The selfless labor of accounting for all the county's war dead – October 29, 2023

Veterans Day was first observed in Alabama in 1947, the vision of Raymond Weeks, a WW II veteran. After the war ended in 1945, he proposed that Armistice Day, which honored those killed in WW I, be expanded to honor veterans of all wars. Weeks led a delegation to Gen. Dwight Eisenhower to promote a National Veterans Day and in 1954 President Eisenhower signed legislation creating Veterans Day.

Memorial Day was established around 1868 and originally called Decoration Day. It was a day for Civil War veterans, families, and civilians to decorate the graves in honor of servicemen from that war, but it took over 100 years before it became a federal holiday in 1971. Now it honors all veterans who have died. The tradition of Westminster's parade and ceremony began in 1868 when Mary Bostwick Shellman followed General John A. Logan's May 5, 1868, General Order No. 11 to adorn the graves of Union soldiers with flowers.

These two holidays were always more than a day off or a three-day weekend. I worked with countless military over 37 years in the federal government and directly supported troops in the field. I have been in the Westminster Memorial Day parade and placed many flags on veterans' graves. But over the last few years while doing research at the Historical Society of Carroll County (HSCC), the meaning of these holidays has become even clearer. At least 276 men and women from Carroll County have died in service to their country. There are memorials to those who were killed in WW I, WW II, Korea, and Vietnam.

Unfortunately, those memorials are incomplete. Some names were missed. There are no memorials for the Spanish American War, Civil War, Gulf War, and War on Terror. I felt there should be a single memorial naming all who have fallen. There is now a poster at HSCC, 210 East Main Street in Westminster with every name I could find, but it is just a first draft. Surely there are many more names to be added.

This research journey was not planned. It started out when I joined HSCC and the Society needed a docent to interpret the WW II traveling trunk for school children or other groups. I have always been interested in WW II, so I volunteered. One item in the trunk was a War Department list of 88 men from Carroll County who died in WW II. I was curious about their stories and began researching. I soon came across a list of Gold Star Men of Carroll with 78 names, some which the War Department did not include. At that point I knew I had work to do.

The WW II Memorial on Emerald Hill contains 124 names ─ all those on the other two lists. That still left me wondering if there might be more. I was not the first person to ask that question. Gary Jestes has been researching Carroll County's war dead for many years. He has scanned local newspapers for obituaries and placed three large binders of them in the HSCC Research Library. His effort has uncovered 14 more obituaries for men from Carroll County who died in WW II not currently on the memorial.

Jestes's research also includes obituaries for veterans killed in WW I, Korea, and Vietnam that are not on those memorials. It is possible that there are more. His research was also very useful for identifying those killed in the Gulf War and the War on Terror. He discovered two deaths in the former and eight in the latter.

Finding deaths during the Civil War was very challenging. Given how much local Civil War history there is, I was a bit surprised there is not a memorial for our Civil War dead despite frequent Civil War

re-enactments, a yearly Corbit's Charge event, and the proximity of the Gettysburg and Antietam battlefields. Documentation of local Civil War casualties is scarce. There is also very little information on how many Carroll County men served in either the Union or Confederate forces. Fold3, an online source of military information, has millions of Civil War records. This is impressive, but it is difficult to identify where a soldier came from. Many who were killed during the war were buried where they died, so local cemetery records don't include them.

Searching papers from the Civil War period didn't help much. The best source I could find was a Carroll County Times article by Jay Graybeal about Civil War casualties from Taneytown. He cited an article in that town's Carroll Record newspaper published in the 1890s which included details of those who served and those who died. Taneytown had about 500 voters and 75 (15%) joined the Union Army. Fifteen were killed. Carroll County had about 6,000 voters. I assumed that Taneytown supported the Union more than towns in the southern and eastern parts of the county. Guessing that the countywide Union support was 10% gives an estimate of 600 men from Carroll County who joined the Union Army. The casualty rate for the Civil War was 20% (death from all causes including disease). That means about 120 men from Carroll County likely died supporting the Union. I found only 36. Whatever the exact number is, there are likely many more men from Carroll County who died in the Union Army.

Evidence of Carroll County men who enlisted in the Confederate Army is very scarce. The Taneytown history article identified just two. To join the Confederate Army, you needed to cross the Potomac River without being caught. Many did. Marylanders in the Confederacy, a book by local author Daniel Hartzler, contains thousands of names, but only about half included their residence. Of those that did, there were 78 from Carroll County. If a similar number were not listed as residents, our county likely contributed about 150 men to the Confederate cause. Using the 20% casualty rate means Carroll County lost about 30 men. I looked up the 78 names in Hartzler's book and found three who did not survive the war. I could not determine when or where most of the others died and couldn't find them in census records after the war. So . . . there are likely many more.

There is one other group from Carroll County that served in the Civil War, African Americans. Mary Ann Ashcraft has identified approximately 125 who served in the United States Colored Troops. Some were free and some enslaved before the war. If enslaved, their owner had to free them, swear allegiance to the Union, and then was paid for allowing them to join the Union Army. A 20% casualty rate would indicate about 25 killed. I found only 14.

Searching various sources, I could identify only three soldiers from Carroll who died during the Spanish American War. There were probably a few men who fought in the Mexican War as well.

Where do we go from here? Unfortunately, the list of those Carroll County men who died during various wars will never be complete. I have already found a name to add to the list on the poster at HSCC made this year. I have also discovered more research leads. It would be great to make the list as accurate as possible. Please stop in the Historical Society and let us know of any names that should be added. All men and women from Carroll County who have died in war deserve to be recognized.

Guest columnist Austin Hewitt is a research library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.

Image 1: Submitted photo <u>Caption</u>: *Current list of Carroll County men and women who perished in all wars from the Civil War to the present compiled by Austin Hewitt. On display at the Historical Society of Carroll County, 210 East Main Street, Westminster.*

Image 2: Submitted photo <u>Caption</u>: *Memorial for Carroll County men and women who fought in World Wars I and II. Erected by the City of Westminster for the Carroll County Chapter of the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.*

Image 3: Submitted photo <u>Caption</u>: *Memorial for men and women from the Frizzellburg and Uniontown area who served in World War II. Located in Frizzellburg off Rte. 140. Of those listed, three died during the war.*