

THRASHER

CARRIAGE MUSEUM

The Story of the Sloan Carriage

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Since its humble beginnings in 1975 within a former school in Midland, Maryland, the Thrasher Carriage Museum attracted visitors interested in exploring one of the top five private collections of horse-drawn vehicles in the United States. The 50-piece collection was assembled over a 40-year period by James Thrasher, a prominent local businessman who grew up in Midland. The collection has since been moved and can now be seen at the Thrasher Carriage Museum in Frostburg, Maryland.

A blacksmith's son, Jim was born in 1913 and spent hours at the family "smithy," where he developed a life-long affection for horses. The oldest of eight boys and three girls, he worked his way from the family farm to a milk processing plant to local coal mines to construction sites before launching several successful businesses. By the 1950s, he had achieved a reputation for success and sufficient means to collect horse-drawn vehicles.

One of Jim's first carriages, an 1889 Extension-Front Brougham, manufactured by J.B. Brewster & Co., was a gift from Aleck Sloan, the president of the Lonaconing Savings Bank in Lonaconing, MD. Thrasher and Sloan had developed a friendship after Thrasher helped Sloan financially when the banks failed during the 1930s. After Jim's wife Mary died at the age of 43, Aleck's gift helped ease the heartbroken widower's loneliness and sparked his passion for collecting and restoring carriages. After his five children had grown, Jim traveled extensively throughout the U.S. and Canada to purchase carriages from auctions, estate sales and private collections.

The Brougham, an elegant horse-drawn, four-wheeled conveyance of a type once popular with stylish bachelors

around town, was designed with an extended front to allow two people to ride inside the covered carriage separate from the driver. The exterior, painted midnight black with cadmium yellow pinstriping, had aerodynamic features such as large round running lights trimmed in brass and beveled and curved front glass windows. Its interior had black diamond tufted seats made of wool with dark blue wool carpeting. Special options included silk window pull straps, gray rubber tires and spikes on the rear springs. Side window mud flaps and side door step covers helped prevent passengers from getting dust and mud on their clothing and shoes.

Mr. Thrasher was often seen driving one of his carriages, drawn by his beloved Morgan horses, along the road between Midland and Lonaconing. Passers-by in motorized vehicles were treated to a glimpse of times past when they saw Mr. Thrasher with his horse and carriage.

After his death in 1987, Allegany County purchased his collection, moved it to Frostburg, MD, and opened the Thrasher Carriage Museum in 1991 at the Depot terminus of the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. Train passengers receive free admission to the Museum as an option during the layover in Frostburg before the train returns to the Cumberland Station. Mr. Thrasher's collection offers visitors an opportunity to appreciate a forgotten way of life.

Thrasher Carriage Museum
19 Depot St., Frostburg, MD 21532
301-777-7200

Alleganymuseummd.org/
thrasher-carriage-collection

Hours of Operation: January – April
by appointment; May – October,
Noon – 2 pm Friday – Sunday;
November – mid-December,
Noon – 2 pm Saturday & Sunday.



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