

## *Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles*

### "A Poetical Tramp"

Carroll County Times article for 9 January 1994

By Joe Getty

Turn-of-the-century newspapers in Carroll County devoted considerable attention to the local system of justice and news from the courthouse. Many of the more lengthy articles present topics about crime and punishment in Carroll County.

Sometimes these articles also addressed the humorous nature of occasional courthouse proceedings. The following is an example, being a story about a poetical tramp as reported in the December 25, 1897, edition of the American Sentinel:

### "A Poetical Tramp"

He Writes Some Verses and Escapes a Term in the House of Correction.

Among the prisoners before Chief Justice William Baer at his office, on Court Street, last Saturday, was one William Brandt, whose home is the wide world. He was arrested by Chief of Police Beaver, and was charged with being a tramp. While in jail he wrote some verses, in which he gave his impressions of the law officers, the jail, &c. He showed the verses to Deputy Sheriff Wilson, who was so pleased with them that he spent his leisure hours in setting them to music. After he had completed it, he turned his rich baritone voice loose and sang the piece, and so well pleased was he with the performance, like blind Tom, he could not restrain from applauding himself.

At Brandt's hearing last Saturday the evidence against him was not very convincing. Wm. H. Thomas, Esq., appeared for the state, in the absence of the State's Attorney, and did not press conviction.

Brandt's poetry so completely won Deputy Sheriff Wilson's admiration that he could not resist laying before the court the verses. The Judge, with bald-headed gravity, took up the verses and read as follows:

In the far-famed Carroll county,  
In the good old Maryland state,  
There is a town - Westminster  
Its men are brave and great.  
There is a gentle justice,  
Whom they call "Billy" Baer;  
He has such lovely whiskers  
And upon his head no hair.  
On cold and frosty mornings,  
When the ground is white with snow,  
The gentle northwest zephyrs  
Through his auburn lilacs blow;  
And the flies in playful moments  
So smoothly slide and skate  
Upon the barren desert  
He has upon his pate;  
And when the mark's at zero

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And upon the ice you slip  
You will see our noble justice  
Take a quiet little nip.  
There is a brown-stone cottage,  
With nice large window panes;  
"Tis owned by Carroll county,  
And in charge of Mr. Haines.  
Both he and Mr. Wilson  
Ever watch from morn till night  
The poor and wayward children  
And keep them out of sight.  
In the soft and quiet evening,  
When we hear the sweet church bells,  
Mr. Haines and Mr. Wilson  
Lock us all within our cells;  
And early in the morning,  
When loud crows the chanticleer,  
We know our welcome breakfast  
Will ever find us here.  
Long, sheriff, may you prosper,  
And your brave assistant, too;  
"Three cheers for Carroll county,  
And her noble sons, so true!"  
The New York daily papers  
Of their police force do prate;  
Of the "Broadway Squad" of giants.  
An honor to the state.  
They boast of their fine marching  
On the streets in dress parades;  
But the police of Westminster  
Can give them "cards and spades."  
Take, for instance, Beaver;  
Where could you find a man  
More noble in his carriage  
In all the police clan?  
When the streets are very muddy,  
Like a noble knight so true,  
He takes charge of the ladies  
And leads them safely through.  
He is liked by all the people,  
And e'en those who would be rash  
Are scared into submission  
When they see his fierce moustache.

After finishing the Court said - Mr. Wilson, I learn that you have set this poetry to music and can sing it. The Court would like to hear you. The Deputy began, and enchanted the Court and all the spectators. After the last trill of his sweet voice died away, the court looked up and said –

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'The prisoner is discharged. A man with such brilliant attainments, who possesses such grand poetical inspiration, who no doubt is fitted for a grand and noble life, should not be confined in prison, but sent forth to enlighten the world. This man can shake with Shakespeare and soc with Socrates. He can make a better tariff bill than Dingley and a better free silver speech than Bryan. Let him go, and with the Court's blessing.'

Photo Caption: [None]