

Carroll History Journal

Historical Society of Carroll County, Maryland

A WESTMINSTER FRIENDSHIP

By James E. Lightner

In any small community, it is not surprising that leading citizens will know each other and perhaps impact each other's lives. Such was certainly the case with the intertwining lives of Joshua W. Hering and James W. Reese during the latter half of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century in Westminster and Carroll County. Born five years apart in the 1830s and dying three years apart in the 1910s, these two men, friends from boyhood, led lives that intersected for almost 75 years, professionally and personally. As a young man Hering worked for Reese's father. Then they both became intimately connected with the newly-founded Western Maryland (now McDaniel) College. Hering was a trustee, treasurer and occasional lecturer in anatomy and hygiene, and Reese, whose appointment was approved by Hering, was a professor of Latin and Greek language and literature. Both received honorary degrees from the College, both spoke at the dedication of Alumni Hall in 1899, and both were honored with portraits that now hang in the same room at the College. And each was the toastmaster for the other's testimonial dinner. Both their wives died when the women were in their late forties. They were both very active in the Masons, they lived about a block apart

on Main Street for much of their lives, and no doubt crossed paths almost daily as they walked the streets of the growing town.

BOYHOOD YEARS

Joshua Webster Hering was born March 8, 1833, on the Hering homestead at Beaver Dam (near Johnsville) in Frederick County, Maryland, the fifth of eight children of a miller, Daniel Saylor Hering (1800-1876), and Margaret (Orr) Hering (1800-1863). After receiving a limited educational foundation in the local schools, he served as an apprentice in John Kinzer's country store in Johnsville until age 18, when he came to Westminster in April 1851, to train as a clerk in the

mercantile establishment of Jacob F. Reese and Sons, located at the corner of Main and Center Streets (where Mathias Monuments is now located). Jacob Reese was the father of James W.

Reese, and quite possibly young Hering boarded with the Reese family and came to know the 13-year-old James. Hering described this early meeting: "It was here and at this time, that I formed the acquaintance of a youth, who was to be one of the most intimate and confidential friends of my

DRUGS, MEDICINES, PAINTS, OILS,
DYESTUFFS, PERFUMERY, FANCY
ARTICLES, NOTIONS, BOOKS,
STATIONERY, &c.

DR. J. W. HERING

HAVING purchased the entire stock of HERING & CHRIST, respectfully announces to his friends and the public generally, that he is prepared to furnish them upon the most moderate terms, with every article in his line of business. His stock is very large, carefully selected, and persons purchasing from his establishment, may rely upon getting pure and unadulterated articles.

[May 15, 1856.]

Ad for Hering's drug store, *Carroll County Democrat*,
June 5, 1856

after life, JAMES W. REESE. . . . For intelligence and culture he was far superior to any person of his age I have ever known, - [he] was indeed, a Prodigy, intellectually. He was a boy of beautiful manners and one of the finest conversational powers, mature and thoughtful, making him a most delightful companion. . . . We were from our first acquaintance, close personal friends.” Two years later, Jacob Reese gave up his commercial enterprise and went into banking at the newly-formed Farmers and Mechanics Bank. Hering, deciding that store keeping was not his calling, began studying for the medical profession under Dr. William A. Mathias, a Westminster physician. In 1855, along with his older brother Edwin, he was awarded the Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Maryland (his medical school diploma is now part of the Historical Society’s manuscript collection). He soon thereafter established his first office in the old City Hotel at the corner of Main and Court Streets. Immediately upon his return to Westminster Hering bought a half-interest, with Jesse B. Christ, in a local drug business in Carroll Hall at 179 East Main Street, because he knew he could not depend on his fledgling medical practice for total support. But 14 months later he bought Christ out for \$1,250 and put his brother-in-law, 16-year-old George Trumbo, in charge. Because his medical practice had grown so large that he could no longer give attention to the drug business, Hering sold the pharmacy to his brother Frank in November 1860.

Born in Carroll County on October 3, 1838, James William Reese was the youngest of three sons of Jacob F. (1798-1872) and Eleanor (Fisher) Reese (1798-1871), and the grandson of David Fisher, one of the oldest citizens and largest landowners in the community. James prepared for college first through private tutoring and then by attending St. Timothy’s Hall in Catonsville, Maryland, where his classmates included Edward, Junius, and John Wilkes Booth. At 17 he entered Princeton College,

graduating with a bachelor’s degree in 1859. A serious and critical student, he won honors and the distinction of being elected class orator, delivering the classical oration on Commencement Day. One of his classmates described him as “the best man in the whole class. . . no one approached him in fine literary instincts.” He was offered the post of tutor at Princeton but declined it to prepare for the Episcopal ministry. He entered the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church in New York in 1860 and graduated in 1863.

