

"Remember Stories of the Past"

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By Mary Ann Ashcraft

As we flip our calendars ahead to 2011, we cannot lose the past, especially the memories of it stored in the minds of people living today. Grandparents, parents, neighbors and friends are sources of history well worth preserving.

I've spoken to a number of people with wonderful stories about Carroll's past while doing research for this column over the last four years. Some stories I've used, but others are still in my head because I haven't quite figured out a way to weave them into articles.

Virginia Hierstetter was just a young girl when her father took her to Gettysburg in 1938 for a reunion of veterans of the Civil War. Approximately 1,800 men showed up, and Virginia collected autographs from several of them. She struck up a correspondence with one who died soon afterward, but she continued writing to his son for a number of years. Imagine that someone alive today spoke to and shook hands with a Civil War veteran!

Helen Totura has lived in Bachman's Valley her entire life. One of her ancestors owned iron ore banks in the Valley and the pits are still visible on her property. She remembers the roads, now barely visible as clearings in the woods, which connected the area's old farms and made lacey patterns on early maps. Lifetime residents whose roots stretch back several centuries are one of Carroll County's many attributes.

Several months ago, Dean Griffin and I spent more than an hour with two men who attended Pleasant Valley's one-room school as youngsters. Two stories they shared were delightful. One year, the school bus got hung up on a dirt road with incredibly deep ruts. Everyone piled out and some of the boys jumped hard enough on the bumpers to eventually rock it out of the ruts. Levine Myers recalled that teachers could insure that a student using the outdoor privy didn't make any unnecessary "detours" because they could track him or her through the classroom windows.

In his ninety-plus years, Edward Bachman has tucked away a lot of history in his head, both things he has experienced and stories passed down within his family. His dozens of scrapbooks hold additional information clipped from area newspapers. One afternoon this fall he demonstrated a "husker," the small metal device worn on your forefinger when corn was husked by hand and not by a giant piece of farm machinery.

The history of Carroll's small African-American communities is hard to come by and often only found in the memories of inhabitants. Pernel Hammond has shared stories of his ancestors living along Buffalo Road in the area once called Newport, now known as "Weldon."

Thank goodness the Carroll County History Project of Carroll's Community Media Center is preserving these important memories. Volunteers videotape people wherever it is convenient for everyone and the tapes are available for viewing on the CMC website. Watching people tell their stories beats reading them in a column such as this. If you have memories to share or know of someone who wants to participate in the project, contact the Community Media Center.



Edward Bachman and Marlene Shilling share memories of their Wentz ancestors inside the Wentz Meeting House in September 2010. The tiny brick church was built just over the Pennsylvania line by three Wentz brothers about 150 years ago.

*Mary Ann Ashcraft is a library volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.
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