

"Manchester Incorporated in 1833"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

Each year the Historical Society has its annual dinner meeting in a different community and this year we visited my hometown of Manchester. Preserved at the Historical Society is the minute book of the Commissioners of Manchester following the first incorporation of the town in 1833. Section 1 of the Act of Assembly briefly outlined the new town government:

"Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland that the citizens of the town commonly called and known by the name of Manchester and Germantown in Baltimore County, shall be and they are hereby constituted and made as a body corporate under the common name of the Commissioners of Manchester, with all the privileges of a body corporate, and to have a common seal, and perpetual succession."

The remaining eleven sections stipulated that only free white males aged 21 or older who had lived in the town for at least six months could vote, that the boundaries of the town extended one-quarter of a mile from a tavern at the center of town, that the Commissioners could pass local ordinances including taxes, appoint a clerk to keep the records, a collector to receive bills, and a baliff to "preserve the peace and good order of the town". The first elected commissioners in 1834 were George Everhart, Joseph Ganter, Philip G. Jones, Jacob Kerlinger and Levi Maxfield.

Following several organizational meetings, the newly elected town officials quickly began to consider and pass several ordinances. The first one involved the regulation of sidewalks. Home owners who wanted to install curb stones were required to observe a uniform distance so that the curb would be straight. The ordinance also stipulated that no one could block a sidewalk for more than twenty-four hours except in the case of building supplies. Malefactors were to be charged a one dollar fine.

The next several ordinances involved ordinances for keeping animals in town. The commissioners had considerable difficulty in reaching a agreement on how to deal with swine. A bill by Mr. Maxfield to prohibit swine from running at large between June and November was considered. Mr. Everhart proposed two successive amendments to exempt porkers weighing over 40 pounds or that they only require their owners to pen them up at night; each was voted down. The original bill was enacted, however, Mr. Everhart was not finished with his opposition. At the next meeting, he presented a petition from "sundry citizens of Manchester, complaining that the ordinance prohibiting Swine from running at large was oppressive, and praying that said ordinance be repealed". The commissioners apparently bowed to public pressure and the ordinance was repealed at least for the time being.

After one year in office the commissioners found themselves in a financial crisis; the treasury was low. There were insufficient funds to pay Town Clerk Joseph M. Parke his yearly salary of \$10. Mr. Everhart proposed a bill to reduce the clerk's salary to \$6.39. The solution, which was agreeable to Mr. Parke, saved the commissioners from "resorting to taxation" at least for the time being.

Not much new business was undertaken by commissioners from 1836 until 1839 when the swine issue again reared its ugly head. A new bill prohibited swine from running loose was passed on 28 June but again there was discontent. At the next meeting Baliff John Krautz reluctantly resigned because he was "fearful of threats made him by a certain Individual in Manchester". For a second time the "Ordinance for the better regulation of swine" was repealed. The measure, however, was not dead. The

commissioners passed a new bill on 14 August 1841 which imposed a \$2 fine for those who let their pigs run free. Subsequent commissioners reconfirmed the bill and the matter was finally laid to rest.

In 1840 the commissioners found it necessary to institute a "dog tax" to raise money. The 1840 tax list shows that 41 dogs were owned in Manchester; their owners paid a quarter for each dog which put \$10.25 in the town treasury. The commissioners also passed a bill for public safety. They appointed a committee to purchase five ladders to be kept around town and used only in the case of fire. Anyone who borrowed a ladder without permission was subject to a \$1 fine. In the same year a bill passed that prohibited any one from discharging a gun in town, except to kill an animal afflicted with rabies.

The record book continues until 1846 with some scattered records until 1860 and then ceases for no apparent reason. The Corporation of Manchester was reorganized by an act of the Legislature in 1870. The early record book shows the kinds of issues that were important in our local towns as they developed in the mid-nineteenth century. Residents wanted access to uniform sidewalks, some control of domestic animals and a measure of public safety.

Photo caption: Manchester's North Main Street was covered with snow in this turn of the century image. The northeast Carroll town was first incorporated in 1833. Greenbury Everhart Collection, Historical Society of Carroll County.