CIVIL WAR ERA

In 1855 Hering married Margaret Henrietta Trumbo, a union that produced four children: Joseph Trumbo (1864-1924) who became a doctor like his father, Florence Gertrude (Murray) (1867-1920), Charles Edgar (1870-1910), and Grace Etta (Miller) (1874-1955). When Hering’s wife Margaret died in 1883 at age 48, he remained a widower for five years, until his marriage to Catharine E. Armacost (1844-1927). There were no children from this union.

His medical practice grew rapidly as he visited his patients on horseback; soon he became associated in practice with Dr. J. Howell Billingslea at 189 East Main Street.



James W. Reese as a young man.
(HSCC collection)

Apparently his medical practice put enough demands on his strength and health that he retired in 1867 and moved briefly to Virginia. But he soon returned to Westminster to reside at 156 East Main Street, to assume the position of cashier (CEO) in the Union National Bank, and to serve as a consulting physician whose services were in constant demand. Although he no longer practiced medicine regularly, he remained a student of medicine throughout his life.

Reese, meanwhile, was ordained in September of 1863 in Annapolis, and from January 1864 until January 1870 he was rector of the Church of the



1862 image of the Church of the Ascension on Court Street (built 1844-1846), where The Reverend James Reese served as Rector from 1864-1870. (HSCC collection)

Ascension in Westminster. This service brought him little compensation from the parish, and he no doubt resided with his parents until his marriage to Mary Pauline Perry in 1868, when they went to live with her mother's sister, Katherine Jones Shellman, at 206 East Main Street.

WESTERN MARYLAND COLLEGE

At the founding of Western Maryland College in 1867, Joshua Hering was elected one of the 33 charter trustees and continued to serve on the College Board for the next 45 years. He also was treasurer of the Board from 1868 to 1885 (being succeeded by a faculty member, William R. McDaniel), and in 1897 he succeeded J. T. Ward as president of the Board, a post he held until his death. From 1868 to 1913, Hering was also an occasional lecturer in anatomy and physiology. His significant role in the development of Western Maryland College was recognized in several ways during his life. He was awarded an honorary master of arts degree in 1885. A new multifunction annex to the west of the Main Building, to match Smith Hall to the east, was erected and formally opened in the summer of 1890. It was named Hering Hall in honor of the charter trustee and longtime member of the Local Committee (the three-man executive committee of the Board of Trustees).

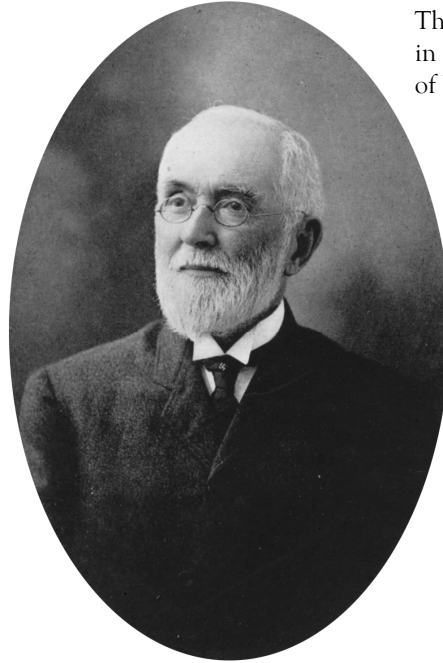
At a testimonial dinner in 1908, college president T. H. Lewis unveiled a life-size portrait of Hering commissioned by the trustees in honor of the "last of the glorious company of 33 worthy men" who founded the college 42 years before. Dr. Hering responded by recalling the history of the college and its many difficult times. "There was not a real college man in the board. . . . and we, therefore, had no conception of what was ahead of us in the way of work and difficulties. . . . If we had known in advance all the difficulties to be met and overcome, and all the dark places through which we were to pass, I doubt very much whether we would have had the courage and faith to undertake the work at all." He went on to salute his friends and fellows on the board who had passed on, noting, "Only I have survived. Why I do not know, but I do know that soon. . . . I will join them, and this portrait only will remain. If that portrait could speak, I would have it through all the years say to you that as God has been with us, may He ever abide, and may the watchword of the college continue to be 'Onward and upward.'" The portrait now hangs in the Board Room in Hoover Library.

