

Carroll Yesteryears  
28 March 2021  
A Look at Carroll Easter Celebrations Through the Years  
By David Buie

Last Easter took place during the safer-at-home order, so many of the typical Easter celebrations— community egg hunts, Easter Bunny visits, church services, even family dinners— didn't happen.

This year, restrictions are not as extreme, but the pandemic is still with us, so large gatherings, which don't allow for proper social distancing, continue to be discouraged.

For centuries, Carroll Countians gathered in churches to celebrate Easter. Although it may be a while before we return to “normal” social celebrations, it is always fun to look back, remember how celebrations were once held, and look forward to future celebrations. After all, Easter does represent spring, and as American author Hal Borland (1900-1978) once predicted, “No Winter lasts forever, no spring skips its turn.”

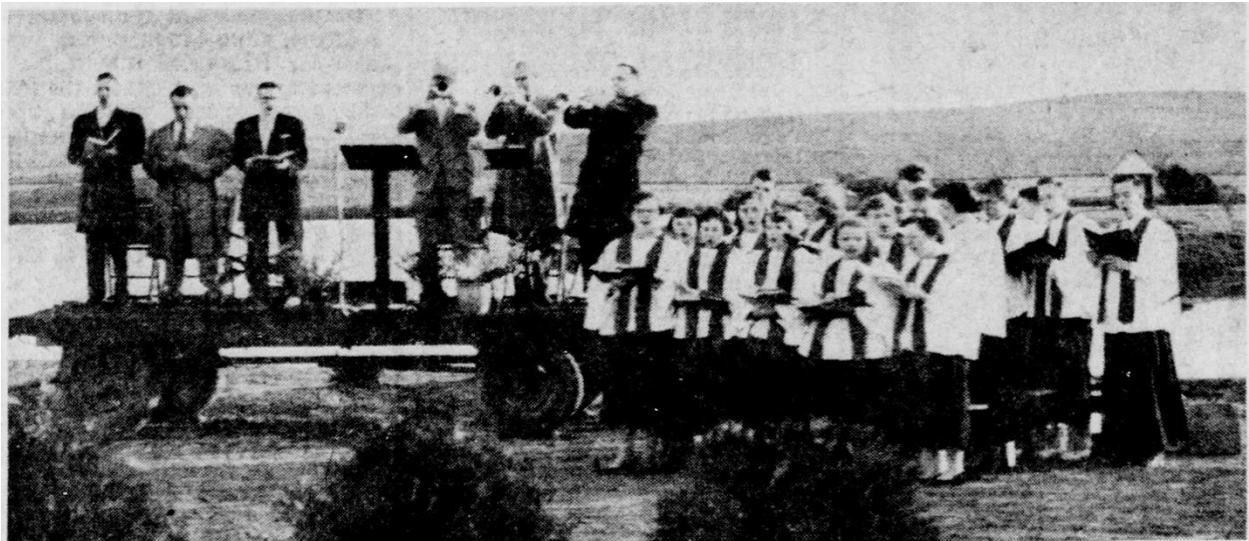
Nineteenth-century celebrations of Easter may be considered more elaborate than what we would expect in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to the March 31, 1894, *American Sentinel*:

A grand Easter Entertainment was held last Sunday night in the M.E. Church in New Windsor, under the Sabbath School's auspices, which proved to be one of the finest events of the kind in New Windsor for some time. The church was decorated with Easter lilies and potted plants, while on each side of the pulpit, a thorn tree stood laden with little Tarleton baskets, blue, yellow, green, white, and red, and in each basket was an Easter egg for the little ones of the school. The church was well filled. The music was excellent. Mrs. J. T. Smelser presided at the organ with Mr. Edw. Devilbiss cornetist. A program had been carefully prepared which was as follows: Singing by all, standing, Rock of Ages; prayer, by Rev. T. J. Cross, senior pastor of the church; singing, by the school, Happy Easter Day; recitation, Our lord is Risen, by Master Sterling Geatty; responsive reading, by the school; duet, Lift your Glad Voices, by Mrs. Wm. Eckenrode, and Miss Allie Frounfelter; recitation, Christ is Risen, by Miss Katie Hassett; singing by the school, Jesus Lives; reading, Easter Day, by Miss Florence Englar; Fair Lilies, by 14 Boys and Girls; recitation, The Earth is Keeping Easter, by Master Forrest Otto; Joyful To-Day, by four little children, 1st, Christ's Meekness, and patience, by Miss Lamore Bankard, 2nd, His Silence Before His Accusers, by Miss Winnie Wampler, 3rd, The Journey to the Sepulcher, by Miss Edna Snader; singing, by the school, Tell It; reading, by Miss Allie Frounfelter; singing, by the school, Awake; recitation, The Garden of Gethsemane, by Miss Goldie Bloom; The Easter Cross, by nine children; singing by the school, Christ's Triumph. The next feature of the program, which was giving out the Easter eggs, was pleasing to the little ones, and all were very happy. This was followed with an address by the Superintendent, Mr. G. P. B. Englar; singing, by All, All Hail the Power of Jesus'

Name; benediction by Rev. C. T. Jones, the junior pastor. The ushers were: Messrs. Edgar Nusbaum, T. Edward Cross, Howard Englar, and Chas. Cross.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, newspapers continued to carry descriptions of Easter Sunday services and church decorations. One holiday custom that may see a re-emergence throughout Carroll County is the tradition of sunrise church services on Easter morning. A local example of the practice, conducted by the Westminster United Methodist Church at the Community Pond, can be traced back to 1955. The pond was a public amenity created as part of the Westminster Bypass Project completed and dedicated in 1954.

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*Photo Credit: John R. Byers/Carroll County Times*

*Photo Caption: The Carroll County Times printed a photograph of the first community pond Easter sunrise service in its edition of April 14, 1955. The photograph was taken by John R. Byers and ran with the following caption: "About 400 persons attended the first Easter Sunrise Service held at 6 a.m. at the Community Pond, Westminster, by the Youth Fellowship of the Westminster Methodist Church. Featured were the church's chapel choir, a trumpet trio of Prof. Edward Moyer, Norman Arbaugh, and William E. Price, Key Club octet and address by Prof. Robert B. Pond, Johns Hopkins University. Thomas Warren presided."*