

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Lillian Shipley Profile"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

The collection, preservation and interpretation of objects are the defining characteristics of a museum that set it apart from all other cultural and educational institutions. When the Historical Society was founded in 1939, the certificate of incorporation included a purpose ". . . to collect and preserve all papers, books, documents or other matter of things pertaining to the history of Carroll County."

With the acquisition of the Sherman-Fisher-Shellman House in August 1939 came a few casted-off furnishings, a Victorian wardrobe and a spinning wheel. From this humble beginning, the Historical Society's collection has grown to many thousands of objects which form a unique legacy for present and future generations.

Prominent among the many people who helped build the Historical Society's collection was Miss Lillian Shipley (1890-1989), a founder, first resident curator, and tireless supporter. Miss Lillian credited her knowledge of local history to her father Dr. Daniel F. Shipley, whom she accompanied on his patient visits throughout the county. Her knowledge was matched by her willingness to share with others. Her services to the county were recognized in 1956 when the Soroptimist Club of Westminster named her "Outstanding Woman of Carroll County."

Miss Shipley retired in 1962 and was honored with a dinner in the garden behind the museum house where she had lived and worked since 1953. Among the many tributes was a poem written by her friend Edith E. Rill, who served as the Historical Society's secretary from 1946 to 1964:

LILLIAN SHIPLEY
Curator of the Historical Home
1953-1962

In '53 Miss Lillian came to the Historical House,
She lived all alone - well maybe a mouse.
She loved the ol' house and all its antiques.
Valuable yes, tho' some may have squeaks.
Thousands of children and folks galore,
From all parts of the country, were welcomed at the door.
She showed them each room, she showed them each gift.
She had the answers - but she had to be swift.
We never had a meeting, but it ended with a tea -
"It will only take a minute," was always her plea.
She knew each hole and crack, tho' small as a louse,
But it resulted in improvements to the Historical House.
Each gift or loan was received with delight,
Your valuable relics you better keep out of her sight.
The doll collection is really the best -
Who could be lonesome, with them as her guests?
The collection of hobnail and all kinds of glass -

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Alone with these valuables, she must have had brass.
In the garden, each a beautiful flower,
But never an "Old Maid" had a bed near her bower.
Corn shellers, old guns, and all kinds of ware
Were obtained mainly through her foresight and care.
Old books, old maps, or even a bust,
She loves them all, even if covered with dust.
She knows everybody, no matter where they be.
All over the Country - A ha-handshaker is she.
She's now past 50. So her we can claim
As an antique relic - we love this Historical dame.

Miss Lillian Shipley's memory is kept alive by an annual history contest for local seventh graders which bears her name. The fruits of her labors are also seen in the rich collection of objects preserved by the Historical Society.

The Historical Society will host an exhibit and reception in honor of Carroll County's 156th anniversary on Tuesday, January 19th. The exhibit will feature architectural artifacts from the Historical Society's collection. The reception will be from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the Shriver-Weybright Auditorium, 210 East Main Street, Westminster. Call 848-6494 for information.

Photo Caption: Miss Lillian Shipley prepares to address the attendees at her retirement dinner June 21, 1962. Standing at her left was Historical Society's President James M. Shriver; her brother Daniel F. Shipley, Jr. stands at her right. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.