

2024 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 637

Commending the Carroll County Historical Society.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, May 13, 2024

WHEREAS, the Carroll County Historical Society hosted its final run of the historical play *Thunder in the Hills*, which tells the story of the trial of Floyd Allen and the shooting in the Carroll County Courthouse that left five dead and divided the community for decades to come; and

WHEREAS, *Thunder in the Hills* was written by Carroll County native Frank Levering, who worked as a screenwriter in Hollywood before returning home to the Commonwealth to help care for his family's orchard after his father became ill; and

WHEREAS, Frank Levering had always been fascinated by the story of the shoot-out inside the Carroll County Courthouse, which traces its roots to 1910, when Floyd Allen, a local businessman and alleged bootlegger, prevented law-enforcement officers from arresting his two nephews who had been involved in a fight; and

WHEREAS, despite later bringing his nephews to the local jail himself, Floyd Allen was arrested for obstruction and sentenced to one year of prison in a jury trial on March 14, 1912; as a sheriff approached to lead him away, Floyd Allen, who was armed, refused to be taken, and while accounts differ on who fired the first shot, the end result was a massacre, with the judge, the Commonwealth's attorney, the sheriff, a juror, and a witness all killed; and

WHEREAS, Floyd Allen and his son, Claude, were both captured, tried, and executed at Virginia State Penitentiary a year later, and several other members of the Allen family were sentenced to prison but later pardoned; the shocking and tragic event caused a deep rift in the community for many years; and

WHEREAS, as the centennial of the tragedy approached, Frank Levering worked with county officials and the Carroll County Historical Society to author the two-act play, which was first performed in 2012 as part of a commemoration that included speakers, symposiums, memorial tributes, and other events to analyze and interpret the event; and

WHEREAS, Frank Levering himself performed in the play, along with former Delegate Tom Jackson, who portrayed Floyd Allen, and a cast of nonprofessional local actors; the initial run was a hit, with 12 sold-out shows at the historic 1873 Carroll County Courthouse, where the actual events took place; and

WHEREAS, *Thunder in the Hills* returned for additional performances in 2016, 2018, and 2019 and has been performed more than 50 times for nearly 6,000 people; proceeds have benefited the Carroll County Historical Society's efforts to renovate and preserve historic sites in the area, including the Sidna Allen House in Fancy Gap; and

WHEREAS, *Thunder in the Hills* has helped the community reconcile with the tragedy by providing a unique, emotional interpretation of a story that has been passed down through generations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Carroll County Historical Society hereby be commended on the occasion of the final run of the historical play *Thunder in the Hills*; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Carroll County Historical Society as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the organization's interpretation of an important local event and dedication to community engagement.

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