

Carroll Yesteryears  
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New Windsor Celebrates Milestone Birthday  
By Frank J. Batavick

Try wrapping your mouth around “quasquibicentennial.” That’s a \$225 word for, well, a 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and that’s what New Windsor celebrates this year. In 1797, real estate entrepreneur and farmer, Isaac Atlee, arrived in the area and had it surveyed to create a town of 60’ by 150’ lots. He then dug a community well on the corner of what’s now High and Main Streets and named the new village after Windsor, England, a residence of the British Royal Family.

Atlee came to the region from Lancaster County, PA, attracted by the area’s natural beauty; its Dickinson’s Branch and Little Pipe Creek that promised energy for mills; its three sulphur springs that offered natural healing; and its prime position at a crossroads of two major colonial highways.

The Shawan-Monocacy Road from Baltimore and the Buffalo Road from Washington, D.C. both led travelers north to the Monocacy Road—the Great Wagon Road from Philadelphia—and on to points west and then south to Western Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Historians have argued about the origin of the Buffalo Road. Some believe it follows the path of migrating buffalo that still populated the state in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Others claim it derives its name from a military road planned from Washington to Buffalo, NY, that was surveyed in 1829 but never built.

Atlee’s town was on a tract of land known as “Five Daughters” that he purchased in 1795 for 500 British pounds sterling. It had been part of the 4,386-acre land warrant granted to James Carroll by the Crown in 1727. Atlee’s 150 or so acres were sliced out later and named for the five daughters of a Carroll descendant, Dominick Carroll. Previous histories of the town have credited Atlee with opening a tavern at the site where the Dielman Inn now sits. However, recent research has revealed that the first lot he sold was #6 to Emanuel Brower who soon after built a tavern. This finding was reinforced in 2014 when one of his descendants from Saint Peters, Missouri gifted New Windsor Heritage with a ledger book that had belonged to Brower. It is one huge bar bill, tracking transactions from 1806 to 1813. Aside from charges for whiskey, “cyder oile,” brandy, rum, beer and cocktails like Apple Toddys, one finds entries for broken tumblers and “window lights,” which suggest barroom brawls may have been part of the local scene. The ledger lists regular customers whose surnames names can still be found in and around the town: Hibberd, Baile, Yingling, and Frizell.

Atlee built a boarding house and a bath house at the foot of what is now Main Street to facilitate access to the sulphur springs. On the original plat, he appropriately dubbed this road Bath Street. Before and during this era and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people prized sulphur water, rich in mineral salts and gasses, as a natural medicine or tonic to drink or bathe in, effective in curing skin infections and muscle diseases and, in moderation, improving the digestive process.

As the number of visitors increased, they started calling the town “Sulphur Springs,” “Springtown,” or just “The Springs.” On an 1808 map of Frederick and Washington Counties, “Sulphur Springs” appears in a smaller font under “New Windsor.” However, this and the other monikers were just nicknames, and the official town name has always been New Windsor. As with Atlee’s supposed role as a tavern keeper, facts again bump into an alternate historical narrative, proving it wrong. The railroad obliterated two of the springs when it came through town in 1862. The third survives in a circa 1850 springhouse on private property on Water Street, and the spring can still be seen inside, bubbling up from deep below.

The steady wagon traffic through town encouraged growth and spurred other businesses which soon included a general store on Lot #9 across from the tavern, four grist mills, and a saw mill. German Lutherans and a German Reformed congregation erected a log house of worship in 1798 on what is now Rt. 75. Eventually it became St. Luke’s (Winter’s) Church. Other denominations worshipped at a Union Chapel, today’s 320 Main Street, built in 1830. A brick Presbyterian Church followed in 1841 and a log Methodist Church in 1843. Sometime after 1849, St. Thomas Roman Catholic chapel was built on the grounds of Calvert College, which later morphed into New Windsor College and then Blue Ridge College. The chapel is long gone, but its stained glass windows and other architectural details survived when builders integrated them into one of the town’s fine, old Victorian houses. The African-American community didn’t have its own church until 1916-17 when they built Smith Chapel, later Strawbridge United Methodist Church, at Rt. 31 and Wakefield Valley Road.

Isaac Atlee’s son, James Clemson Atlee, combined an existing boarding house on Lot #7 with Brower’s tavern on Lot #6 to create a new establishment, Whitehall. He built a brick addition extending to the rear, and his hotel catered to the increasing commercial traffic passing through town and to tourists fleeing the summer heat and stench of the cities or in search of the healing waters of the sulphur springs. After a change of ownership or two, Whitehall eventually became the storied Dielman Inn in 1864.

Catherine Brawner started the town’s first school around 1825 in a house on lower Bath Street. When residents financed the construction of the Union Chapel in 1831 (today’s 320 Main Street), they enterprisingly designed it as a duplex with the left side serving as a school and the right as the church. There was a “Select Boarding School for Young Ladies” on upper Bath Street in 1854. Under the supervision of Theodore Blume, it promised girls tuition, bed and bedding, meals, laundry service, and mending for torn dresses or missing buttons—all for only \$100 a year. Today the building is a private residence (today’s 315 Main Street).

In 1841, a group of citizens met to appoint a board of trustees to create a “seminary of learning,” a high school for students desiring to move on to advanced studies. They called the institution New Windsor College and chose the Reverend John Pym Carter, a Presbyterian minister, as principal. Atlee’s son, James, offered the group the use of the brick addition to his hotel for classrooms. This worked for a while, but the building’s space constraints prevented it from earning the more desirable title of “institute.” Andrew Hull Baker, a graduate of Mount St. Mary’s College in Emmitsburg, bought Carter’s school in 1846. Baker wanted to establish a Catholic college for “boys and men” and in 1849 he purchased and cleared land on the hill at the top of Bath Street. There he constructed a large classroom-dormitory building known today as

Old Main. For a time, it was the largest building in the county. Baker called his school Calvert College, named after Charles Calvert, the third Lord Baltimore and founder of Maryland. Financial hardships during the Civil War caused the college to close, and the Presbytery of Baltimore purchased the property in 1873 and rebranded it New Windsor College. Money troubles continued, and the campus became Blue Ridge College in 1913 when the Church of the Brethren's Maryland Collegiate Institute relocated its operations from Union Bridge.

These are only a few highlights from the long history of a town whose 225 years are being celebrated in 2022. You are invited to learn more by visiting the New Windsor Heritage Museum at 207 Main Street and by watching these pages for further news about how the “small town with a big history” plans to celebrate one very important birthday.

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*Image caption:*

*The oldest known view of Dielman Inn, once the Whitehall Hotel, c.1865. The pump on left was the location of the town's communal well. (Courtesy of New Windsor Heritage)*