It was James Reese who, as master of the Door to Virtue Masonic Lodge, laid the cornerstone of the first building of Western Maryland College on September 6, 1866 (See *Carroll History Journal*,



Western Maryland College c.1900, the College known to both Hering and Reese. Hering Hall (1890) is the building to the left of the larger Main building (in the center of the picture). (Courtesy of McDaniel College)

Vol. 1, No. 1). He was elected worshipful master of the lodge for 21 consecutive terms and also held various high offices in Maryland Masonry. In February 1870, the Western Maryland College faculty interviewed a candidate for a teaching position in ancient languages: the local Episcopal minister, James Reese. On February 28, 1870, he began his teaching career as professor of ancient languages and literature at the college, a position he would hold with great success for nearly 42 years. His election to the faculty had at first been questioned because he was not a Methodist Protestant. But the more liberal board president, John Smith, and trustee Joshua W. Hering pointed out that such objection was “not worthy of notice,” perhaps pointing out the special clause in the College charter specifically forbidding such a religious requirement, and Reese was duly elected. The new professor soon became known for his bright mind, extensive store of information, and pleasant disposition, which made him a valued



The portrait of Joshua W. Hering commissioned in 1908 by Western Maryland College. (Courtesy of McDaniel College)

member of the faculty and the community.

A singular honor was conferred upon Reese when the trustees voted in June 1873 to confer upon him an honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Immediately after receiving notification of his new degree, the Rev. Dr. Reese departed for an extended tour of Europe, returning in late September, when the Webster Society, a new college literary society, welcomed him back with a reception, during which he gave a brief narrative of his tour. On October 30 of that year, he gave the first lecture of the season, entitled “Homer’s *Iliad*: Why So Generally Regarded as the Masterpiece of Ancient Literature.” President J. T. Ward commented on the speech in his diary for that day: “I doubt whether there are many men living who could have said so much so well, in thirty minutes, on such a subject.”

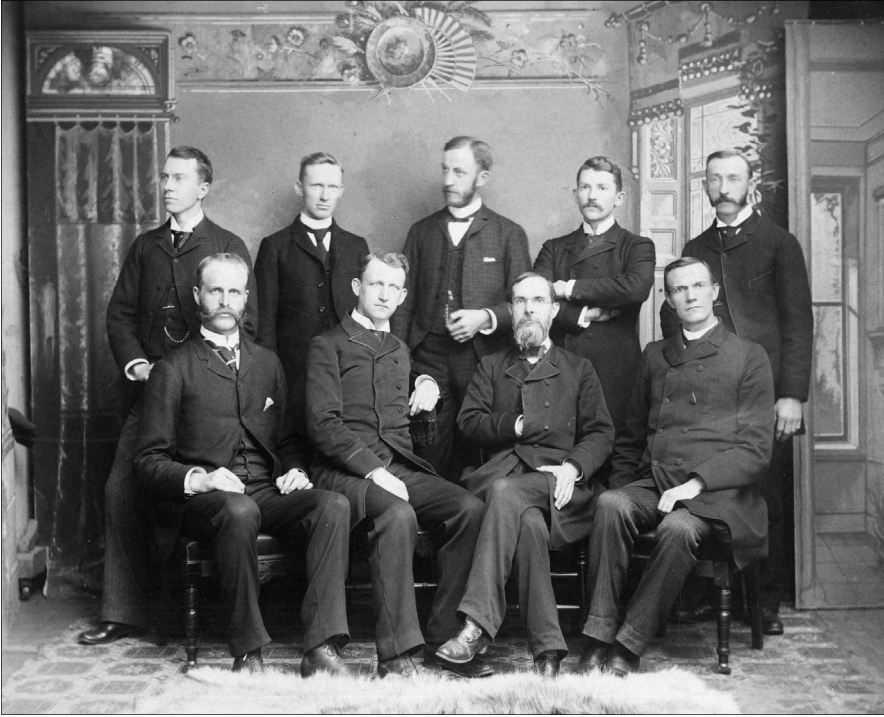
YEARS OF SERVICE

James Reese continued his teaching of Classics at Western Maryland College. He also became the founding president of the Oratorical Association of Maryland Colleges in 1888. The Reeses’ only child, Paul (1877-1944), was born at home on Main Street, with Dr. Hering in attendance. Paul would become a local architect and later an Episcopal priest as well as caregiver for his cousin, the venerable Mary Bostwick Shellman (1849-1938), in his home in Texas.

