

"Defense Day Celebration, 1924"

Carroll County Times Article for 10 September 2000

By Jay A. Graybeal

Carroll Countians joined with communities throughout the nation in celebrating Defense Day on September 12, 1924. In addition to the typical martial demonstrations, local residents added baby and beauty contests. An article in the September 19th issue of the Democratic Advocate newspaper described the event and noted that the beauty contest was cancelled do to a lack of entrants:

"Defense Day Celebration –

Fine Parade and Large Crowd -- The Infant of Robert Leese Wins First Prize in Baby Contest -- No Beauty Contest –

With the balance of the Nation Westminster Friday afternoon and evening observed Defense Day with a parade and other festivities. A gathering of several thousand witnessed the affair.

The one important feature on the program was the beauty contest but our timid beauties and we have many of them too, would not enter the contest for the \$25 prize. Of course they did not need the money. Our citizens wanted to see who was our best looking lady and the judgment of Wade H. D. Warfield, William Anders and Blaine Murray as good pickers.

The program opened with a street parade which was formed on Belle Grove Square or Park and moved off from that point at 2 o'clock headed by Captain John N. Weigle, chief of police, riding in a car. Following was the committee of arrangements and individual citizens and those who took part in the program with the Westminster Band. Other representations in the parade comprised delegations from the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, school children of the city, Westminster, Lineboro, Hampstead and Manchester Fire Department, enlisted Defense Day men. Also the Western Maryland College Football squad, business floats and beautifully decorated automobiles from the various garages and individuals were in line. Several lodges were also represented. The parade moved East on Green street to Center and thence to East Main and from there to Hoffa field where the remainder of the program was carried out.

The ceremonies at Hoffa field opened with the singing of 'America' accompanied by the Westminster Band. Dr. Albert Norman Ward, president of Western Maryland College offered prayer. Mr. James Pearre Wantz presided over the gathering and introduced Col. E. A. Kreger, who has been in the United States Army since 1898. Colonel Kreger spoke on 'Preparedness' pointing out how weak the country's defense was when the World War started, and what we suffered through lack of preparedness.

The first prize in the baby contest was awarded to the young son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Leese, East Main street, which was \$15. Others receiving prize of \$1.00 each for the entries of their babies were Mrs. Levi Wagner, Mrs. Clifton Null, Mrs. J. L. Nichols, Mrs. H. C. Reaver, Mrs. Russell Conover, Mrs. Guy Holbrook, Mrs. Earl E. Schaeffer, Mrs. Oliver Myers, Mrs. Oliver Caple, Mrs. Arthur Dull, Mrs. John Sherfey, Mrs. Tolley Spencer, Mrs. Charles Etzler, Mrs. Uriah Fritz, Mrs. Reuben Pool, Mrs. Evan Zepp, Mrs. John Gessell and Mrs. Charles Seipp. The judges in the contest were Dr. G. Lewis Wetzel, Union Mills, and Miss Gibson.

The members of Company H Machine Gun Company entertained the crowd with demonstrations in machine gun firing. The prize was based on quickness in setting up guns and getting them in firing action

and dismounting. Four machine guns were set up on the southern terrace of Hoffa field with four targets to the northeast terrace. The shooting was decidedly accurate. Tracer bullets were used in the final shooting event. One target was a five gallon can of gasoline which was struck by the second shot. The can flamed in a mass when struck by the bullet. The prize for this contest was awarded to squad No. 1 composed of eight men under Corporal Herbert Brown, Captain Herbert D. Gibson, of the United States Army and commander of the R.O.T.C. at Western Maryland College was judge in this event.

Company H paraded and maneuvered on the field under the command of Captain John H. Magin and Lieut. Hugh L. Elderdice. The boy Scouts patrolled the line of parade and assisted in handling the crowds on Hoffa field.

The judges, Walter H. Davis, Ober S. Herr and C. Russell Schaeffer, on decorations, floats, etc., made the following awards: Westminster Band, first prize, \$20, Wm. F. Myers' Band, second prize, \$10, Best Passenger Auto, Lester Brown, \$10, Business Float, Richard Bros., \$15, Decorated Dwelling, J. P. Wantz, \$15, Decorated Business Place, W. H. Davis, \$15, Squad No. 1, Company H, \$15, Fire Company, Hampstead, first, \$10, Manchester, second, \$5, Lineboro, third, \$5.

A feature of the parade was a truck from William F. Myers' Sons meat packing plant, decorated in American flags and bunting and carrying a band of fifteen pieces, all employees of the firm. A trailer carried a black hog in a cage.

The program came to a close at night by a concert by the Westminster Band.

The committee in charge was James Pearre Wantz, William T. Mather, Jr., and Harry M. Kimmey. We congratulate these men on the successful celebration, as it was something new but they handled it well.

A large American flag on the residence of Ober S. Herr, Main and Bond streets, was made by Mr. Herr's mother when she was a resident of Manchester, during the year of the battle of Gettysburg. When the Confederate soldiers passed by her home the flag was taken down and buried in a potato patch. Later on when Mr. Herr knew of the approach of Union soldiers, the flag was again placed on display at her home. The flag contains 37 stars for the state at that time."

The article reveals that Carroll Countians of 1924 possessed patriotism, had pretty babies and attractive women with good sense not to participate in a beauty contest even for the tidy sum of \$25!

Photo caption: The members of the Western Maryland Reserve Officers Training Corps Battalion, photographed in May 1922, participated in Defense Day on September 12, 1924. Historical Society of Carroll County Collection, gift of Carl Twigg, 1995.