

## *Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles*

Carroll's Yesteryears  
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Civil War reenactments are a growing pastime in U.S.  
By Jay Graybeal

The Civil War Centennial of 1961-1965 rekindled a nationwide interest in this most tragic of America's wars. Throughout the country individuals, communities, civic groups and governments prepared special projects in observance of the anniversary. Publications, exhibitions and reenactments brought the history of the war to a wide segment of the population.

My earliest experience with reenactments and Civil War history dates from the September 17, 1962 reenactment of the Battle of Antietam at Sharpsburg. I viewed the day's events from a unique vantage point, sitting with my grandfather in the dignitaries' grandstand. I was a few months shy of my sixth birthday.

My grandfather, the late Myron L. Bloom of St. James, Washington Co., was a member of the Executive Committee, Maryland State Civil War Centennial Commission. Throughout the day he filled my head with family stories. One relative was a turnpike tollgate keeper who attempted to charge the Confederates. Another visited the battlefield after the fighting and carried off a Confederate rifle-musket and an ammunition chest as souvenirs.

One of my strongest memories of the day relates to the man I sat next to in the grandstand. During a lull in the reenactment he asked me if my relatives had been "Rebels or Yankees." Not knowing the difference I blurted out one or the other. To this he exclaimed "Those are the fellows who shot off my leg!" at the same time pulling up his pants leg to expose an artificial leg. His wife chastised him for scaring the wits out of a child. He apologized and gave me a silver dime for my piggy bank. The rest of the day was spent watching the rows of infantrymen marching, charging and firing their muskets, the artillery firing cannon and the cavalry charging with drawn sabers.

The reenactment phenomenon had had a profound impact on the popularization of Civil War history. Throughout the country tens of thousands of reenactors perform for an even greater number of visitors. When done well the visitor learns a great deal about soldier life, including clothing and equipment, diet and food preparation, and the history of the military unit being portrayed by the reenactors.

Next weekend the Union Mills Homestead will host a group of reenactors as part of "Civil War Days at Union Mills." The event commemorates the 129<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encampment by the

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Union Army's Fifth Corps prior to the Battle of Gettysburg. For more information please call the Homestead 410-848-2288.

*Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County*

*Photo caption: Jay Graybeal, age 5, poses on September 17, 1962 after attending the reenactment of the Battle of Antietam at Sharpsburg.*