Joshua Hering had gained such a reputation as a banker that in 1898 he was elected president of the Maryland Banker’s Association. He also served four years as Carroll County senator in the Maryland Legislature, where he became the acknowledged



James Reese and his young son Paul, c. 1882. (HSCC collection)



The male members of the Western Maryland College faculty, 1890-91. Seated in the center of the first row are President Thomas H. Lewis and James W. Reese. William Roberts McDaniel is standing at the far left. (Courtesy of McDaniel College)

leader of the Democratic Party, and, because of his financial acumen, for three terms (1899–1901, 1901–4, 1907–10) he served as Maryland comptroller. He was one of three appointees by Governor Austin L. Crothers to the newly-created Maryland Public Service Commission in 1910. It is reported that he declined nominations for both president of the senate and governor. In recognition of his distinguished service to the state, St. John's College in Annapolis awarded him an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 1900. He also served as president of the Carroll County Mutual Fire Insurance Company for a number of years. Active in the Methodist Protestant Church, Hering was superintendent of the local Sunday school for 25 years, president of the church's board of trustees, a member of the General Conference of the church for ten successive sessions, and president of the General Conference in 1892 and 1896, the only layman to hold that office up to that time. He was also a charter member of the board of governors of the Westminster Theological Seminary when it was formed in 1882. He was active in Masonic activities and served on the Board of Managers of the Westminster Cemetery for 30 years, from 1883, and president of the board from 1905 to

1913. He was also instrumental in establishing the Home for Aged People on Main Street and was a life trustee of that institution. He participated in the development of Westminster soon after 1900 by building a double house for investment purposes at 156-162 on the newly-created Willis Street. Dr. Hering was a clear, forcible, and interesting speaker; few could equal his ability in gaining and holding the attention of an audience. He had refined and cultured tastes and played the violin.

HONORS IN THE TWILIGHT YEARS

In 1907 a testimonial dinner for Prof. Reese served as the Mid-Winter Banquet of the Western Maryland College Alumni Association.

Unfortunately, Reese could not attend because of illness, but that did not stop the many tributes to the professor of 37 years, including one from his former

student William R. McDaniel. That evening the association proposed, as an expression of the high esteem in which the professor was held by all his former students, to commission Baltimore artist Oscar Hallwig to paint Reese's likeness. Many alumni subscribed, and the portrait was unveiled at the 1907 Commencement as a surprise for Reese. The picture now hangs in the Hoover Library Board Room.

The *Western Maryland College Monthly* described the unveiling:

One of the most interesting and pleasing incidents of the commencement was the unveiling and presentation of a beautiful life-size portrait of Prof. James W. Reese, Ph.D., who has been the professor of the Latin and Greek languages at the college for more than 37 years, having begun his connection with the institution before its first commencement. The presentation speech was made by William G. Baker, Jr., '94 of Baltimore, retiring president of the Alumni Association. In view of Professor Reese's long and valuable

services to the college, he was presented a handsome sum of money voted by the trustees. Prof. Reese was greatly surprised and deeply moved by these evidences of appreciation and affection, and on rising to express his gratitude, he took refuge in the Latin tongue to conceal his emotion and spoke impromptu in this language.



The portrait of James W. Reese commissioned in 1907 by the alumni of Western Maryland College. (Courtesy of McDaniel College)

