

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Humorous Anecdotes from the Carroll Record Histories"

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by Jay A. Graybeal

Throughout the nineteenth century, humorous stories about practical jokes, human foibles and tall tales were frequently published in local newspapers. Most of the writers who submitted the histories of their communities to the Taneytown Carroll Record in the 1890s included favorite local humor stories. These stories remind us that our earlier citizens had a sense of humor. Frank J. Devilbiss included several humorous stories in his history of New Windsor.

Visitors continued to be attracted to Sulphur Springs in numbers, and soon more hotels and boarding houses sprang into existence. Early in the present century, a hotel was opened in the building now occupied by Marshall Lambert, and was subsequently conducted by one Dick Burgess, a famous character of the time. He had the reputation of being a great winner at cards, but his methods were not always commendable. Once upon a time, a peddler, with a pack of large dimensions strapped to his back, stopped for a night's lodging at Dick's hotel. The peddler not knowing his landlord or his propensities, challenged him for a game. Dick finally consented to play, providing his guest would agree to instruct him as the play advanced, to the mysteries of the art. The innocent peddler willingly agreed, supposing he had now a lamb, ready for market. The game moved along lively and interesting, Dick losing every one -- interesting to Dick because he could laugh in his sleeves -- and interesting to the peddler, because Dick's spirits were sustained, and not depressed. Finally they agreed to put up stakes, then Dick commenced to win. They played until the peddler lost every cent, and he then commenced to bank on his pack for stakes. Towels, shawls, clothing, handkerchiefs, etc., were put up and swept away by the irrepressible Dick, until the pack was exhausted, and the poor peddler bankrupt. Then he began to realize his losses, and rising excitedly from the table said, "Burgess, you learn faster than any D--- man I ever saw." Poor Dick is gone, and even his tombstones do not speak of those qualities for which some loved him.

After Mr. Atlee discontinued his boarding place, Thomas Bartholow opened a hotel in the old Conoway property, recently purchased by Mr. Louis H. Dielman, and as quickly torn down. Thomas had the patronage of many lively denizens in his ranch. He had a particular fascination for dominoes, and would frequently encourage the game in his house but seemed to be religiously opposed to card playing. He would conscientiously fight, or reverently eject patrons, who would attempt to play cards. Very frequently, a citizen named Thomas Poole kept bar for Bartholow. An unenviable character named Moses Cullison frequented the ranch, and upon one particular occasion, he imbibed too freely and became offensive to Poole. They wrangled until matters became desperate, and finally, in order to get rid of Cullison, Poole challenged him to fight a duel. No quicker was the challenge given than it was accepted. By this time, quite a crowd congregated on the street. Poole and Cullison next selected their seconds, into whose hands two rifles were given to be loaded and submitted to the duelists at their call. The ground was measured and staked, and the antagonists took their respective positions without fear or trembling. The seconds delivered the deadly weapons, time was called, and order given. "Fire." Bang! bang! rang out the shots, and Thomas Poole fell automatically to the ground with a heavy thud, and without a struggle. The crowd stood steadfast and speechless. You could have heard the hair growing upon your head. Cullison realizing his crime (?) dashed his gun to the earth, and tore through the crowd with the rapidity of an arrow. The crowd followed him, captured him and had him well bound. Upon his return to the hotel, he wept bitterly, and begged that "after his is taken from the gallows, that his body be decently buried under a certain familiar old chestnut tree, from whose branches, in his youthful days,

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he threshed down the prickly burrs and rifled their contents." That tree stood on a farm in Baltimore county. The joke was carried far enough, so finally Cullison was made promise solemnly, that when liberated, he would never again make a disturbance in New Windsor. He left the town, and his face was never seen again.

J. H. Koons wrote about an Ante Bellum "slave catcher" in his history of York Road.

The third of these homesteads is situated on a bluff overlooking the other two. In acreage it does not compare with them, containing as it now does less than ten acres. It made its first bow to the public in about 1842, when its monarch, Jacob Hape, erected a distillery in a marsh on the east end of it, and also passed as a "slave Ketcher," While many of the noted marksmen of that day (who hunted the frisky squirrel that spooked among the branches of the lofty oaks and hickory's that lined the banks of Little Pipe Creek) partook of his fiery refreshments, yet the enterprise failed after a struggle of some five or six years.

During the years he spent as a distiller, he also watched the roads for runaway negroes. The archives of that day fail to record a reward that he ever obtained or any negro that he apprehended, but they do record the following joke played upon him by Joshua E. Harper, a tanner in the employ of Mr. John Cover. A report was put in circulation, and it reached the ears of Jacob Hape, that a negro had run away from Dr. Schely of Frederick, and that a reward of \$200 would be given for his capture and return. He watched the roads closely by day and night for the runaway. Accordingly one very cold Sunday afternoon in January, Mr. Harper got himself up in true negro style and passed along the road near Hape's distillery acting as suspiciously as possible. It was but a short time until Hape was after him giving him a lively chase. Harper, who was of light weight and very fleet, soon distanced his pursuer, who tipped the beam at 220 pounds. Harper turned and ran in the direction of the creek and when he got out of his pursuer's sight he removed his disguise and came up to Mr. Hape, and offered his services to assist in hunting the negro. The offer was accepted and in a short time he beckoned to Hape and pointed to a large tree on the opposite bank of the creek. In the twinkling of an eye, Hape had plunged into at least four feet of ice cold water, waded the creek to the tree, but found no negro there. This joke was the burden of his life and he finally folded his tent and went away.

These stories and others will be included in the Historical Society's new publication entitled The Carroll Record Histories of Northwestern Carroll County Communities due out this fall.

Photo Caption: [None]