

Jay Graybeal

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There were several efforts to found the new county. There were folks in Carroll county, from Carroll county that had thought we needed a new county seat in Union Town. There was a movement, there was a newspaper called the Engine of Liberty published to format a new county. That happened in the War of 1812 period. But it was not until the 1830s there really were strong efforts to found a new county. There were several votes in the legislature. One of my favorite stories, there was a vote down in my hometown of Manchester that county folks of Baltimore county at that time didn't want to be part of a new county. There was a portion of the people. And they drug a cannon up on the hill, Catholic Hill, actually where I grew up, and fired a victory shot at Westminster which they thought was the reason that they weren't going to have a new county. Shortly thereafter in 1837 the county was formed, and I think most people felt that was a good idea. You had half of Baltimore county, half of Frederick county kind of together, and you have a new county. There was great celebration in Westminster.

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Sure it was done by popular vote. Let's say in '36 there was a vote that did not pass the county but it was re-looked at, and then it was passed; and the county was formed in 1837.

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I think the first one, it's January and there was a bad snowstorm so the celebration was somewhat subdued, but a celebration none the less of a new county. It's exciting thing. Named for Charles Carroll, the last signer of the Declaration of Independence, a Marylander, and you know that was part of their celebration honoring Charles Carroll.

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I think Westminster became the focus, obviously people not traveling maybe had local celebrations more subdued perhaps, but Westminster was the focus at that point.

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Well I think most of your immigrants, or emigrants in that case, those who were already here, were coming for opportunity as most people had come to the new world. You're looking in the 1730s, 1740s, people starting to move into this area, Pennsylvania Germans coming south and Tidewater English coming north. We always think of migration being from east to west, but in this area, its north to south, south to north. So those two cultural groups, Pennsylvania Germans bringing their ways coming into the northern half of what would become Carroll county, and then Tidewater English coming up out of the Annapolis, Anne Arundel County area bringing their ways. And their impacts on the counties are quite different. In the northern half of the county you have towns being created, small farms as Germans were used to, and in the south you have larger plantations, the idea of building a larger farm, and you don't have the growth of towns until much later.

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African American history obviously begins when the Tidewater English come that the use of slaves in their culture, an agrarian culture, large farms, they did bring slavery to Carroll county. Pennsylvania Germans owned slaves to a much lesser degree. One of the reasons they had left Germany was because of oppression and it was felt owning slaves was not consistent with their culture, although some Pennsylvania Germans did. It's interesting some of those who were here early who had done well in this economy, manumitted their slaves, freed their slaves when they passed on in the 1820s, 1830s, adding to that free black population. The Quakers also set their slaves free. Methodism formed in Carroll county, also did not believe in holding slaves. So as early as the first census in 1790 you had nearly equal slave and free black populations in what would become Carroll county. And those populations stayed nearly equal up until the Civil War.

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The Tidewater English favored a large plantation lifestyle, 400-500 acre farms were not uncommon for them, very labor intensive. They were growing tobacco and those crops were then exported down to Annapolis and shipped out. And that economy used slavery, and those large farms were their idea not having a community center like you would have in the German populations. You'd have towns like Taneytown, Union Town, Manchester, Hampstead; these were town centers and while you had agriculture they were smaller sustenance operations, maybe 150 acres, 200 acres is what they were looking at but they differed in contrast with the plantations in the southern part of the county.

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The small farm operations generated a lot of grain crops, and there was adequate water power throughout Carroll county, so you have mills dotting the landscape, hundreds of mills in the history of Carroll county. Water power was a very reliable thing most of the year although there were times when was low, the mill would sit idle, but throughout most of the year those mills operate grinding grain. There were also textile operations throughout the county, weaving cloth, and again used for the local economy and sometimes you'd export it to Baltimore and Annapolis, and raising funds for those farmers who were in those operations.

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We had good road systems in Carroll county. There were many Indian paths and they obviously found the easier way through the region. And Carroll county did not have large settlements of Native Americans, but used these roads to travel through hunting game, traveling from different parts throughout their life cycles in the year. And those roads became the pathways of immigration, the pathways of commerce throughout the county.

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The typical Pennsylvania German community is at a crossroads of transportation, again commerce and industry. You would have the tradesmen, the blacksmiths, the tanners, the local church would be there, the Reformed Lutheran Church and many times there were

Union churches with congregations would share a building. And then you had the small merchants, the tavern, and those folks would be congregated along a small main street. Then around the community would be those small German farms that would bring their produce or come to market in the small town.

