

"The George Washington Bicentennial in Hampstead"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

The Bicentennial of the birth of our first president was widely celebrated throughout the United States. Taneytown was chosen for the Carroll County event residents because of Washington's overnight stay in that town. The President recorded a June 30, 1791 entry in his diary, "I set off this morning a little after 4 o'clock in the prosecution of my journey to Philadelphia--lodged in Tawneytown. Tawneytown is but a small place with only the street through which the road passes, the buildings are principally of wood." Washington's visit was not forgotten when Taneytown celebrated its centennial in 1954. A historical pageant entitled, "Here on the Monocacy" by Dorothy Elderdice, included a scene commemorating the visit.

Other communities in Carroll, however, sponsored similar events, including one in Hampstead attended by 10,000 people according to a newspaper article:

10,000 Attend Bicentennial

Celebration at Hampstead

Street Parade, Pageant And Addresses Feature Characteristic Episodes

In The Life of George Washington

"Hampstead Md., May 7-The elaborate George Washington Bicentennial celebration and parade held here today under the sponsorship of the fire department, drew nearly 10,000 spectators. Business houses and private residences were decorated in flags and bunting and many women and girls appeared in becoming ensembles of red, white and blue.

There were thirty-two units in the parade which included six bands, a number of historical floats portraying early Colonial life, and important events in the life of George Washington, fraternal organizations of men and women, and ten fire companies.

Washington, as he appeared on horseback, led the parade, escorting a reception float from which women distributed programs. Later he was depicted in church, in Sunday-school at Pohick Church, as a surveyor, as a blacksmith, in the surrender of Cornwallis at Valley forge, before the portrait painter, and perhaps the most sentimental scene was the lad Washington standing beside the cherry tree, which had fallen as the results of his hatchet.

Other historical floats were: "Betsy Ross, of 1776," and the Declaration of Independence. School children in costume represented three groups of colonial days. Following the parade, a program was held on the high school lawn, with amplifiers placed so all might hear. the invocation was given by the Rev. F. H. Schrader, pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Hampstead. The singing of "America," followed, and the assembly recited the "Pledge to the flag." The address of welcome was given by John M. Shank, secretary of the Bicentennial committee for the Mayor and general chairman, Dr. E. M. Bush, Prof. Claude Lowell, of the Hampstead High School gave a reading, "Mary Ball Washington, mother of Washington."

The principal address was delivered by Representative William P. Cole, Jr., of the Second Congressional district of Maryland. He stressed the need at this time for such leadership as George Washington manifested in his day.

American's creed was repeated in unison, followed by the singing of the "Star Spangled Banner," and the benediction by the Rev. W. I. Randle, pastor of St. John's Methodist Episcopal Church.

A historical pageant, "Washington and Young America," portraying the important events in the life of the first President, was presented by a cast of fifty characters in Colonial costumes tonight. Several thousand persons witnessed the pageant presented by school children and residents of the community.

Local interest in historical events such as the 1932 Washington Bicentennial and the 1937 Carroll County Centennial were contributing factors in the founding of the Historical Society of Carroll County in 1939. Photo caption: The back cover of the souvenir booklet of the Carroll County George Washington Bicentennial featured the President's coat of arms. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.