

"An Elegant Victorian Wedding"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

Throughout the early history of our nation, most wedding ceremonies took place in the home. By the late nineteenth century, however, the traditional church wedding had become popular in America. The more fashionable brides wore white dresses and her attendants were similarly attired. One of these local church ceremonies was described in the October 13, 1894 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper.

Probably the most brilliant wedding ever solemnized in the Church of God at Uniontown took place at the hour of noon on Wednesday last. The church altar was banked with choice flowers and an evergreen arch spanned each aisle. As far as possible the light of day was excluded and the rays of numerous lamps brilliantly illuminated the sacred edifice. The contracting parties in the interesting event were: Mr. Jerry J. Garner, son of Mr. William Garner, of Taneytown, and Miss Minnie Ray Garner, only daughter of Mr. Ezra B. Garner, of Linwood. Mr. Owen Steinheiser, of Columbia, was best man, and Miss Addie Manahan, of Warfieldsburg, maid of honor. the bridesmaids were: Miss Bessie Wentz, of Union Bridge; Miss Olive Snader, of Sams Creek; Miss May Galt, of Copperville, and Miss Myrtle Steinheiser, of Columbia, Pa; flower girl, Miss Lamora Bankert, of New Windsor. The ushers were: Messrs. Norman Reindollar, Walter Wilt, Edward Banker, Jesse Haugh, of Taneytown; pages, Masters Walter Bankert and Eugene Sellman, of Warfieldsburg. The bride wore a striking and becoming wedding gown of cream silk with pearl trimmings, princess style, en train, with gloves and slippers to match, veil falling to train and caught up with orange blossoms. She carried the bible of her Grandmother Garner, which is nearly 100 years old. The bride's attendants all wore cream gowns with cream roses in their hair. As the bridal party entered the church the strains of Leo's march arose from organ, cornet and violin, played respectively by Mrs. William Messler, of Linwood, Mr. Louis M. Sellman, of Warfieldsburg, and Mr. Edward Rinehart, of Linwood. The pages moved forward to the arches and held the ribbons while the groom, leaning on the arm of his best man, passed up the right aisle, and the bride on the arm of the maid of honor advanced by the left aisle, the other attendants following and all passing under the arches to the altar where the marriage ceremony was impressively performed by the pastor, Rev. George W. Seilhamer, assisted by Rev. George W. McSherry, of the Lutheran Church, Taneytown. The wedding march was played softly during the performance of the ceremony and all the bridal party knelt during prayer. A reception was given at the home of the bride's parents, Linwood, immediately following the solemnization of the nuptials, and several hundred guests tendered their congratulations to the newly wedded pair and were handsomely and hospitably entertained. Mr. and Mrs. Garner were driven to Taneytown at a late hour and took an afternoon train for a bridal trip to the North and West. They will reside for a year at Linwood and then make their home at Taneytown.

The bride received many handsome presents, among which were: 3 sets of furniture, fancy stand, 1 rocker, 1 large picture on easel, 8 fancy table covers, 1 door mat, 2 pairs slippers, 3 large lamps, 2 toilet sets, 2 castors, 1 landscape, 1 water set, 1 coffee urn, 3 berry sets, 3 sets of bread and cake knives, 1 glass jewel case, 1 set bone dishes, 3 sets of fruit dishes, 1 Gettysburg souvenir card plate, 6 pitchers, 4 dozen glasses, 2 rose jars, 1 cushion, 6 handsome scarfs, 1 oyster set, 1 wine set, 2 ice cream sets, 2 perfumery sets, 1 set of flat-irons, 7 flower urns and vases, 1 dozen fruit plates, 1 large basket of flowers, 3 sugar boxes, 1 rope ornament, 2 canaries, 5 fruit stands, 4 Dresden china dishes, 1 bisque statue, 1 match case, 9 silver dippers, ladles and spoons, 4 silver butter knives, tea spoons, desert spoons, &c., silver knives and forks, silver butter dish, silver pickle castor, silver jewel case, 3 tidies, 1

handsome mirror, 1 whisp holder, 1 fur rug, 1 pair blankets, 3 vegetable sets, 20 pairs of towels, table cloths and napkins in abundance, 1 center piece, 3 counter-panes, 1 table cover made by her aged grandmother; tinware, 1 gold piece (\$10.00) and many other articles.

The Garner wedding article provides exceptional detail about local wedding traditions during the late Victorian period. This writer wondered, however, who gave the Gettysburg souvenir card plate and why?

Photo caption: Miss Addie Manahan was photographed at about the time she served as the maid of honor at the October 1894 wedding of Jerry and Minnie Ray Garner. A local paper noted that the Garner wedding was described "as the most brilliant wedding ever solemnized in the Church of God at Uniontown". Historical Society of Carroll County collection.