

## "Memorial Day 1901"

Carroll County Times Article for 3 June 2001

by Jay A. Graybeal

Memorial Day has been observed throughout Carroll County since the late nineteenth century. Begun by Union Civil War veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic as a day to honor the Union dead, the holiday only later became a day to recognize all American war dead. As early as the mid-1880's, Westminster residents were also decorating the graves of Confederate soldiers, a credit to the Union veterans who organized the event. A description of the 1901 observances appeared in the June 1 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper under the headline of "Memorial Day in Carroll":

"Memorial Day was observed in nearly all the localities in this county where there are graves of deceased soldiers. In some cases exercises were deferred to a later date. In this city the exercises were conducted under the supervision of Burns Post, G. A. R. [Grand Army of the Republic], and consisted of singing by a select choir; prayer by Rev. C. S. Slagle; reading of Lincoln's Gettysburg address, with explanatory remarks, by Dr. Charles Billingslea; a recitation by Master George Stoner, and an address by W. L. W. Seabrook. In the absence of the commander, Mr. George C. Crass presided. An original hymn, written by Miss Mary B. Shellman, was among the selections sung by the choir. The hymn will be found on the first page of the SENTINEL this week.

At Deer Park a delegation of Burns Post had charge of the exercises, and an address was delivered by Rev. C. J. Burdette. The remains of Sergeant Charles Hampton Smith, who was the first American soldier who fell in Cuba during the war with Spain, are interred in the Deer Park Burial Ground and a wreath of galax leaves and a flag sent by the Legion of Loyal Women of Washington, D.C., through Miss Mary B. Shellman, of this city, were placed upon his grave.

At Taneytown there was a parade of military, benevolent and patriotic orders and school children; prayer, by Rev. A. B. Mower; addresses, by Rev. B. J. Lennon and Rev. James Cattanach; vocal and instrumental music. The benediction was pronounced by Rev. A. Bateman, Ph. D. Mr. Thos. D. Thomson presided at the meeting where the exercises were held. A very large crowd was in attendance.

At Winfield, as is usual on such occasions at that place, thousands of people assembled to participate in the exercises and hear the addresses. It is estimated that six thousand people were present. Pickett Post, G. A. R., had charge of the services which consisted first of a procession of the post, the Women's Relief Corps and camps of the P. O. S. of A. [Patriotic Order Sons of America], to Ebenezer Cemetery, where the soldiers' graves were decorated at 9 A.M. The procession then returned to the grove at Round Top, near the village, where the day was given up to vocal and instrumental music, the reading of Lincoln's Gettysburg address by A. M. Geisbert, of Baltimore, and orations by Col. Wm. A. McKellip, of this city; James H. Marine, of Baltimore; Rev. Dr. Thomas H. Lewis, president of Western Maryland College; ex-Mayor F. C. Latrobe, of Baltimore, and Prof. Coblentz, of Annapolis. Prof. George W. Hess directed the vocal music, and the Westminster Concert Band delighted the multitudes with its finely rendered selections.

At Uniontown a band of children assembled at the residence of Miss Sallie E. Weaver and marched to the cemetery, carrying flowers with which they decorated the soldiers' graves. Prayer was offered in the cemetery by Rev. George Bowersox, of the Church of God.

Wherever the day was observed in this county all soldier's graves were profusely decorated with flowers."

The June 8 issue of the same newspaper carried a story about the observance in Hampstead: "Memorial services for the deceased soldiers of the Union interred at Hampstead, were held in the M. E. Church at that place on Sunday last, under the supervision of Burns Post, G. A. R., of this city. The veterans assembled at the residence of Capt. Thomas J. Hunt and, under his command, marched to the church, where the church choir sang several appropriate selections, Mr. George C. Prechtel read Lincoln's Gettysburg address, Miss Rosa Royston read some interesting memorial statistics and Rev. D. M. Browning, pastor of the church, delivered an eloquent memorial address. The members of the post and citizens then proceeded to the cemetery, where the soldiers' graves were decorated with flowers. During this part of the program the choir sang 'Nearer My God, To Thee.' The attendance was very large and many persons were unable to get into the church."

Although some changes in the way the holiday is observed have occurred over the last century, the 1901 community events sound surprisingly familiar.



*Civil War veterans of Pickett Post, Grand Army of the Republic organized the 1901 Memorial Day services in Winfield. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Laura V. Kennell, 1941.*