

"Carroll's Grand Jury in 1887"

Carroll County Times article for 17 May 1998

By Jay A. Graybeal

The process of presenting cases to a grand jury has a long history in the county. Usually the jury did its duty and upon dismissal the members went their separate ways. The May 1887 jury members ended their service with a party as described in the May 26, 1887 issue of the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper:

"THE LATE GRAND JURY.
OF WHOM IT WAS COMPOSED AND WHERE THEY WERE FROM

A New Departure in the Work of that Body. It Organizes into a Committee of the Whole. Short Sketches of the Lives of the Members.

The recent Grand Jury, immediately after their discharge by the Court, took "a new departure"-one not heretofore practiced "by the Grand Inquest of the State of Maryland for the body of Carroll county." They resolved themselves into a committee of the whole, with the late foreman in the chair, Wm. P. Gorsuch, Jr., as secretary and treasurer, and Louis Dielman, historian.

After the presentation of a substantial purse to the bailiff, and the reading of a "rich, rare and racy" commentary on the several members of the late jury by the historian, on motion of Juror Oursler, from the Fourth district, which was unanimously endorsed, each member and the bailiff was directed to prepare and submit for publication a brief biography of his life.

After adjournment, Bailiff Lippy and Juror Zile, with cigars and ice cream, entertained the jury at the City Hotel.

Evidently the May term, 1887, Grand Jury, have had a good time.

The editor regrets to state that for want of space this week, an abbreviation of the sketches was an absolute necessity. They have all been preserved, however, and at no very distant day will be published in full.

We submit the biographies in the order of districts:

District No. 1.

Geo. W. Baumgardner; born in Taneytown district, March 20, 1842; occupation, farmer; religion, Lutheran; politics, Republican; postoffice, Taneytown.

Augustus Mehring, born Aug. 3, 1840, in Carroll county; occupation, farmer; religion, Lutheran; politics, Republican; postoffice, Taneytown.

District No. 4.

Martin Bitzel; born in the Kingdom of Bavaria; occupation, butcher and farmer; age, 54 years, religion, Orthodox Lutheran; politics, Democrat; residence near Smallwood; postoffice address, Westminster.

Joshua S. Brothers; born near Carrollton, Md.; occupation, farmer; age, 38; politics, Democrat; postoffice address, Carrollton.

Elisha Ogg; born in Carroll county; age, 52; religion, Protestant, but not a church member; politics, Republican; postoffice address, Smallwood.

Azariah Oursler; born in Carroll county, Md.; occupation, farmer and justice of the peace; age, 68; religion, Methodist; politics, Democrat; postoffice Carrollton. Grand juror four times.

District No. 5.

Jno. E. Gaither; born at Gaithers Siding, Carroll county; occupation, farmer and dairyman; age, 43; religion, Methodist (Episcopal); politics, Democrat; postoffice Sykesville, Md.; residence, Gaither's Siding. Grand juror three times.

Wm. P. Gorsuch, Jr.; born near Sykesville; occupation, farmer; age, 33; religion, Catholic; politics, staunch Democrat; residence, Sykesville.

J. Thos. Harris; born in Eldersburg; occupation, farmer; age, 27; politics, Republican; residence, "Windsor Forest;" postoffice, Freedom.

Wm. T. Polk, born on the homestead farm, "Glenwood," near Sykesville; occupation, farmer and dairyman; age, 34; politics, staunch Democrat; postoffice address, Sykesville.

District No. 6.

Peter G. Ober; born in the Kingdom of Sweden; has retired from active business; was extensively engaged in the South in the milling business; age, 61; religion, Lutheran; politics, Democrat; postoffice address, Manchester.

District No. 7.

J. Wesley Biggs; born in Carroll county; occupation, farmer; age, 36; religion, United Brethren; politics, Democrat; postoffice address, Bachman's Mills.

Absalom H. Bowersox; born in Carroll county; occupation, farmer and dairyman; age, 56; religion, Lutheran; politics, Republican; postoffice address, Westminster.

A. H. Huber (Foreman); born in Waynesboro, Pa.; occupation, druggist; age 49; not a member of any church; politics, Republican; postoffice address, Westminster.

David Robertson; born near Warfieldsburg; occupation, farmer; age, 46; a member of no church; politics, Republican; postoffice address, Warfieldsburg.

Thomas Turtle; born near Westminster; occupation, farmer and huckster; age, 49; religion, a member of the M. E. church; politics, Republican; postoffice address, Westminster.

District No. 8.

Wm. M. Harris; born in the 8th district, Carroll county; occupation, joiner and carpenter; age, 31; is a member of no church; politics, Republican.

District No. 9.

Howard M. Zile; born in Carroll county; present occupation, traveling salesman for Myer Bros., Westminster, and also agent for the Cold Spring Dairy company's ice cream; age, 39; religion, Methodist (Episcopal); politics, Republican; residence, Winfield.

District No. 10.

John Shirk; born in Pennsylvania; present occupation, farmer and peach grower; age about 50 years; politics, Democrat; postoffice address, Middleburg.

District No. 11.

Louis Dielman; born at Frankfort-on-the-Main, Germany; occupation, proprietor of New Windsor Hotel, the well known summer resort; he is also a justice of the peace; age 65; he is a member of no church; his political sympathies are with the Democracy; address, New Windsor.

District No. 12.

Wm. H. H. Clary; born in Frederick county; occupation, farmer; age, 46; politics, Democrat; postoffice; Union Bridge, Md.

Solomon Shepherd; born near Union Bridge; present occupation, farmer; age 67; religion, a Friend; in politics a Republican Prohibitionist.

The Bailiff

George E. Lippy was born in Myers' district, Carroll county, in 1860; his present residence is Westminster; by occupation he is a harness maker; in religion a Lutheran, and in politics a "Stalwart" Republican.

The biographical sketches contain a wealth of information about the individual members. The article also provides a clear indication of the type of juror selected to hear cases in the late nineteenth century. Most were farmers, although other occupations were represented, and there was an even number of Democrats and Republicans.

Photo caption: After completing their duties in May 1887, the Grand Jury retired to the nearby City Hotel, which formerly stood on the corner of Court and E. Main St. in Westminster, for cigars and ice cream. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.