

"Carroll County Christmas, 1899"

Carroll County Times article for 26 December 1999

By Jay A. Graybeal

The last Carroll County Christmas of the Nineteenth Century was celebrated in much the same way as previous years. Local residents attended religious and social functions and generally enjoyed the holiday with family and friends. The December 30, 1899 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper carried community reports from around the county. The story from the Manchester correspondent was typical:

"Manchester Items

The joyous Christmas season found this community with much to be thankful for. The year among our people has been quite prosperous. Our cigar factories, the chief source of income, have been working on full time and for several months even at night and the employees have been earning good money. Some of them who are engaged in stripping tobacco, live in the country. The factories disburse five or six thousand dollars a month in weekly and bi-monthly payments, which goes into circulation, and our business men are smiling over their holiday trade. In entertainments we have not been lacking. The Imperial Orchestra gave a musical at the I. O. O. F. Hall on Friday night, 22nd, to a good audience, which was fine in every detail and reflects much credit upon the leader, Mr. John Stick and his associates. The Alesia Band was present and added much to the program with their selections. Musical and literary talent from Hampstead and home was a splendid factor in making the affair a success. All did so well that no special comment can be bestowed upon any one in particular.

The Lutheran Church was filled to overflowing at the Christmas exercised by the Sunday School of the church on Sunday night. They were fine throughout and held up the joyous occasion in speech and song. The singing was well supported by the orchestra. The altar and pulpit were trimmed with arches and evergreen.

On Christmas evening there was a repetition of the large audience at Trinity Reformed Church, where the Sunday School held their festal exercises, using a Church service, Joy to the World, with recitations and class exercises. At each of these occasions the schools were given their annual treat and collections taken for the Orphans' Homes of the respective churches.

A great deal of calling and exchange of family greetings are the principal features of the week, while the young folks in large and small companies are enjoying masquerading and fun making."

The Shipley correspondent also noted that masqueraders had a lively time in this community:

"Shipley Items

Christmas is a thing of the past again, but so far as we have heard the usual Christmas roast was indulged in and the day was very respectfully kept as a Christmas holiday here. No accidents happened to mar the day, and no one has been reported sick from over indulgence, as is often the case.

The masqueraders of our community were out on Monday in costumes to suit the occasion and they were mounted on horses finely ornamented and festooned with sleigh bells to enliven the spirit of both man and beast. About eight of our best horsemen, mounted on as many of our finest steeds, took a

tour of 16 miles on Monday, dressed as aforesaid. They started from Shipley and went to Gist, to Klee's Mill, to Gamber, then to Bird Hill, and then back to the place of starting. They claim to have visited many private families along the route, all of whom treated them, though they were disguised in a first class manner. Many were the guesses as to their identity, but few were correct, as they were well organized for the purpose. We are glad to say, too, that our young men deserve more than passing notice, as we have not seen one person during these holidays, thus far, who has exhibited any signs of intoxication. Some of our close observers seem to have a poor opinion of a green Christmas, however, as they claim it is indicative of a full graveyard."

Next week's column will present several articles from the American Sentinel describing how local residents ushered in the Twentieth Century.

Photo caption: A group of Manchester masqueraders posed in costume in December 1875. Historical Society of Carroll County.