

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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Choral Society has enriched life for two decades
By Joe Getty

Written historians of local community organizations in Carroll County demonstrate their vitality to the cultural and social life of Carroll County. This has become readily apparent as the Historical Society compiles research to document organizational, business and family histories for a 1993 historical supplement being published as part of the Legacy Campaign.

An example of a vital community organization is the Carroll County Choral Society, which has enriched the cultural life of Carroll County since 1970. In addition to the varied contributions of their musical performances, the proceeds of their concerts have benefited numerous nonprofit organizations.

This year's concert in commemoration of the 130th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg will benefit the Historical Society of Carroll County. This "Festival of Freedom" concert of historical music will feature a special guest performance by troubadour John DuRant. This event will be held on April 26 and 27 at Westminster High School. The concert will be directed by Herbert J. Sell with Beverly Wells as accompanist.

A brief history of this organization was compiled last year by John W. McGrew. The Carroll County Choral Society was founded by Evelyn Maus, Arlene Myers, Grace Wine and Betty Wise. The founders had participated with the Westminster Community Chorus, which present concerts from 1947 to 1955. They recruited Herbert J. Sell as music director and advertised the formation of this new county-wide musical organization. Seventy-five people turned out for the first rehearsal.

The tradition of presenting two concerts a year began during the initial season of the Choral Society. The first concert was titled "Christmas" and was presented on December 8, 1970, at the old Westminster High School auditorium. "Easter" was the first spring concert and was held on a snowy April 6, 1971.

As with many Carroll County organizations, their success has resulted from the talents of dedicated leadership and many willing volunteers. Neal Hering served as the first president of the Carroll County Choral Society. During his tenure from 1970 to 1974, the society became established and also initiated a series of televised concerts on a Baltimore television station.

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From 1975 to 1989, John McGrew served as president during years when the Choral Society not only continued its regular programs and television shows but also expanded programming to do invited performances throughout the county. For example, the Bicentennial concerts in 1976 were given in a number of towns including Mt. Airy, Taneytown and Union Bridge. In addition, the Choral Society was selected to officially represent the state of Maryland at the Philadelphia "A Salute to the States" celebration in the Bicentennial Pavilion at Independence Hall on July 31, 1976.

Several years after the televised programs with a Baltimore station were discontinued, the Choral Society arranged to have concerts televised in Carroll County through Prestige Cablevision. Since 1989, Ronnie Bohn has lead the Choral Society as president.

The success of the Choral Society through its many community contributions and organizational accomplishments were summarized by Mr. McGrew last year:

"The Carroll County Choral Society is very proud of its many accomplishments, notably the entertainment presented to the community, the many groups and organizations that were recipients of monetary donations, and their own personal sheer joy and sense of pleasure of having been a part of a group that presented 125 performances that they hope have given enlightenment and much happiness to their audiences through music, the universal communicator."

Directed by Herb Sell, the Carroll County Choral Society concert will be held at Westminster High School on Monday, April 26 and Tuesday, April 27, beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$5.00 adults and \$3.00 children. For ticket information, call the Historical Society at 848-6494.