

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

Carroll's Yesteryears
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'Horseless carriage' ride was a long trip to Baltimore in 1900
by Joe Getty

Last month the program at the Roop-Royer family reunion in Union Bridge consisted of presentations about the children of David J. Roop and Henrietta Ocker. This continues a series of programs about the fifth-generation Roop and Royer family lines that lived in Carroll County.

Descendants of the sixth-generation children provided highlights about the lives and careers of this Roop line. I was asked to make the presentation about my great-grandfather, H. Scott Roop who married Kate McCollum. The other speakers were: Dorothy Brookhart on J. Thomas Roop and Dr. Charles E. Roop; Mildred Beard on Annie M. Roop; Earl Beard on Susan Alice Roop, who married David Young; Jean Swope on Fannie B. Roop, who married Milton Snader; and Charlotte Keefer on Margaret R. Roop, who married David Shorb, and David M. Roop.

It is interesting that this generation, born in the mid-19th century, is the first in which photography plays a role in providing a historical perspective on their lives. As I prepared my presentation, photographs became as important as the written documentation in conveying a sense of who these people were.

One photograph is particularly cherished by family members. It is a view taken in November 1900 of my grandmother, Henrietta Roop Twigg, as a child with her parents and three siblings seated in a horseless carriage at Union Station in Baltimore.

This image conveys many themes of local history. The family theme presents the proud parents, H. Scott and Kate Roop, with their children, Richard, Harold, Isabelle and Henrietta. There is the theme of technology in the fact that this was an early automobile in Baltimore. The pose for the photographer captures the significance of these themes.

In addition, there is a newspaper article in the files of the Historical Society Library that records Kate Roop's reminiscences of this automobile and the problems with these initial technological advancements:

"We left Westminster at 6 o'clock in the morning and didn't get to Baltimore until 4 in the afternoon. And just to think, we can make that trip now in less than an hour. The great difficulty

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we experienced on that trip in 1900 was ‘plunger trouble,’ whatever that was, but I know we had to stop every mile or two for Mr. Roop to tinker with the engine.

“Then too, we were delayed often by having to stop for teams to pass. Mr. Roop would get out of the car and lead the horses several hundred feet out of sight of the car. You know, the animals would become frightened even at the sight of a ‘horseless carriage,’ rear up and sometimes run away.

“I remember on one occasion a pair hitched to a horse at Buena Vista became frightened by our auto, ran away and nearly plunged down the mountain side. No wonder people hated the sight of an auto in those days.”

While this photograph and reminiscence is personally significant to me and my family’s heritage, it also enlightens us about our broader community history. At the Historical Society, we need to continually remind people of the value of documenting our 20th century history.

Many people forget that we are in the last decade of the 20th century, and that it is important to document the people and events of our more recent past. Now is the time to preserve and record the 20th century history of Carroll County as a legacy for future generations.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County

Photo caption: H. Scott and Kate Roop and their children, from left, Harold, Richard, Henrietta and Isabelle, drove in this horseless carriage from Westminster to Baltimore in November 1900. The trip took nearly 10 hours.