

## *Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles*

Carroll's Yesteryears  
22 November 1992

How it all began  
By Jay Graybeal

The Historical Society of Carroll County was founded in 1939 to save the historic Shellman House in Westminster which was threatened with demolition. While some people may have expressed the attitude "so another old timer going to make a place for another new filling station perhaps? Oh, well," Mary Test Kimmey and others thought the house should be saved.

The story of the founders is best told by the late Miss Dorothy Elderdice who will be the subject of a later profile:

"Test Kimmey first shared with Miss Lillian Shipley the idea of purchasing the Shellman property to serve as a historical and community center. Before this could be done, it was necessary to find many other people who would be inspired by the same idea. A corporate body must be formed. This meant days, stretching into weeks, into months of touring the county to discover people genuinely interested in acquiring a home for the treasures of our heritage. After a period of high hope there followed one of discouragement. But just then the two promoters were ready to abandon the project, Mrs. John Smith of Wakefield came forward with indomitable determination that the project must be launched.

"On Feb. 2, 1939, Mrs. Kimmey called a meeting at her home. This gave Mrs. John Smith the opportunity to inspire the group with her own intense enthusiasm. She advanced the idea of making the home available for use by many groups, including those intensely interested in preserving our history. Mrs. Charles O. Clemson proposed that a historical society be formed after the pattern provided by the Maryland Historical Society. This would provide the legal body necessary for the acquiring of property. Also present at this meeting were Mrs. John M. Lynch, Walter Bower, Miss Bonnie Custenborder, Mrs. W. Carroll Shunk, Henry Himler, Dr. C. Levine Billingslea, H. Peyton Gorsuch, Lillian Shipley, Mrs. John Wood, D. Eugene Walsh, Miss Adeline Hoffman, Mrs. Agnes Jones, and Mrs. Agnes Fink Michaux. Mrs. John Lynch served as chairman and Mrs. Charles O. Clemson as secretary.

"On Feb. 24, a second meeting took place in Mrs. Kimmey's home. The idea of a historical society which began as a spark in the mind of two was now igniting others into full flame. Mrs. Kimmey announced that the Carroll County Society of Baltimore was now giving enthusiastic support to the project.

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"March 11, 1939, braving rain, snow hail and slippery roads, about 75 men and women of Carroll County and Baltimore city met at the Westminster High School to organize the Historical Society of Carroll County. There were two speakers from the Carroll County Society of Baltimore: J. Walter Eckenrode, president, and George R. Babylon, secretary. Both gave enthusiastic support to the idea. Miss Elizabeth Billingslea added the hearty endorsement of local countians. Sen. A. Earl Shipley gave his cordial approval and promise of possible aid.

"Standford I. Hoff, member of the House of Delegates, told of the bill being introduced to authorize the County Commissioners to levy a sum not to exceed \$1,000 for the fund to purchase the Shellman property. County Commissioner Norman R. Hess expressed his support.

"The following officers were elected: president, Senator J. David Baile; first vice president, Charles W. Melville; second vice president, Dr. Arthur G. Tracey; third vice president, Mrs. Harry M. Kimmey; secretary, Mrs. Charles O. Clemson; and treasurer, Mrs. Carroll Shunk. These together with Mrs. Paul Wimert, Miss Elizabeth Billingslea, Mrs. John M. Lynch, Col. T.K. Harrison, and Carbery Boyle comprised the Executive Committee. Other committees were formed to take charge of publicity, programs, finance, history, membership and museum. Key people were chosen from every district in the county. The historical society was off the drawing board and into the launching pad!

"In honor of her work Mary Test Kimmey was given the first membership in the new organization. Until her death in 1961 she was a tireless supporter of the society. J. Hampston Baumgardner wrote of her:

'It seemed to me through the years that Test Kimmey shared in and became the heir of Miss Mary Shellman's devotion to the cultural and historical traditions of Carroll County. Her active part in the conception of our Historical Society and her devotion to its growth are abiding evidence that all of us have lost a devoted friend.'"

*Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County*

*Photo caption: Historical Society members pose at the front door of the Shellman House following the Aug. 19, 1939 auction. First row left to right: Carroll Shunk, Mrs. John W. Smith, Miss Carrie L. Mourer, Miss Dorothy Elderdice, Mrs. John Lynch, Lillian Shipley, Mrs. Test Kimmey, Miss Fanny Thompson, Miss Adelaide Hoffman, Mrs. Carroll Shunk. Second row: T.K. Harrison, David J. Baile, Arthur Zile.*