

Carroll County Times “Carroll’s Yesteryears” Articles

Summer Tournament

Carroll County Times article for 17 June 1990

By Joe Getty, Executive Director, Historical Society of Carroll County

On Saturday the Historical Society will sponsor an Antebellum Costume Ball at Antrim in Taneytown. While some of the activities that will take place in conjunction with the ball are based on local history, the planning committee has also used the theme of *Gone with the Wind* to spark the imaginations of those planning to attend this event.

Of course, *Gone with the Wind* is a product of 20th century romanticism. The author, Margaret Mitchell, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for the novel in 1937. The movie won the Academy Award for best picture in 1939 as well as awards for director Victor Fleming, actress Vivian Leigh, and supporting actress Hattie McDaniel.

The choice of this *Gone With the Wind* theme poses an interesting question: If we select an antebellum theme for a 1990 summertime special event, what would the people of Carroll County have used over 100 years ago for a romantic theme?

Our historical newspapers show that one of the popular events during past Carroll County summers was based on the chivalrous days of the knights in shining armor. Each year a jousting tournament and costume ball was held for the entertainment of local residents. An article in the August 14, 1873 edition of the Westminster newspaper, *The American Sentinel*, provides the following description of the tournament:

“The morning of Thursday last dawned auspiciously for the gallant Knights who had entered the lists to contend for the prizes and privileges of the Tourney. Soon the street leading to the Fair Grounds was thronged with an eager multitude, in carriages, on horseback, and on foot, pressing towards the scene of the day’s diversion. About half past ten o’clock the Knights paraded throught the city, in knightly costume headed by the National Grays Band. They were met at the West End by the Frizzellsburg Silver Cornet Band, who accompanied them on their return to the Fair Grounds, where they were appropriately addressed by Hon. Wm. M. Merrick. The tilting then commenced, the following Knights appearing in the lists:

J. F. Miller, Knight of Rocky Ridge; Jacob Newcomer, Knight of Emmittsburg; H. N. Zile, Knight of Hunckadora; J. Zur Buchen, Knight of Black Plume; George Shumaker, Knight of Red Cloud; John G. Shunk, Knight of Mountain View; Samuel Reindollar, Knight of Taneytown; G. W. Motter, Knight of Abdallah Stead; William Burgoon, Knight of Erin; John Shaffer, Knight of Edgewood; N. Bruce Boyle, Knight of Carroll; Harry Lilly, Knight of Conowago; Thomas Henifer, Knight of Lost Cause; J. Grason, Knight of Baltimore County; Joshua S. Burke, Knight of Malta; E. L. Jacobs, Knight of New Windsor; William Shunk, Knight Before Last; and Mr. McCurdy, Knight of Washington city.

The ring, which was 2 inches in diameter, was hung immediately in front of the judges stand. The Knights were required to ride 100 yards in 12 seconds, and it was soon apparent that skillful horsemanship and a well practiced hand were necessary to take the ring at that rate of speed. Each Knight rode five times, when it was found that only two of them, Messrs. Miller and Motter had not

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missed taking it a single time. The next most successful were Messrs. Grason, Jenifer and Reindollar, who were tied, each having taken the ring three times. A 1 1/2 inch ring was then substituted and Messrs. Miller and Motter contended for the first prize, a silver pitcher and goblets, and the privilege of naming the Queen of Love and Beauty, which was won by Mr. Miller, he having taken the ring twice, and Mr. Motter but once. The second prize, a handsome saddle and bridle was awarded to Mr. Motter, who also won the privilege of naming the first Maid of Honor. Mr. Grason won the right to name the second Maid of Honor and Mr. Jenifer the third. At the request of the Knights, the running race then took place. After this race the successful Knights proceeded in the most interesting part of the exercises – the selection of the Queen and her Maids of Honor.

Mr. Miller crowned as Queen of Love and Beauty, Miss Rebecca Butler, of Westminster; Mr. Motter crowned as first Maid of Honor, Miss Buffington, of Bruceville; Mr. Grason crowned as second Maid of Honor, Miss Mary B. Shellman, of Westminster; and Mr. Jenifer crowned as third Maid of Honor, Miss Kate Woods, of Westminster, after which a brief but beautiful and eloquent coronation address was delivered by Hon. John E. Smith. At night a ball was given at Wheeler’s Hotel, and dancing was kept up until a late hour.”

In 1874, a “Fete Champetre” was sponsored by a local group called the Amphions. An orchestra played from the Court House balcony and tables of refreshments were located throughout Court Square. A number of people wore costumes and participated in entertainments for the people in attendance. The major excitement, however, centered around the scenic environment created for the evening. The recent introduction of gas lighting in Westminster provided the technology for a remarkable backdrop for this summer night, as described in the local newspaper:

“The entertainment given by the Amphions was certainly a splendid success. The Court House grounds, lit up as they were with hundreds of brilliant gas jets, chandeliers and innumerable Chinese lanterns, scattered in the greatest profusion through the trees, presented a scene of beauty never before witnessed in this city or county. Over each entrance to the grounds was thrown a huge, beautifully trimmed arch, so lit up with gas as to seem a great, brilliant, blazing semicircle of fire. Beneath this was suspended a large and beautiful chandelier and on every side long rows of Chinese lanterns. Within the grounds the trees lit up with the many colored lights, glistening through the green of the foliage, present a strange and beautiful scene. Viewed from Main Street the grove looked like an enchanted place – like fairyland. Approaching nearer, and entering from Court Street, the illusion was scarcely dispelled. The scores of beautifully dressed ladies and children glancing lightly about, here and there, under the soft, bright lights, looking like ‘strange creatures in a stranger land.’ ”

These are just two examples of a wide range of summertime activities that are part of the recreation and leisure heritage of Carroll County. Some traditions are still carried on, such as the annual “Dutch Picnic” each August at Deer Park Lutheran Church where jousting is a featured event. Family reunions, camp meetings, church socials, strawberry festivals, local baseball games, seafood picnics and other Carroll County events are also part of this tradition. We invite you to join us at the Antebellum Costume Ball at Antrim, where we will not only be having a good time, but also will be sharing in part of Carroll County’s rich tradition of summertime special events.

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Photo Caption: This photograph captures details of a summertime picnic that featured flags and friendship, Chinese lanterns and steamed crabs in Manchester on July 28, 1910. Historical Society of Carroll County.