

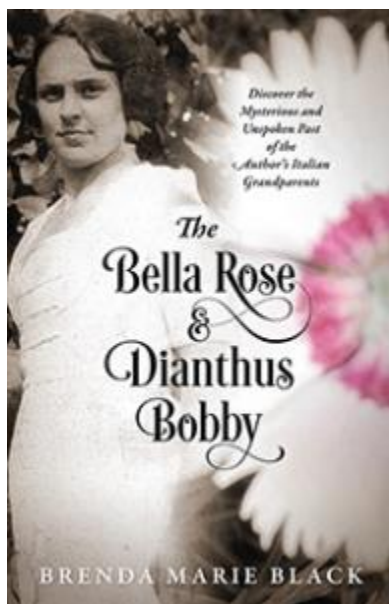
‘Historical Society of Carroll County Helped Fulfill My Dream’

Local author Brenda Marie Black recently wrote to the Historical Society of Carroll County to thank the organization for help in researching information that appears in her new book, The Bella Rose & Dianthus Bobby, available for purchase in the Shellman Shop & Bookstore.

My lifetime dream has been to write a story about my Italian grandparents, the late Pasquale and Lena (Casasanta) Donofrio. My grandfather left Italy in the early 1920s to work and live in the United States of America. He and my grandmother met and married in Geneva, New York in the mid 1920s. Soon after, they moved to Westminster, Maryland where my grandfather started and ran a successful nursery business, Carroll Gardens. They and their children contributed greatly to the Westminster community. My grandparents’ story is unique and precious. They faced tragedy and personal challenges which changed the direction of their lives. Research and writing began 25 years ago and more recently I was gifted time to complete the manuscript. The story is historic in nature and the chapters span Italy (Abruzzo region), New York (Ellis Island and Geneva), Pennsylvania (Ernest, Indiana and Punxsutawney), and Maryland (Westminster). I celebrated and cried writing my grandparents’ story.

To write the story as authentically as possible, I had an enormous amount of work in front of me; however, the Historical Society of Carroll County made the research relating to Westminster enjoyable and rewarding. Last year, on January 25, 2019, I entered the Research Room within the Historical Society of Carroll County and was greeted by Mary Ann “Mimi” Ashcraft, research library volunteer.

Mimi was amazing—friendly, knowledgeable and helpful—and once she discovered the items on my “to do” list, she pointed me to the resources I needed. Catherine “Cathy” Baty, curator of collections, also was helpful and she allowed me to view some vintage photographs. The research room contained an abundance of records and everything was well organized and labeled.



The information I discovered from my visit to the research room allowed me to incorporate authentic and significant details about Westminster within the story. For example, telephone directories were utilized to determine addresses and telephone numbers of Westminster residents and businesses. A file on St. John's Catholic Church gave me enormous historical insight. Such as, in the 1930s, one of the Catholic fathers spoke Italian as he had attended school in Rome (this fact was important for a scene in a chapter). Additionally, viewing photos of Westminster decorated during Christmas, in the 1950s, helped me understand and write details for a specific scene in the book. These are just a few highlights of the many records which were valuable to me in my research. (My research was specific to downtown Westminster during the periods of the 1930s, 1950s, 1970s and the 1980s.)

My book, *The Bella Rose & Dianthus Bobby*, was recently published. It is available in paperback, hardcover and e-versions through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Outskirts Press, etc. I invite interested readers to travel back in time to explore the riveting legacy of my Italian grandparents. Through precise period details, one will experience, first-hand, the treasured story of handsome Pasquale and beautiful Lena. The aura of their hearts and souls are revealed in raw, in-depth characterization. Along the journey, there are many other unique individuals and places to discover. Pasquale and Lena gift us with an extraordinary and inspirational story. Read of their challenges, celebrations, tragedy, heart break, deep regret, and...

With thanks,

Brenda Marie Black

Pictured above, from left to right: Historical Society of Carroll County research library volunteer Mary Ann Ashcraft and author Brenda Marie Black.