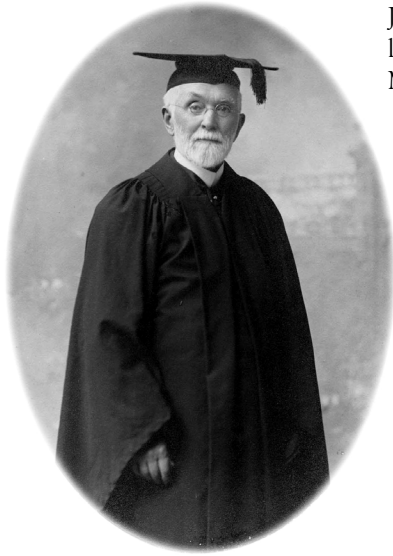
The next year, at a testimonial dinner held at the College in Joshua Hering's honor, attended by Governor Crothers, various state politicians, trustees, and friends, Dr. James Reese was the toastmaster. Reese reminisced that he and Hering had been friends for 57 years with not one moment's unpleasantness; he also recalled letters between them when they were young men, pouring out their hearts about their sweethearts, whom they later married – "We both had it bad." This was followed by addresses from 11 other friends including College Trustee Dr. Thomas O. Crouse who commented: "Possibly oftener than any other man Doctor Hering was held up to myself as a model and an example. And for the absolute cleanliness of his life, for the unsullied purity of his character, for the kindness of his disposition, for his congeniality, for his cordiality [and] urbanity, and for the consideration that he. . . has shown to. . . younger men – for all these things I have esteemed and have loved him." Westminster Theological Seminary President Dr. Hugh L. Elderdice amused the audience and the honoree by saying that the best tribute he could pay to Dr. Hering was to say: "I am a Republican by natural birth; a Prohibitionist by spiritual birth, and a Democrat by a fall from grace every time Doctor Hering is on the ticket." Dr. Hering humbly responded to these many toasts by saying: "I have endeavored through my life to live in a plain and simple way, doing my duty as I would find it, doing it with conscientiousness and with a desire to perform it to the very best of my ability. If I have won the esteem of my friends and fellow citizens I am glad of it. I appreciate it."

On February 26, 1910, a date chosen because it marked the close of his 40th year at the college, the Alumni Association again honored Prof. Reese at its

Mid-Winter Banquet at the Hotel Belvedere in Baltimore, and this time he was able to attend. The toastmaster was board president Dr. Joshua Hering. Many distinguished alumni and friends came from all over the state. Also attending was Daniel Hering (Dr. Hering's younger cousin, now the dean of the Graduate School of New York University). Numerous toasts were given and responded to by various individuals. President Thomas

H. Lewis (one of Reese's many former students) paid glowing tribute, declaring that the professor gave the college its first advance in the educational world. "When we think of that peculiar and powerful helpfulness we call scholarship," he said, "we bow the knee first of all to James W. Reese, and without a trace of envy or reservation give him our 'Ave Caesar!'" Reese's long affiliation with the Masons was recognized, and Judge J. A. C. Bond, representing the townspeople of Westminster, presented him with a silver loving cup. Bond said to the honoree: "On your name, sir, the fame and scholarly rank of Western Maryland College has been most widely borne and solidly founded. You have been a tower of strength through all its vicissitudes." After long and hearty applause, Reese finally responded in "that gentle, genial way which is so characteristic of him." The faculty also recognized Dr. Reese's completion of 40 years' service with a resolution: "Forty years of eminently faithful and successful teaching, of wholesome and lasting moral influence over the students, and of support and extension of the good name and fame of the college."

The first professor to remain long enough to retire from the College was James William Reese who, because of failing health, left active service in 1912, when he was named the college's first professor *emeritus*. The *Western Maryland College Monthly* noted, "To the college at large it is not extravagant to say that Professor Reese, more than any other one man, gave [the college] its first real advance into educational reputation. He shaped its ideals, gave direction and character to its curricula . . . so that the college quickly gained and has never lost a position of respectability in the educational world." He was



Joshua W. Hering in cap and gown in his role as lecturer in anatomy and physiology at Western Maryland College. (Courtesy of McDaniel College.)

also remembered for having laid the cornerstones of most of the college buildings in Masonic ceremonies. In recognition of almost 42 years of continuous and distinguished service (during

which he occasionally acted as president in the early years), he was retired at full salary (\$1,200), which he received until his death.

Hering recorded in his memoirs some personal thoughts about Reese: "His life has been an inspiration to me, in prompting me to an effort to reach some degree of culture. . . . His general fund of useful information is amazing, and even more wonderful than this, is the extreme accuracy of his knowledge. It is said of some persons that they 'know a little about everything,' but it may be truthfully said of James W. Reese, that he knows a great deal about everything that is worth knowing, and knows it through and through."

FINAL DAYS

Joshua Hering died at his home on September 23, 1913, after an illness of about six months. His passing was extensively eulogized in the local papers in which he was called one of the most distinguished citizens of Maryland. It is interesting to note that at the funeral in the Methodist Protestant Church, with President T. H. Lewis as one of the officiating ministers, the six pallbearers were all trustees of the College, including Dr. McDaniel. Among the 24 honorary pallbearers were the directors of the Union National Bank and his old friend, Dr. James W. Reese. Burial was in the Westminster Cemetery.

