

Carroll Yesteryears

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Remembering "Cousin Lou," Who Lived Through the Civil War and World War II

By Helen Shriver Riley

This year marks the 80th anniversary of our entrance into World War II, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Those were frightening times, with news about war almost every day. My father regularly listened to broadcaster Lowell Thomas on the radio, and I recall listening with him and asking many questions. I did not understand what was happening and I remember fearing that that war would come to Carroll County.

Looking back now, over age 90, I am reminded of another 90-year old: Louis Shriver, who we knew as "Cousin Lou." Lou was my grandfather's first cousin, and in 1941 was about the same age that I am now. Amazingly, when Lou was a boy, war *did* come to Carroll County.

Growing up in Union Mills, Cousin Lou was one of many nearby relatives, but one who really stands out in my memory. Although I asked my parents about world events back then, in hindsight boy do I wish I asked Cousin Lou about what he lived through!

Louis Shriver was born in 1851 and died in early 1945, living his whole life at the Union Mills Homestead. He experienced the Civil War and WWII and everything in between! Most amazing was that in my lifetime I knew someone who not only knew me, but also knew family who were around when Union Mills was founded in 1797. Unfortunately, my experiences with Cousin Lou were all formed through the eyes of a young child.

My earliest recollection of Cousin Lou was about the age of four or five. When he would come visit, Cousin Lou would drive his horse and buggy up our driveway and tie his horse to a clothesline under a big oak tree in the yard. I was so excited because Cousin Lou would let us pat his horse as long as we were quiet. But he did not let us get in the buggy. I was little at the time, so the buggy was high off the ground and a bit scary with its big black hood over the seat, so of course I respected his directions.

I followed my big brother, Jimmie, everywhere. He was two years older and we soon learned how fun it was to disappear from home for the day. Sometimes we just walked down the hill to my Aunt Madgie's house. But even more fun was Cousin Lou's barn. It was a wonderful old barn, located on the other side of the turnpike about where the Corn Roast is now held. It was a fun place to play because no one could find us there and, best of all, it contained many wonderful old wagons and carriages of various shapes and sizes. Although Lou would not let us get in his buggy when he visited, we enjoyed that carriage and others in the barn. We drove them all over the countryside in our childhood imagination. Sometimes a passenger, sometimes a driver, but the many places we went with our make-believe horse was such fun! Cousin Lou lived with his niece, Bessy, in the old Homestead across the road from the barn. Maybe they were hard of hearing because they never caught us playing in that barn.

We were not so lucky when we played in the grist mill. Cousin Lou was a regular there. Sporting a big gray moustache and cane, Cousin Lou would stroll over during the day, to catch up on neighborhood news and visit with farmers getting their grains ground in the mill.

Jimmie and I also liked the mill so had to play under Lou's watchful eye. We ran all over the place, weighed ourselves on the interesting scales, slid down chutes or slides, and scampered up and down all four floors often with the poor miller chasing after us. I don't recall Cousin Lou scolding us but he did frown sometimes. Today I feel sorry for the poor miller as he only had one leg.

Next door to the mill was an old tenant house that used to be where the miller lived. That house was special because attached to the front porch was an interesting outhouse built right over the mill race. Taking advantage of the natural plumbing was fun, too!

In the summer, cousins would arrive to swim at Aunt Madgie's. Cousin Lou would always be on Madgie's porch, playing cribbage with the adults. I can still see the little pegs moving up and down that funny little board they used.

Looking back, I am struck by my childhood recollections of Cousin Lou—and how divorced those memories are from all the incredible history he had lived. Although he was too young to serve in the military in the Civil War, Lou experienced armies from both the North and South at Union Mills. And Lou even went to Gettysburg for the cemetery dedication when Lincoln gave his famous Gettysburg Address.

The good news is that Lou was an avid diarist and photographer and recorded much of the history he lived. And he also shared it with my parents' generation, who passed that down to us as we grew older. The history Cousin Lou experienced is a gift still giving at the Union Mills Homestead all these years later. For me, that history is framed from the seat of Lou's old buggy, on a wild ride pulled by make-believe horses.

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Lou Shriver in 1941. Louis E. Shriver of Union Mills standing in front of the Shriver Grist Mill in 1941. (Union Mills Homestead Foundation image)



Lou Shriver Buggy. One of Louis Shriver's carriages next to the Bark Shed at the Union Mills Homestead in the 1950s. (Union Mills Homestead Foundation image)



Union Mills Barn. An early 20th Century view of the barn at the Union Mills Homestead. (Union Mills Homestead Foundation image)