

"Chamber of Commerce Founded in 1924"

Carroll County Times article for 25 July 1999

By Jay A. Graybeal

Seventy-five years ago local business owners met in the Firemen's building and organized the Westminster Chamber of Commerce. The story appeared in the July 25, 1924 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper:

"In response to invitation sent our last week by Messrs. T. W. Mather Jr., Charles Klee, and C. Edgar Nusbaum, merchants, of this city, Tuesday afternoon last about 100 persons assembled in the Firemen's building, this city, and organized a Chamber of Commerce for this city. The following officers were elected: President, C. Edgar Nusbaum; vice-president, Miller Richardson; secretary, J. Thomas Anders, and executive committee, Joseph L. Mathias, Carroll Albaugh, Denton S. Gehr, Walter H. Davis, William N. Keefer, Joseph E. Hunter, and T. William Mather Jr."

The Chamber and the Historical Society collaborated on a brochure entitled, "Carroll County and Westminster" published in 1954. The text provided a overview of county history and the City of Westminster:

"Carroll County, comprising parts of Baltimore and Frederick counties, was created January 19, 1837, by the act of the General Assembly of Maryland. The county was named in honor of one of its largest landholders, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, signer of the Declaration of Independence.

This county is the twentieth in formation and the tenth in area in the state. Westminster is the county seat. Carroll County has a number of incorporated cities surrounding Westminster. These cities furnish labor for several nationally known industries such as the Black & Decker Co. at Hampstead, The Blue Ridge Rubber Co. at Taneytown, the Lehigh Portland Cement Co. at Union Bridge and the Lincoln Manufacturing Co. at New Windsor. The Western Maryland and Baltimore & Ohio Railroads long have been the carriers for county industrial and farm products to the large marketing area. Carroll County is connected by a modern system of roadways. Its heart is the super highway beginning from the southern tip of the county and running north through Westminster to the Pennsylvania border.

The land was settled largely by people of British and German extraction. The former group brought with them the Roman Catholic, the Episcopalian, the Methodist, the Quaker, and Presbyterian denominations; while the latter brought Lutheran, the German Reformed, and the Church of the Brethren.

According to old records, the first Methodist church in America was built in 1764 by Rev. Robert Strawbridge of Ireland at Sam's Creek, New Windsor district. Nearby, the first Methodist class meeting was held in the log cabin of John Evans, which still stands in its original setting.

The churches of the county have fostered some of our educational institutions, such as the parochial schools of the Roman Catholic church; and the Western Maryland College and the Westminster Theological Seminary under the Methodist Church. The former Blue Ridge College of New Windsor, originally owned by the Church of the Brethren, is now the site of the Church World Service Center under control of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. To this Center come many thousand tons of food and clothing from all over the United States to be sorted and shipped from here to the needy war

sufferers of the world. Especial interest has been aroused nationally and internationally by the shipping of heifers with their volunteer sea-going cowboys.

Among the celebrities born on Carroll County soil, Francis Scott Key, author of the Star Spangled Banner, probably holds first rank. On January 7, 1806, his sister Ann was married to Roger Brooke Taney, destined to be Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Taneytown was named in honor of the Taney family.

In 1809 Jacob R. Thomas of Carroll County invented the harvester and reaping machine. Later, Obed Hussey, his cousin, McCormick and others developed his idea into the practical machine that revolutionized farming in America and the rest of the world. Betsy Patterson of Springfield Manor achieved rather tragic fame when she married Jerome Bonaparte in 1803, for Napoleon, pre-empting the powers of the Pope, soon annulled the marriage.

Among other interesting personalities are the distinguished General Mordecai Gist of the American Revolution; William Rinehart, the sculptor; Frederick Dielman, the etcher; Frank Brown, former Governor of Maryland; and William L. Seabrook, the writer.

To Carroll County goes the honor of establishing the first complete Rural Free Delivery service in the United States. On this original tour 2700 pieces of mail were distributed in addition to a pig and two chickens.

Numerous items of historical interest are being collected and filed by the Historical Society of Carroll County, 206 E. Main Street, Westminster. The property on which the Society is located belonged originally to William Winchester, the English gentleman who founded the town. The Flemish bond brick home was built around 1807 by Jacob Sherman, a retired Pennsylvania Dutch tavern Keeper. The building is in a very good state of preservation considering its age. Fireplaces in the kitchen and basement have the original cranes from which kettles were suspended. A number of the doors are hand made with the big iron latches and hinges characteristic of the period. The wrought iron nails were made by the local blacksmith.

Within this home Alexander Graham Bell once lunched with Mary B. Shellman, the first telephone operator of Carroll County and one of its most public spirited citizens.

Visitors are cordially invited to see the antique furniture, documents and curios on permanent display in the headquarters of the Historical Society of Carroll County.

WESTMINSTER

Westminster is the county seat of Carroll County. Passing over the interesting developments of the more than a century of progress, the latest census gives its population as 6400 plus. Approximately four blocks wide and two miles long, it has about 25 miles of paved streets and alleys.

At least ten churches are located in the city and several within a few minutes drive. A wide-awake Chamber of Commerce and an energetic Retail Merchants Association have the business interests of the city at heart. Industrially, Westminster might well be classed with many cities larger in area and population.

The water system, not owned by the corporation, furnishes an adequate supply of excellent water. Its sewerage system, less than 25 years old, is in excellent condition and is owned and operated by the city. The medical profession is proud of its new Carroll County War Memorial Health center available to any local physician.

Western Maryland College, a miniature town of 700, co-educational, church-owned but non-denominationally operated, brings additional home owners, business, sports, and cultural advantages to the town. Westminster has two primary schools, three High schools, four elementary schools including a parochial school. These are taking care of the present educational needs, the public schools being a part of the county school system.

The government of the city is vested in a mayor and five councilmen. A volunteer fire department, with around-the clock drivers employed, not only serves the city, but the surrounding county area when needed.

If Westminster is not your home town, this is an invitation to visit an almost self-sufficient city where most of the essentials of good living can be obtained without going to larger communities. We welcome you."

As the title to the above brochure implies, the Chamber also promoted Carroll County. The organization formally changed its name to the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce in 1973.

Photo caption: T. W. Mather, Jr., (back row, far right) posed with the employees of T. W. Mather and Sons, Westminster, in c. 1910. Mr. Mather was a founder of the Westminster Chamber of Commerce in July 1924. J. Leland Jordan Collection, Historical Society of Carroll County, gift of the Commissioner of Carroll County, 1955.