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Obviously the settlement period, is sort of like what I like to call the Wild West. You had a town founder, pure development; there's no rules and regulations. A man would buy a piece of real estate and lay it out into lots, and then would sell those lots. And obviously had an idea of where public buildings would be made to give land to say where the local church would be built. To encourage those sale of those lots and those town founders, and there were several of them throughout Carroll county, did very well, establish a town. And they also sold what they called ground rents so a rent would be paid so they would encourage someone to buy a lot, build a home in a certain number years, and then pay a ground rent; it was almost an income that they could rely on for sometimes after 100 years.

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Westminster is a good example of how a town was laid out. William Winchester buys several pieces of land here, Whites Level, Timber Ridge, several other tracts and lays out lots in the 1760s, encourages people to buy those lots. The historical society is at the east end of town; we think of Westminster being down the center by the railroad tracks, in the center of town now but the historical society is at 210 East Main Street, that's the end of Westminster and it goes in the other direction. So towns as they evolved over a period of time, with commerce and changes in transportation and the road system, particularly the railroad coming to Westminster, the center of town actually moves west.

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Well certainly the coming of the railroad is certainly a great American invention. Transportation was always key to town development and if the railroad passed you by, as it did in some Carroll county towns, those towns did not grow. Westminster obviously being a county seat was always going to be a center of commerce, government, industry and so forth, so the railroad coming here in the 1860s made it, cemented that position for transportation commerce. In some ways it moved the center of town west because the railroad has to follow the topography.

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With the coming of the railroads you have a greater ability to transport goods, both agricultural product but also implements down to Baltimore. The canning industry develops in Carroll county, very strong because of that strong agricultural land here. You have the Shriver canning company that's in business right after the Civil War, connected with Baltimore. You have a couple of implement companies in Carroll county that are serving the needs of farmers as implements are developed. You have the Taylor Manufacturing company in Westminster building agricultural implements. Those could be shipped throughout the county either by railroad, or exported down to Baltimore, and sent to other agricultural areas.

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In Union Mills you have the Shriver family setting out very early in the 1790s, a complex with a mill building, also tannery, and you have a very small community there growing up around that to supply the labor and to supply the raw materials for that operation. They were very successful; they were good businessmen. They had an excellent location, and they worked very hard to build that small industry there.

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Well transportation always an important theme in looking at the county history. In the beginning you have pathways used by Native Americans growing into roads, wagon and horse transportation, the coming of the railroad at the time of the Civil War and then the coming of the automobile in the 20th century changes transportation. The railroad made it easier to go to work in Baltimore, people would commute; you had trains running constantly from Westminster and the other towns down to Baltimore. But by the 1950s the automobile eclipsed railroad transportation, and also the coming of the truck -- truck transportation, then automobile transportation largely replacing a lot of the rail transportation, at least for passengers. Then by the 1960s rail transportation's largely gone in Carroll County. There's been a resurgence in the last 20 years moving freight; some of that freight never stopped, but the passenger was gone, again yielding to the automobile, the great American invention, the great equalizer, everyone has an automobile and relying on that. But I think public transportation ebbs and flows, and we may be seeing a great reliance on public transportation as we've had over the next few years in Carroll County.

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Worm seed was one of the unique Carroll county products. It was a very difficult plant to grow but Carroll county had the ideal soils and climate for that. So in the 19th and 20th centuries, worm seed production was nearly unique to Carroll county. It was a product that was used in vermifuse, a medicine for livestock animals. And some of the older fellows used to talk about it would take those products to New York, a very valuable product; it was shipped there. In the mid 20th century there were other products that replaced that so it's no longer grown here, but it's one of those unique Carroll county stories. In the Taylorsville area sort of the epicenter for growing that unique product in the 20th century.

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Well during the 19th century, newspaper publishing was done on a much local level than we see today. You had newspapers in almost all of the towns in Carroll county, and those did survive until the late 20th century. The newspapers were quite partisan in the 19th century. The editors were the voice of the community and also for partisan politics. The early papers in Carroll county; the Engine of Liberty in Union Town, was promoting the creation of Carroll county and those newspaper editors throughout the Civil War, very vocal. You had an editor in Westminster who lost his life over his editorial had mentioned right before Lincoln was assassinated perhaps it was better if Lincoln hadn't survived the war, and when he was assassinated he was run out of town and told not to

come back that he'd be killed. And he came back and he was killed. So newspapers are a very big part of the communities. They were mostly weeklies, four pages long, and those did survive. Some did come weekly, some become absorbed by other papers and into the late 20th century.

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Springfield Hospital was built on the estate of Governor Brown, the only governor from Carroll county, and his estate become a state hospital, an important part of the economy of the southern part of Carroll county.

