

## "HSCC Annual Dinner in Mount Airy"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

Each year the Historical Society holds an annual dinner meeting as an opportunity for the members and guests to enjoy a meal together, elect board members and learn about local history. The Historical Society will hold its 57th Annual Dinner at the Mount Airy Firemen's Activity Building at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 7th. Board member Rita Nikirk, who represents the Mount Airy District, is serving as this year's Dinner Committee Chair. Her committee consists of Board members Celeste Barnes and Jeanne Laudermitch. The Ladies Auxiliary will serve a family style dinner of fried oysters and turkey. After dinner Travis Norwood, Chairman of the 1994 Mount Airy Centennial celebration, will share some remarks about the community and the 1994 celebration.

The history of Mount Airy, of course, predates the 1894 incorporation. According to a local newspaper article of March 10, 1888, Mount Airy was already considered a "progressive business centre":

A writer in the last Ellicott City Times gives the following description of Mt. Airy, Carroll county:

"Mt. Airy is situated on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, at the highest point between Baltimore and the mountains and marking the divide between the territories drained by the Patapsco and Monocacy rivers respectively. The station, a store and a house or two, formed the nucleus of what has since by rapid strides become a flourishing village of three hundred inhabitants. We style Mt. Airy, a village, but with an ever increasing population, with a prospect of even greater business energy in the future, with a prospect of much greater facilities of every description in the very near future, our citizens begin to entertain the aspirations and proclivities of would be townsmen.

Long before the days of present improvements. Mt. Airy had been a great grain depot. It had been recognized as the most accessible point to farmers within a radius of many miles, partly because of the absence of topographical barriers that barred the approaches to other points perhaps even nearer. Roads, too, which ever add immensely when in good condition, even to a country of few good natural qualities, while frequently shamefully neglected, were yet on an average better than those leading to what might otherwise have been terminal points. It was soon apparent that the great number of wagons and teams daily flocking to the place could induce the institution of a claim to part of the trade theretofore enjoyed by the pioneer firm of A. Anderson & Co. then known simply as A. Anderson. The situation was quickly taken in by the enterprising Mr. J. B. Runkles who inaugurated the general merchandise business now carried on by J. B. Runkles & Sons. Soon Mr. Robert Sellman, whom Carroll county has several times honored as one of her distinguished sons, with his usual business aptitude saw a field for yet another enterprise in the general merchandising line and the firm of Sellman & Hood was the outcome of the matter. Among the first to take up a special line, realizing that the increasing

business importance of the village would warrant an investment, was Mr. Byron S. Dorsey who began the handling of agricultural implements of all descriptions from threshers, engines, reapers and mowers down to implements used by hand.

About two years ago began the remarkable revival and period of activity that has since seemed to acquire vigor with age and which Mt. Airy people believe to be yet initial. The railway station boasting of a store, a blacksmith and a shoemaker's shop, became suddenly a town possessing three of the most prosperous general stores in the State, establishments handling as special lines, agricultural implements, hardware, harness, boots and shoes, stoves and furniture, drugs and chemicals, lime and coal, fertilizers, and seeds, carriages of all kinds and lumber, a bank and every enterprise to be attracted by a thriving rural commercial centre. The handsome residences erected upon the hilltops overlooking the place, and which continue in course of construction commensurately with the town's commercial increase, have added greatly to the natural beauty of the scenery, and by the way this section has been favored more in gifts of natural beauty than many places in Maryland and elsewhere. Purchases of land and the erection of buildings by the B. & O. R. R. Co. also doubtless led many to appreciate the opportunities of the place. The B. & O. Company has for some time had in view the erection of a grand hotel and last summer a large force of men were engaged in grading and leveling the company's grounds as if with a view of future beautification. A striking evidence of the healthy condition of things is the flourishing business of the Mt. Airy Bank under the management of Messrs. Jones & Co. and the steady maintenance of the great general traffic that at all times in a less marked degree characterized the place.

Mt. Airy's facilities having been discussed, after an allusion to its conveniences in the way of hotels and a reference to provision store, restaurants and a cigar factory which will be shortly opened, it remains to discuss some of its needs among them being school and church accommodations. One absorbing matter at present is the fact that the divisional line of Frederick and Carroll counties passes through the town; this frequently causes inconveniences in land and legal matters the citizens thus being compelled to divide business effecting said matters between two county towns. The question of jurisdiction in legal matters is especially productive of annoyance, but this must be discussed in another article."

The general public is welcome to attend the Historical Society's Annual Meeting Dinner Meeting. Reservations are \$17.50 and may be made by calling the Society at 848-6494 or by visiting the office at 210 E. Main St. in Westminster.

Photo caption: This turn of the century post card view shows Mt. Airy's Main St. north of the B. & O. Railroad. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.