

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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Music was part of community life
by Jay Graybeal

Prior to the advent of radio, motion pictures and television, music was an integral part of family and community life. Music was played by family members at home, by community bands and in churches as part of religious services. The collection of the Historical Society of Carroll County contains objects associated with each musical tradition.

Music was also part of formal education. Throughout the 19th century, the distinct sex roles of men and women meant that children received different forms of education. While young men were trained for trades, business or the ministry, young women learned domestic skills. The accomplishment of a musical instrument by women was deemed essential since a hostess would often entertain dinner guests in her drawing room.

The historical society's collection contains several types of instruments played in the home. The earliest example is a maple flute with silver-plated and ivory fittings made by Firth, Hall and Pond of New York City about 1840. The flute was probably owned by Beulah Clarke, wife of Dr. Jacob J. Weaver, Sr. of Uniontown. The collection also includes a large square piano finished in expensive rosewood veneers made about 1850. This stylish instrument was owned by Emma Thornburn, wife of Dr. John Buffington of New Windsor. Surviving sheet music, such as "The Battles of Sebastopol," documents popular arrangements. This 1855 composition by Charles W. Glover set to music the recent battles of the Crimean War and brought an important current event into the drawing rooms of American homes.

The community band provided an opportunity for local men to perform music. The Manchester Military Band of Music chartered by the State Legislature in 1838 was the earliest band in the new county. Their purpose was "extending the knowledge & improving the style of performance of martial music."

By the late 19th century nearly every community had its own band which played at church socials, parades and holiday observances. Cornet bands were predominant in the county. Of the twenty-nine incorporated bands formed before 1900, seventeen were cornet bands. In addition to photographs of local cornet bands, the society's collection includes several artifacts related to this type of band. A c. 1892 cornet, played by S.M. Stambaugh of the Winfield Cornet Band of

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Carroll County, and a complete c.192 uniform, worn by Tyson E. Gosnell an alto horn player in the Morgan Chapel Cornet Band, are representative of turn-of-the-century bands.

The earliest band instrument in the collection is a bass drum made by Paul Lamson of New York City. The bass drum was a principal instrument in most bands. Traditionally, the drum heads were painted with the band's name which made for easy identification in parades. A partial history of the society's drum is recorded inside the drum "Made in 182 and repaired by R.O. Fuss, 1874 November 9th, Uniontown Carroll County, Md. For the Drum Core (sic) of Uniontown." Robert O. Fuss is listed in 1874 as a member in an account book of the Uniontown Brass Band. The society also preserves the silk thirty-six star American flag carried by the band from 1874 to its disbandment in 1888.

A selection of the society's collection will be on exhibit as part of the observance of the 155th Anniversary of the founding of Carroll County. The event will be held on January 19 from 1 to 4 p.m. in the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 E. Main St., Westminster. Admission is free. Please call 848-6494 for additional information.