

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

New Windsor Elections

Carroll County Times article for 16 September 1990

By Joe Getty

With the primary election over, we enter the general election campaign season. This provides a good opportunity for retelling stories about Carroll County's political history. Our system of democratic government provides for election campaigns that generate interesting reminiscences about local elections.

Carroll County has seen many hotly contested races in its history. Our political traditions are based on a competition between prospective officeholders that creates many anecdotes in our local history.

With our computerized voting systems and mass communications for informing the public about the results, we frequently forget the context of the early elections carried out at the ballot box.

One reminiscence about a New Windsor election that was recorded for posterity was written by Frank J. Devilbiss. In a series of town histories published in the Taneytown newspaper, *The Carroll Record*, Mr. Devilbiss provides some perspective about the early elections in the New Windsor election district:

"For several years prior to 1856 our citizens voted at general elections, in Uniontown. During this year, however, a portion of each the second, seventh and ninth districts was made into a separate district, and called New Windsor district No. 11. In that year, Buchanan and Filmore were candidates for the Presidency. New Windsor district gave 122 votes for the former and 221 votes for the latter, thus plainly showing the political complexion of the new district.

At the next Presidential election in 1860, one of the candidates, Abraham Lincoln, received but one single vote in this district. The voter who gallantly cast this ballot, very probably secreted himself a fortnight to get breath. At any rate, his identity should have been preserved and honored, and I regret being unable to do either.

The community was in a state of ferment then. The turbulent passions of those times cannot be better instanced, than at a general election, held probably in 1864, Daniel Engel and Jonas Ecker were the judges, and both strong Unionists. The tickets were large that fall, containing candidates for nearly every office in county and state, as well for president.

The day passed quietly away, and the battle of ballots ended, but not the battle of words. After a lengthy consultation, and heated debate, it was decided that considering the length of the ticket and the merciless 'cutting' of the candidates, the counting would be deferred until the following day.

The lights were extinguished, and darkness was supreme, as Jonas Ecker retired from the room with the ballot-box in custody. Soon, he was in his home and had lain himself down on his bed of slumber after the arduous duties of the day.

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

But very soon, 'like a thief in the night' stole 'rap' after 'rap' at his entrance door. Not heeding, but thinking why, he awaited, but not long. A sea of voices loud and tumultuous, clamoring for the ballot-box explained the message and the messenger.

Opposition voters, suspicioning the security of the ballot-box, had agreed to demand it from the hands of Mr. Ecker, and place it in the custody of Mr. Joseph A. Stouffer, the cashier of the Bank. Among the leaders of the procession, which waited upon Mr. Ecker for the ballot-box were William W. Smelser, Geo. W. Fritz and William Steiner. Having no alternative, Mr Ecker finally acquiesced, and accompanied the crowd up town to the residence of Mr. Stouffer.

After calling him from his slumber, their purpose was made known. They entreated him to take the ballot-box and secure it in the bank until morning. Mr. Stouffer was not an officer of the election and was a Union man too; Mr. Ecker was an election officer, a Unionist, and a gentleman of honor and respectability.

After prolonged entreaty Mr. Stouffer reluctantly stowed away the box in the bank, and when the crowd heard the heavy grating of the lock as the key was turned, peace was restored, and there was a calm and solemn joy."