

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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Bands played into Carroll's history
by Joe Getty

The historical society will host its annual celebration of the founding of Carroll County on Sunday, January 19. This year is Carroll County's 155th anniversary and the event will include a ceremony to dedicate the Musical Heritage of Carroll County 1992 Calendar. There will also be an exhibit about Carroll County's musical heritage.

The public is invited to attend this event from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 East Main Street, Westminster. At 2 p.m., the county commissioners of Carroll County will issue a proclamation in honor of the historical traditions three community bands in the county: the Alesia Band, the City of Westminster Band, and the William F. Myers' Sons Band. There will also be a reception with musical entertainment.

The county's musical heritage is quite diverse. In today's culture, we frequently forget how music was performed in the era before modern electronics of radio, television, stereos, CDs and videotapes. Every small town and village had a band for musical performances at community events, church socials, festivals, parades and other activities. Listed below are a few references to the history of community bands in Carroll County.

"Gamber Items. The oyster supper given by the ladies of this vicinity for the benefit of the Mechanicsville Band was a decided success, considering that the weather was anything but favorable. The net proceeds were \$35. The members say they are very well satisfied, and we are requested to say to the ladies and gentlemen who took such an active part in the affair that the members of the Band return their most sincere thanks for their energetic work and also to the public generally for their liberal patronage. The Band discoursed excellent music for beginners suring the festival." – from the *Democratic Advocate*, January 2, 1892.

Union Bridge Brass Band. "November 12 – the meeting for the organization of a Brass Band in town was held in an old box car of Western Maryland Railroad on the side track just east of the present passenger station. Nelson Stonsifer was made president, N.H. Clemson, treasurer, and J. Hamilton Repp, secretary. This was the only meeting held under that organization and the matter lingered for some time when a permanent organization and band was formed. And on April 25th, 1867, the band played for the first time in its history upon the streets of Union Bridge." – from J.H. Repp Diary, 1865-69, Historical Society of Carroll County manuscript collection.

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"A New Orchestra Organized. A 'Skidoo Sting (?)' Orchestra of Westminster was organized last Monday night, and elected Mr. William F. Helm captain. After the organization the members decided to call at the residence of Mr. H. F. Cover, West Main street, early Tuesday evening to serenade Dr. D. Snider Babylon and bride, who just returned from a pleasant wedding tour. The orchestra was promptly on the job at 8 p.m., with a number of imported instruments (store boxes from Miller Bros. back yard, tin pans and bells from some junk pile) and rendered a number of their best selections. Among which were 'Get Your Money's Worth,' 'We Won't Leave Until Morning,' &c. Mr. Babylon standing the strain about as long as any human could, handed a musician a false note to play on which they gracefully made away with on a tie pile in the W.M.R.R. freight yard. At the end of the joyful evening, the orchestra departed to meet on next Wednesday evening. All musicians late in attendance will be made fast for thirty minutes, under orders by the captain." – from the Democratic Advocate, March 11, 1910.

"The Warfieldsburg Band, organized in 1855, consisted of 24 members. From 1885 to 1887, it was directed by John W. Arbaugh, succeeded by Prof. A.B. Morelock, 1887-1895, with John Kutz as assistant. During 1894-95, I also assisted until I left to join Sagwall's Medicine Show band as trombonist and later Wallace's Circus Band. That was a great day for the Warfieldsburg Band in 1888 when we were invited to play for Frank Brown's barbecue at Springfield. It was while he was campaigning for Grover Cleveland. About 5 o'clock in the morning we left Warfieldsburg in our old band wagon and it took us nigh on to four hours to reach Springfield. There we got out and rode in Frank Brown's coach behind eight gray horses. Well, I don't know for sure whether you would call it a coach, because it was as big as one of our modern school buses – looked like one, too...Four years later we played for Frank Brown's campaign for governor. We had a better band ten. He gave us \$400 to play for all meetings around Sykesville. We put \$200 of it in new uniforms. You could get 2 uniforms for that in those days. By order of Governor Brown, we got gray uniforms in honor of Gray's National Band. We wore cream colored shirts and red epaulettes." – Recollection of Noah S. Arbaugh as told to Dorothy Elderdice, Historical Society of Carroll County Newsletter.

Early History of the Westminster Municipal Band. "Many of the (Westminster) members went into the Maryland National Guard, under the heading of 'First Regimental Band of Maryland National Guard' and stationed at Westminster, the State armory located at the rear of Green Street. The First Regiment together with the Band was called to the Mexican Border in 1916, when the writer was in Panama, Canal Zone. However, members of the organization have written about this duty and it goes something like this – it became famous there on the Border and was under the Directorship of Bailey Morelock, and Drum Major Harry Kimmey. It was during this time that on the way to Texas, at some place in Ohio, the Director was handed a penned arrangement of march 'Old Grey Mare' and it became so popular on the border, it

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became sort of a theme song of the Band and was a morale builder not only to band members but others of the Army. This theme had not been forgotten by the present organization, and it brings untold pleasant recollections to those that have heard the march whenever played.” – from “A Narrative about the ‘Westminster Municipal Band’” by John L. Schweigart, July 23, 1970.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County

Photo caption: The Warfieldsburg Band played at Governor Frank Brown’s political events at Springfield, near Sykesville. The members are pictured in this 1890 photograph. Front row, from left: William Foutz, Edward Summers, Howard Bower, Vernon Barnes, John Buckingham and John Foutz. Second row: Harry Summers, Clayton Biggs, John W. Arbaugh, Prof. Bailey Morelock, Prof. Isaac Buckingham, Clarence Lantz, Noah Arbaugh, Charles Lantz. Photo donated by Noah Arbaugh.