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The rich agricultural economy in Carroll county naturally led to the creation of state fairs or county fairs that were greatly participated in by local residents. I think in the late 1860s you had your first fair in Carroll county, and it was a typical fair where you would bring the agricultural products, the domestic products to be judged. There were prizes awarded as early as I think President Grant was one of the first presidents to visit Carroll county, and came to the agricultural fair here in Westminster. There's documentation of him staying in the local paper editor's house, and visiting his local paper.

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One of the notable events in Carroll county history that had an effect on national history was the creation of rural free delivery. Edwin Shriver was a pioneer of rural free delivery and that started in Carroll county in 1899. And Edwin was asked to go around the country and help start other rural free deliveries throughout the United States.

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During World War I there was broad public support for the conflict; everyone knew someone who was in uniform. We had almost 2,000 people from Carroll county in uniform, and you had a State organization called Council of Defense. In Carroll county you had a local chapter of the Council of Defense which coordinated all of the civilian war work. The council worked with organizations such as the Red Cross as a good example of local support. They had knitting groups that would knit things for the soldiers, prepare things that the Army and Navy couldn't provide for them. They knitted wristlets, they knitted helmets, they knitted scarves, they needed sweaters, and those things were produced, had a little tag on it, it would have on it from the chapter and the Red Cross and they would be sent overseas or to state-side camps to supplement the soldiers' uniform equipment. And almost everyone was involved in local war work either working for a Red Cross. They also collected peach pits, something we don't about today as being a war material, but peach pits were used to make the charcoal that was the ingredient to put into gas masks to protect soldiers. Gas was one of the horrible weapons created during the First War, thankfully not used much after that, and the gas mask was a critical thing. I remember reading a local paper that said they would put red, white, and blue barrels outside the stores in Carroll county, and you were asked to deposit your peach pits. And they would be collected up, and then burned to make the charcoal. And then that would be sent in those soldier's gas masks overseas. There was an incidence in one of the small towns where boys tipped over the peach pit barrel and were chastised by

the local newspaper editor for interfering with the war effort—a local prank, but a very serious subject, and people took it very seriously to support those soldiers, because again every one had a neighbor who was there, or son or daughter.

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In 1937 Carroll County celebrated the Centennial; it was a big event in Carroll County. There were lots of public programs, there were parades. There was a huge parade in Westminster with floats from all over the county celebrating the county heritage and the unique place names in Carroll County. That was a very important thing to the people to recognize that 100 year anniversary.

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The Great Depression certainly hit the people hard in Carroll County. Those in the manufacturing industries suffered because of the lack of demand for manufactured products. But Carroll County's strong agricultural economy did make it possible for many people to survive with less impact than it did say in an urban area where more people were out of work. Certainly the small farms weren't selling a lot of their produce but certainly they were able to survive. The sustenance farms that we've seen here for 150-200 years did continue, and there was less impact. And then the coming of World War II, the great industry, the great buildup at that time brought us out of the Depression.

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You know, I don't have the statistics but I seem to remember that there was only...I mean I was working here at the historical society in the '90s when agriculture was finally eclipsed by other parts of the economy. So agriculture had stayed in the beginning years all the way to the mid 1990s as the driver in Carroll's economy. When I think of the 1950s, we think of the automobile, the popularization of leisure time, driving, and roads being built, like the Westminster by-pass which was built in 1954 which took industry and commerce off the main street of Westminster, relieve that traffic and put it out on by-pass. Governor McKeldin when he opened the highway spoke about how this would be an engine of development. We think of it today as why did we build all those businesses out there but in 1954 they were looking at that to build new businesses, and now we're looking at needing a new by-pass to come around Westminster. So the automobile, the truck, all those traffics, those economy drivers you see growing in the 1950s, and industry building, population growing, and I think that changes the economic base in Carroll County. So by the mid-1990s; it's no longer purely agricultural, but it still remains strong in parts of Carroll County.

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Well I think Westminster's fate, if you will, is inevitable being the county seat starting in 1837, it was going to become the economic governmental commercial center of Carroll County that would be natural because this being the county seat. The original farms that surrounded Carroll County have given way to development, which started immediately after the town was laid out; it was attracting people to this center. But the growth of the county after the 1830s and throughout the 19th century was a natural progression of people coming here for that center of commerce and government.

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Carroll County is still a great place to live. You have the heritage of Carroll County stretching back several 100 years. The imprint on the county from those early settlers and those later residents of come to call Carroll County home. Everyone's made a contribution to our heritage, and for me, it's still a great place to live.