

Carroll Yesteryears

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Cornish Miner Had Successful Life After Emigrating to Carroll

By Mary Ann Ashcraft

Thanks to many years of research by local geologist and mining expert Johnny Johnsson, we know a great deal about mines and mining in Carroll County. We also know the stories of some of the miners, particularly an immigrant from County Cornwall, England, named Thomas Paynter.

Johnsson wrote, "Thomas Paynter was probably the most notable Cornish mining captain employed in Carroll County's copper mines. He developed a solid reputation as a Geologist, Geological Surveyor, and Practical Miner, as he advertised himself in the 1877 Atlas of Carroll County."

Immigrants' stories are frequently inspirational and Paynter's is no exception. We don't know the precise circumstances that led the 30-year-old to board a ship bound for New York in the spring of 1849, although we do know that Cornish mining was in decline by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thousands of miners were emigrating to find work in copper and iron-rich areas around the globe. More than likely Paynter had spent half his life working in mines by the time he sailed from Cornwall. He was leaving a hard life, but one he knew very well. His experience guaranteed he could find a job in America. Other miners on the same boat must have been equally optimistic.

By 1850 Paynter was serving as the mining captain at Finksburg's Patapsco Copper Mines although he didn't have a place of his own and was boarding with a farmer in nearby Reisterstown. It didn't take long before he found a wife, Ann Sidney Haines, and started a family. Between 1850 and 1860 he spent a short period working at a mine in Frederick County, then was hired as captain at the Springfield Copper Mine in Sykesville. The 1860 Carroll County census showed the couple with four children and a place of their own in the Freedom District.

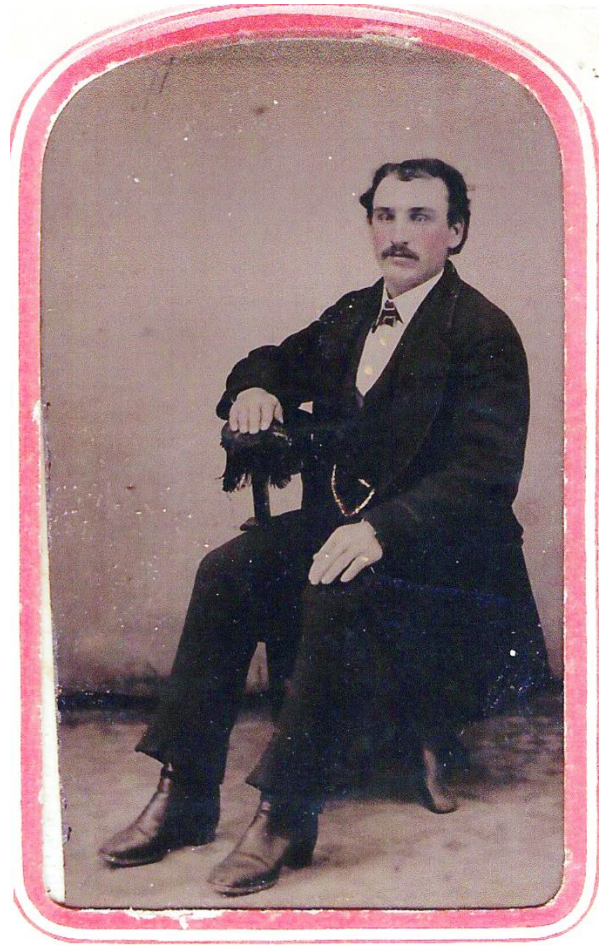
Paynter's superintendence of the profitable Springfield mine from 1856 until its close in 1864 and his expertise in evaluating other mining operations brought recognition and financial success. Mine owners consulted him for years after he retired from mining in 1864, bought 120 acres west of Eldersburg, and began a new life as a farmer.

In 1865 he successfully ran for a 2-year term as Carroll County Commissioner. He became involved in organizations such as the Masons. A younger brother, William, arrived from Cornwall and settled nearby. When Paynter won the bid for operating the postal route between Sykesville and Franklinville (near Taylorsville), he employed his brother as the mail carrier.

The 1870 census showed Thomas Paynter as age 52 with nine children, a wife, and real estate worth \$7,200. He had already achieved more than the average Cornish immigrant in the U.S., more than miners back home in Cornwall, and would live another 11 years, dying in 1881 at age 63.

While vacationing recently in Cornwall, my daughter and I drove to the Perranzabuloe Parish area not far from the west coast where Paynter and his parents lived in the 1840s. We searched for the family name on headstones in an old cemetery but left disappointed. I intend to try again.

*Mary Ann Ashcraft is a library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.*



*Image credit: Courtesy of Kathleen Paynter*

*Image caption: Thomas Paynter, probably photographed in the 1860s, wears the boots and long waistcoat that would have been typical attire for a successful mining captain and gentleman.*