

"Historical Society Meeting in January 1946"

Carroll County Times article for 7 January 7

By Jay A. Graybeal

The end of World War II allowed local community organizations, including the Historical Society of Carroll County, to return to peacetime activities. The January 4, 1946 issue of the Democratic Advocate had an article about one of the Society's early meetings in the Shellman House:

"The meeting of the Historical Society of Carroll County, Inc. held at the home of the society, 206 E. Main Street, on Thursday evening January 3rd proved a most interesting one. A cheery fire was burning in the fireplace of the living room and the whole house was warm and comfortable due to the excellent heating system.

Dr. Arthur G. Tracey, president of the society, introduced the directors present who were elected at the November meeting: Dr. Theodore M. Whitfield, Westminster: Melvin G. Miller, Hampstead, and Arthur W. Myers, Woolery's, Miss Amelia Annan who was elected a vice-president last fall was also present. The minutes of previous meetings were read by the secretary, Miss Edith Rill, and Paul F. Kuhns, treasurer gave his report. Mr. Kuhns read the report of Mrs. Helen Ditman Harbaugh who has been serving as hostess at the home for the past two months. During that time Mrs. Harbaugh has served six hundred and seventy-five people, the occasions being dinners, receptions, teas and parties. A sizable fund was turned over to the treasurer. This department is under the direction of the House Committee which is composed of Mrs. F. Donald Shriver, Mrs. Edgar G. Barnes and Mrs. Joseph L. Mathias. Col. T. K. Harrison gave a report of the Emergency Committee which looked after the repairing done to the house last fall and which has greatly helped in the comfort of the house. Special praise was accorded Mrs. Harbaugh for her splendid report and for the graciousness with which she has served a hostess.

Ms. Lillian Shipley reported that one hundred and fifteen members have joined the society in the past year. One is a life member. It was proposed that a special drive be made for life members, the fund to be used in liquidating the debt on the house. It was decided that the society hold a directors' meeting the first Thursday in each quarter.

Dr. Tracey outlined the plans for the society for 1946 and they include plans to continue the district organizations as started last year. In this set-up, the director for each district has a chairman for membership, finance, publicity and history. These chairmen will make a drive for membership and also have some event to raise money with three big events in Westminster, Hampstead and Taneytown.

Taneytown has already set the 18th of January as that day for their project, which will be a tea at the Municipal Building in Taneytown when there will be an exhibit of teapots. Westminster has named a committee of Mrs. Paul M. Wimert, Mrs. Harry M. Kimmey and Mrs. G. Norman Hunter to arrange for the sponsorship of an operetta.

After the business meeting, Mr. Tracey introduced Dr. Whitfield, head of the Department of History at Western Maryland College who gave a most informative talk, his topic being: "The Relation of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in the Civil War." This was particularly fitting, as this railroad runs through the lower part of Carroll county and reports at the Mt. Airy Historical meeting told of the quartering of soldiers in one of the churches in that district as they guarded the road.

Dr. Whitfield drew a graphic picture of the importance of this road in bringing raw materials and coal as well as transporting troops. Both the North and the South tried to control the road and John W. Garrett, its president, received threats from each side. An interesting incident was the effort of the northern engineers to take the troops across the Potomac river when the southern soldiers burned the bridge at Harpers Ferry.

Mrs. Harbaugh served refreshments in the dining room at the close of the address. Mrs. Tracey and Miss Annan poured."

The article provides a glimpse of how an all-volunteer community organization functioned in its formative years. The evening's guest speaker, Dr. Whitfield, remained active in the Society for many years. He served as Treasurer from 1947-1949 and as President from 1956-1959. During the Civil War Centennial, he chaired the Theme-History-Memorials Committee of the Maryland Civil War Centennial Commission. His group produced an informative book, *Maryland Remembers*, that identified historical sites and significant events throughout the state. Dr. Whitfield also generously donated his personal papers, related to his service with the Centennial Commission, to the Historical Society.



Dr. Theodore M. Whitfield, left, (photographed with Mr. L. C. Card of the C. & P. Telephone Co. in July 1959) spoke at a January 1946 Historical Society meeting about the importance of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad during the Civil War. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of John Byers, 1959.