From early manhood James Reese was plagued with a frail body susceptible to illnesses, and the last five

years of his life were spent in increasing blindness and ill health, Mary B. Shellman being his primary caretaker because

his wife had predeceased him in 1890. He died on March 30, 1917, and his funeral was held at the Church of the Ascension, with burial in the cemetery behind the church in the Shellman/Reese plot. The six pallbearers were all College faculty colleagues, including his former student, William R. McDaniel. Eight honorary pallbearers included Westminster seminary president Hugh L. Elderdice and local physician L. K. Woodward. His death was mourned in the community and by everyone associated with the college, because this gentle, scholarly man epitomized the educational program and life of the early college. In 1918, the board erected a tablet in his honor, appropriately inscribed in Latin, which is now in Baker Chapel.

James W. Reese and Joshua W. Hering were the best of friends their whole long lives. They shared many life experiences, both happy and sad, and reveled in each other's professional and personal successes. The Westminster community and Carroll County were significantly better places for their having lived and worked here. And they were men whom we all would be proud to know if they were alive today.

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EYEWITNESS TO WAR

Joshua Hering's services were much in demand during the Civil War, following local engagements and especially that at Gettysburg, when he assisted the army medics in aiding the wounded who were brought to the Old Union Church (in the middle of the Westminster Cemetery) that served as a hospital. He was even temporarily under arrest during the Southern occupation of the town, although he was a Southern sympathizer during the conflict. Years later he noted in his memoirs,

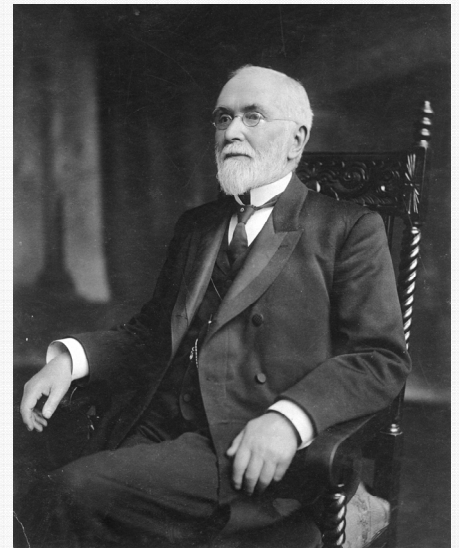
On. . . . June 29th, 1863, about two o'clock in the afternoon, without the slightest knowledge upon the part of our citizens that there were any confederate soldiers near us, the advance guard of General J. E. B. Stuart's entire cavalry force, numbering about 6000 cavalry, with artillery, was approaching the town on the Washington Road. . . . The [Union cavalry] came down through the town [from the hill at the west end of town] in good style and were met by the confederate advance at the junction of the Washington and Main Street, where a sharp cavalry engagement took place four persons were killed and some twelve or fifteen wounded

. . . . Immediately after the Cavalry fight. . . . the confederates began to pass into Westminster. . . . all afternoon and nearly all night. . . . General Stuart dismounted and was for sometime on the pavement in front of the "Shellman" property I met him there, and with others of the town, had quite a conversation with him. He was tall and erect, well proportioned, with large bony frame, full beard, which was rather sandy, and looked every inch a Cavalry leader. . . . When I go back in thought to 1865, I find myself moving among some of the most momentous events of American History.

A law passed by Congress in 1863 allowed draft-eligible men to hire substitutes to fight in the Union Army for \$300. In 1864 Hering and John L. Reifsnider were selected to go to Baltimore to Camp Bradford to procure substitutes for a number of local draftees. Hering reported on the experience:

We spent a week. . . . in arranging the matter, and finally we got all our substitutes in and our drafted men furnished with certificates of release. . . . It was really a responsible and somewhat dangerous position to

be placed in, as we were compelled to carry the cash with us to the Camp, for the payment of the substitutes, and the Camp and its surroundings were about as tough and uninviting as you can well imagine. . . . One morning, we found a dead soldier lying right inside the enclosure. . . . We inquired what it meant, and were told that the fellow was put in as a substitute the day before, and was attempting to get over the fence at night and desert, when under orders, the guard shot and killed him, and that they had him laid in the conspicuous place as a warning to others.



Joshua W. Hering, Comptroller of the State of Maryland. (HSCC collection)

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