

"Carroll County in 1892, Part I"

Carroll County Times Article for 7 October 2001

by Jay A. Graybeal

A little over a century ago, a Baltimore American newspaper writer wrote a highly complementary description of Carroll County. Not surprisingly, the article was reprinted in the local press under the headline of "Carroll County—Her Many Advantages—Productive Soil, Thriving Towns and Villages, Churches, Colleges, Schools, &c."

"From special correspondence of the Baltimore American, under date of 26th inst, we extract the following in relation to Carroll county:

WESTMINSTER, January 26—Among the counties of Maryland possessing varied general business and agricultural advantages, Carroll occupies, by no means, the lowest place. The chief occupation of its people is farming, but they are not limited to this, either by necessity or in fact. Agricultural pursuits, in one shape or another, are the leading features in the daily life of the people, but many other things engage their attention and give opportunity to their enterprise. A large part of the soil of the county is admirably adapted to cultivation, and there are large bodies of fertile lands in every section of the county. Its territory is bisected from northeast to southwest by Parr's Ridge, which rises to an elevation of seven hundred to one thousand feet above tide, and breaks the surface of the land into numerous hills and valleys. Some of these valleys are renowned for the crop-producing qualities of their soils. Among these are Bachman's, Cranberry and Kroh's Valleys in the northeastern section, Wakefield, Little Pipe Creek and Priestland Valleys in the central-western section. The latter group is traversed by the Western Maryland Railroad, while the Bachman's Valley Railroad penetrates the section bearing that name. The lands in all these valleys are among the higher priced of the farms in the county, but there are other localities not less productive. In fact, there is scarcely any part of the county in which rich farming lands, selling at fifty to seventy dollars per acre, with improvements, cannot be found. Wheat, rye, corn, oats, barley, potatoes, &c., are produced, and the crops, except in unfavorable seasons, are usually large—twenty to forty bushels of wheat, ten to eighteen barrels of corn, and other grains in proportion. Perhaps the largest quantity of corn ever produced on a single acre of ground—a fraction over thirty-one barrels—was grown by Mr. John W. Murray, of Hampstead, some years ago.

IN THE RED LANDS OF THE COUNTY.

There are, however, a great variety of soils, some of which are not classed as fertile, although all seem to be susceptible of improvement. What are familiarly known as the red lands occupy the northwestern portion of the county, and by the use of lime have become quite productive, the crops being such as have been already designated, in addition to which they are admirably adapted to the production of hay of a superior quality. In most cases, well improved and productive farms in this section can be purchased at prices ranging from twenty to thirty-five dollars per acre, and without improvements for considerably less. This section lies beyond the range of Parr's Ridge, and is, for the most part, less broken and hilly, the land being generally gently undulating.

For a distance of six or eight miles south and southeast of the city the small fruits are grown successfully and find a ready market at remunerative prices. To the southward, a quarter of a century ago, a considerable region bore the general designation of "The Barrens," but the appellation, whatever it may have been at that time, is no longer pertinent. Much of the land has been improved by the use of lime and other fertilizers until it has become quite productive, and the farmers are, as a rule, thrifty and

prosperous. Unimproved lands are still to be found, and can be bought at moderate prices. There is much fine land all over the southern portion of the county, interspersed with soils less fertile, but, as a rule, highly susceptible of improvement. A particularly fine section runs from the eastern boundary of the county about Finksburg in a southwesterly direction towards Freedom.

MARKETS OF EASY ACCESS.

The southern portion of the county is still well wooded, there being extensive forests of excellent timber. The eastern and North-eastern sections, toward and beyond Manchester from this city, and in the direction of Hampstead, also have considerable bodies of fine timber land. The northeastern section of the county is traversed by the Baltimore and Harrisburg Railroad, the northwestern by the Frederick and Pennsylvania Line Railroad, and the center, from east to west, by the Western Maryland Railroad. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad skirts the southern border. An extension of the Green Spring Valley Railroad to and up Morgan's Run, then to Westminster, and probably further north, is in contemplation, and the route has been partially surveyed by a corps of Pennsylvania Railroad engineers. These railroads furnish excellent facilities for marketing the products of a large portion the county, but farmers generally find a ready home market for their grain at the numerous flour mills found in every section of the county. Many of these mills have improved roller machinery, and, taken in the aggregate, have a large capacity for the manufacture of flour. Large steam-roller mills are located in this city and at Taneytown."

Next week's column will conclude the article with sections about Carroll's abundant water supply, local schools, colleges, churches and low taxes in 1892.



Andrew P. Frizzell (on horseback) posed with his steam engine powered threshing machine near Bloom Post Office on Salem Bottom Road in c. 1890. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Mrs. Byron Gartrell.