

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Carroll County Business Women of the 1890s"
Carroll County Times article for 12 March 1995
by Jay A. Graybeal

A century ago local women had few choices when it came to careers. The vast majority received an elementary school education, married and became mothers. Their home, family, church and community were the focal points of their lives.

Only a few local women entered business. While some were widows who were forced or chose to continue a family business, others started businesses of their own. This latter group of women operated businesses that catered primarily to women.

An interesting selection of late 19th-century business histories can be found in *Business Review and Directory, Northern, Western, and Southern Maryland, Not Including Baltimore City*, published in 1892. The Carroll County section includes the following sketches of businesses operated by local women.

WESTMINSTER

Mrs. M. E. Wilson, Toys, Confectionery and Stationery

In reviewing the various business enterprises of Westminster, the oldest surviving stationery store here is that conducted by the lady whose name heads this article. John S. Murray, her father, founded here 60 years ago, then in the grocery business. The stock was finally changed, and came into the hands of Mrs. Wilson in 1862. From its first inception it has always proved a convenience to the county, and now sustains a well earned reputation for reliable goods and honest business methods. The store is 20x28 feet in dimensions, and carries school supplies, pens, inks, papers, novelties, fancy articles, toys, and a general line of confectionery and segars, and perhaps the largest line of jewelry and plated goods in the city. Two store rooms in the rear are used for superfluous goods. Mrs. Wilson is well known in social and trade circles, and is identified with the German Reformed Church. As a business woman of executive ability she is recognized as a reliable dealer.

Miss May C. Gardner, Millinery and Notions

By a practical experience of over six years in the millinery business, combined with a native artistic taste, has enabled the lady whose name heads this article to sustain a well merited reputation. In the spring of 1891, Miss Gardner located in her present quarters and has soon ingratiated herself into the goodwill of a select patronage. She occupies a well arranged salesroom and carries a general line of hats and bonnets, flowers, feathers, ribbons, beads and a general line of notions. The workroom is in the rear and with every facility at hand together with skilled assistance no lack of attention is bestowed on the welfare of the most fastidious patron in trimming and retrimming hats and bonnets into the latest metropolitan fancies. A native of Carroll County, this lady is well and favorably known. She is identified with the Catholic church and commands the approbation of a large social acquaintance.

Mrs. E. B. Malehorn, Millinery

After an extensive career of over thirty practical years in the millinery business little need be said of the reliability of the perpetrator. Mrs. E. B. Malehorn located in her present quarters twenty-five years ago and has since by personal attention to the interests of the patron won and retained a permanent

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patronage. The salesroom is 12x32 feet in dimensions and carries a general line of millinery goods, hats, bonnets, feathers and trimmings. In the mechanical departments are employed several skilled assistants under the personal supervision of Mrs. Malehorn herself, and thus the utmost satisfaction is assured in trimming hats and bonnets in the most desirable styles in vogue. Born in Carroll County, the subject of this article is well and favorably known as a reliable business woman. Identified with the Methodist church here she commands a large social acquaintance and proven herself worthy of every success her energies have achieved.

MANCHESTER

Mrs. J. M. Motter, Millinery, Fancy Goods & Stamping Depot.

The artistic avocations are by no means overlooked in Manchester and a representative house in the millinery business is that conducted by the lady whose name heads this article. Establishing here originally in 1882, she occupies a salesroom 16x18 feet in dimensions. This is attractive in appearance well furnished and contains a varied line of millinery goods, in straw, felt and fur materials. Every description of goods, chenilles, arresenes and embroidery silks generally. The millinery department is in the rear where hats and bonnets are trimmed into the leading styles, direct from the newest fashion plates. Personal attention is given to the business. Mrs. Motter, is a native of Baltimore Co. By practical experience, together with an artistic taste enables her to cater to and supply the demand of the most fastidious patrons. Identified with the Reformed Church, the subject of this article is well and formally known in social as well as trade circles.

UNION BRIDGE

Mrs. J. L. Smith, Millinery

In reviewing the business enterprises of Union Bridge the writer discloses that conducted by the lady whose name heads this article. Dating its establishment back to 1890, this business, though of recent inception, is destined to future well merited success, due to personal attention to business details. The store is 14 x 18 feet in dimensions, attractively arranged, and contains a line of millinery goods and trimmings, notions and fancy articles, special attention is given to trimming hats and bonnets. After a practical experience together with ingenuity of arrangement the utmost satisfaction is assured. By doing good work at reasonable prices has won for this house a select patronage. A native of Carroll County, Mrs. Smith is well known in trade circles for her executive abilities and enjoys a wide social acquaintance.

M. E. Herbaugh, Millinery and Notions

The artistic avocations are by no means overlooked in Union Bridge and a representative house in the direction of Miss Herbaugh established here and carries a general line of millinery and fancy goods, hats and bonnets in cloth, felt and fur material, birds, beads, flowers, feathers, ribbons, and a general line of millinery trimmings and ladies goods. The workrooms are well arranged and special attention is given to trimming and retrimming hats and bonnets into the latest metropolitan fashions. Personal attention is given and as an adept at this pursuit together with a native artistic skill, she is enabled to assure satisfaction to the most fastidious patron. The subject of this article was born in Carroll County, and is identified with the Methodist Protestant church. As a business woman, is recognized as a reliable dealer.

HAMPSTEAD

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Misses Sallie and Katie Hoover, Milliners and Dressmakers

The artistic avocations are by no means overlooked in Hampstead and thoroughly perpetrated by the ladies whose names head this article. Established sixteen years ago they occupy a salesroom 10x18 feet in dimensions, attractively fitted out and containing a stock of hats and bonnets in felt, fur and straw material, ribbons, beads, flowers, feathers, etc. The workroom is at the side and here is trimmed and retrimmed, hats and bonnets into the leading metropolitan fashions. In the dressmaking department all kinds of plain and fancy sewing is done. Dresses are made for street, house or evening wear and the utmost satisfaction is assured the most fastidious patron in fit, style and finish, at moderate prices. Miss Sallie Hoover is a native of Hampstead and has charge of the millinery department. Miss Kate is also a native of this place and supervises the dressmaking. They are both adepts at these pursuits and command an appreciative patronage. The former is a member of the Lutheran Church here and Treasurer of the Ladies Aid Society of that church.

The abovementioned local business women were able to compete successfully against larger readymade clothing stores until the early twentieth century. Their success was probably due, in part, because local women preferred to deal with a trusted firm when it came to matters of fashion.

Photo Caption: Mrs. Elsie Stem posed for her photographic portrait wearing a fashionable hat, dress and gloves. She may have purchased her outfit from a local millinery or dressmaker. Photograph by Krichton, Westminster, Md., c.1895. Historical Society of Carroll County Collection.