

"New Years Day Observances in 1901"
Carroll County Times article for 31 December 2000
by Jay A. Graybeal

New Year's Day 1901 was observed throughout Carroll County as the beginning of a new century. The January 5th issue of the American Sentinel included descriptions of events from several of Carroll's communities:

Westminster Century Observances

"While there was no lack of interest in this locality in relation to the departure of the old and the beginning of the new century there was no concerted public observance of the event. It was, however, observed in many ways. As the evening of the closing day of the passing century approached the usual custom of "shooting out" the old year with the deafening noise of explosives began and continued spasmodically till midnight. At that hour the bells in public buildings were rung and the Westminster Drum Corps began marching through the streets to the sound of its own stirring music. Two hours after the new century began most of the noises had ceased and the people had generally retired. Among the observances of the closing hours of the old century were religious exercises at several of the churches. At the Methodist Protestant and Centenary Methodist Episcopal Churches "Watch Night" services of an interesting character were held during the last hour. At Grace Lutheran church a more elaborate service was held, beginning at 10 o'clock. A specially arranged program was rendered, in which many persons in the audience participated, and great interest was manifested. The program was as follows:

10 to 10.20, song service; 10.20 to 10.40, Praise for the Century past; 10.40 to 11, Open Parliament, "The best thing in my Christian experience;" 11 to 11.20, Purpose, (1) Have a Purpose, (2) God's Purpose—a scripture reading, (3) Our Purpose – scripture readings; cornet solo, Arthur Stonesifer; 11.20 to 11.40, Prayer for a Great Awakening; 11.40 to 12, Consecration for the Century to come; Singing, kneeling, "Take my life," &c.

Taneytown

The midnight services held on New Year's at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, in obedience to the privilege granted by the Holy Father, Leo XIII, were appreciated to a great measure not only by the members of the congregation, but by a large number of members of other denominations who were present on this solemn occasion. The church was handsomely decorated with flowers, wreaths and evergreens, while the altars were resplendent with dazzling lights. The music at the solemn High Mass was well rendered, under the direction of Miss Gertrude Gardner, the organist of St. Joseph's Church.

Manchester

We are now writing 1901. This great event was observed with especial interest by our people. The day was all that could have been desired, and by nightfall our streets were alive with crowds bent on having a memorable time, while for several hours the firing of explosives became so general that there was almost a continuous roar. Miss Fannie G. Ross had arranged to entertain about 60 of her friends at

watch meeting and a pleasant time was spent in social chat, music and singing until 7:30, when refreshments were served. At 10 o'clock the exercises in the Lutheran church commenced and at 11:30 those in the Reformed Church, both of which were well attended. At midnight the alternate tolling of the bells on the respective churches announced the end of the 19th century and was followed by the ringing of the bells announcing the advent of the 20th century. All was observed with solemnity and reverence in the congregations, which were then dismissed with the benedictions. When the pavement was reached all eyes were fixed upon the moon, which was in a halo of splendor, showing the colors of the rainbow, as if the earth's satellite was thus adding its testimony to the great event. Masquerading was made quite general during the week and a great deal of fun was had, not only by the young but many of the older folks.

Patapsco

The holidays were passed very quietly in this vicinity. The members of Union Bethel held a watch meeting Monday night and rang the bell as the old year and century came to an end and the new year and century began

.Union Mills

At midnight, on New Year's eve, the resonant tones of the two large church bells of Silver run announced, far and wide, throughout the country the birth of the new century."

Local residents also took time to celebrate at home with family and the newspaper reported on one such function:

Jordan's Retreat

"On new Year's day another pleasing event of the season was a grand social at the hospitable home of Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Kauffman. At eleven o'clock the friends began to arrive and soon the sitting room and parlor were filled with the sound of chatting and laughing. All were pleased to meet each other. At one o'clock all were invited to the dining room, where a table was loaded with turkey and all the good things of the season, to which all did ample justice."

As noted several of the articles, local residents correctly considered January 1, 1901 as the first day of twentieth century. In closing I want to wish you Happy New Year from the Board and Staff of the Historical Society of Carroll County.

Photo caption: Mrs. M. A. McGirr of Westminster received this New Year's Day post card wishing her "A bright and happy New Year" in 1912. Historical Society of Carroll County Postcard Collection.