, or returned to me; or **FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS** for either of them, if secured or returned in like manner.
 129-6t* **HENRY S. DAVIS.**

In 1859 Henry S. Davis, a Carroll County resident, advertised for the return of Nathan and Lewis, two of his enslaved workers who had run away. Although he was willing to pay \$1,000 for their return, he asked that his tax assessment be lowered \$325—\$75 for Nathan and \$250 for Lewis.