

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

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### "Story Tells of Search for Boy"

Carroll County Times article for 9 December 2012

By Mary Ann Ashcraft

One of the perks of volunteering at the Historical Society's research library is access to microfilm of local newspapers. The ads are amusing; the marriages and deaths are handy for genealogists; but occasionally a true story, like this one from the January 21, 1893, issue of The Carroll News really grabs you.

In the fall of 1857, John and Elizabeth Switzer set out from Union Bridge with their ten children intending to relocate in Iowa. They began the trip in Baltimore, changed trains in Pittsburgh, and were traveling on the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Express by the second night. The excitement which kept the children awake the entire first night, wore off and everyone began to get sleepy. Uncle Joshua Switzer was charged with paying special attention to Abraham, a boy about 12 prone to sleepwalking.

Around midnight, Abraham awoke, let out a scream, and ran down the aisle saying he thought someone was trying to kill him. Uncle Joshua caught up with him and pushed him into a seat, but left his 13-year-old brother Jacob Carroll unattended in the process. In the aftermath of the incident, they suddenly realized Jacob had left his seat and was nowhere to be seen. Other passengers said he'd exited the coach.

The conductor was notified immediately and the train stopped slightly east of Upper Sandusky, Ohio. It began backing up slowly while the conductor and John Switzer held lanterns on opposite sides of the last car looking for Jacob. Nobody held much hope for finding him alive because the train had been traveling 35 miles an hour. "Several times [the] father's heart fluttered as they thought they were about to find the mangled boy, but it was only the glare of the lantern, or the shadow of the tall trees from the full moon..."

At length, the train backed to its previous stop and the Switzer party got off. At a hotel, they told their tragic story as townspeople gathered around and volunteered to search for the boy now that the moon was high and would light their steps. The train, meanwhile, went on its way.

Morning dawned and the search party had reached nearly a hundred when suddenly a footprint was spotted...and then John heard, "Is it me you are hunting, father?" At first John and Joshua thought they'd seen a ghost, but there stood Jacob with only a bloody ear to show for his experience. When searchers found his missing cap and a glove, they could determine exactly where he'd landed and said it was the only place along that stretch he could have fallen off without being killed. Jacob had spent the night walking the tracks alone.

The reunited family eventually reached Johnson County, Iowa, and settled there as they had planned. John Switzer died within a few years. Jacob Carroll Switzer enlisted in Company A of the 22nd Iowa Infantry during the Civil War. In the autumn of 1864, he lost a foot during a bloody battle near Winchester, VA, but returned home to a mother who realized God had always looked after her son.



The Pilot, a Union Bridge newspaper, was published from 1899 until sold to The Carroll County Times in 1969. This photo of its office probably dates from the early 20th century. The Carroll News, also a Union Bridge paper, ran from 1886 until 1898.