

In 1764, William Winchester, an Englishman laid out the 45 lots to become Westminster. The town stretched from Old Washington Road to present day Court Street. The town's location along the main route to Baltimore accounted for its first major growth, and the coming of the Western Maryland Railroad (1861) turned Westminster into a virtual boom town during the last half of the 19th century.

The area nearest the railroad tracks reflects this surge of activity. Hotels like the Albion and the Charles Carroll emerged. Small business structures like the John Christmas Restaurant, the Rexall building, and the White Palace were joined a few years later by town superstructures - the Wantz and Babylon buildings. The telephone company and fire department moved into this section of town.

Germans migrated into this area from Pennsylvania bringing with them an architectural tradition of sturdy brick or stone farm houses, which they adapted to the closer quarters of town living. The B.F. Shriver canning company is an example of this style architecture, as are the Wantz, Bennett and Utz houses along East Main Street.

East, toward the oldest section of town, more residences begin to appear, some (Gilbert, Billingslea, Shipley) were designed for the contemporary look of their decade, and other older dwellings (Beaver, Jones, Frazier) typify homes and shops of the early 1800's. The church and Opera House were built mid-19th century symbolizing Westminster's rising importance after becoming the county seat in 1837.

Center Street brings us into the 20th century as the War Memorial at the community playground entrance indicates. Along Willis Street, the homes built on the "mansion sites" created from the estate of John K. Longwell can be viewed. Longwell was probably the most influential of Westminster's citizens in creating Carroll County from Frederick and Baltimore counties in 1837. Much of Willis Street was settled between 1880 and 1920 by town business people who shared in the prosperity brought by the railroad.

TO BEGIN YOUR TOUR, park in the municipal parking lot north of Main Street at entrance on Longwell Avenue. Proceed west to Railroad Avenue and use directions interspersed throughout text for best viewing points. This tour takes approximately one hour to walk.

Stop alongside the Albion Hotel on Railroad Avenue to view:

14 Liberty Street

1. B.F. SHRIVER CO. 1885

Typical of early industrial building in this region, this attractive seven-bay fieldstone structure was Westminster's first canning factory. Operations continued on the Liberty Street site until early 20th century when it was bought by Koontz Dairy and then by Farmers Supply Company.

Cross E. Main Street and stand on corner to view:

12 West Main Street

2. BABYLON HOTEL 1896

A symbol of the rise of the merchant class, the Babylon Building is most noticeable for its two arches which surround three-sided bay windows. Notice how a continuous line is formed across the second floor by the addition of the central window topped with a pediment. This building and the Wantz building were the most impressive of Westminster's Victorian style commercial buildings in the late 19th century.

1-3 East Main Street

3. ALBION HOTEL 1886

Located at a busy intersection, the Albion Hotel catches the attention of the passersby with its distinctive Queen Anne touches - conical roofed tower, tall chimneys, recessed porch with arched lattice work, projecting balcony, arched window treatment and small square panes on the upper sash. The Queen Anne form of architecture became popular after 1876 and used a variety of form, textures, materials and colors, all of which are visible in this unique building designed by Jackson C. Gott, a Baltimore architect. The Albion Hotel had a favorable location opposite the railroad depot which was razed in 1961.

5-7 East Main Street

4. JOHN CHRISTMAS RESIDENCE & RESTAURANT 1870

Most homes and businesses built along Main Street were either three or five bays in width. Showing some individualism, this four bay structure served as both residence and business to the Christmas family.

9-17 East Main Street

5. WINCHESTER EXCHANGE

These three buildings date from the 1880's. The storefronts now serve as the entrance to Winchester Exchange.

Walk to 21 E. Main Street and stand in front of Wantz Building:

21-29 East Main Street

6. WANTZ BUILDING 1882

Charles Wantz, a cigar merchant and civic leader, built a two story brick building on these premises in 1882. The second floor at one time housed the telephone company in which Mary Shellman, the town's first telephone operator, met Alexander Graham Bell. (The Historical Society at 210 E. Main Street is in possession of a miniature telephone presented to Miss Mary as a memento of this meeting by the inventor.) The third floor was built especially for a Masonic meeting room. Seven years later (1889), an additional three story building was added west of the original which created the four sectional facade of today. Only the uneven number of windows betrays the fact that the building was built in two stages. Note the pressed brick above the second floor windows and the five ornamental bulbfinials along the rooftop which add to the architectural effectiveness of the Wantz Building.

39-41 East Main Street

7. OLD POST OFFICE BUILDING 1885

Built by Joseph B. Boyle in 1885, this three story, four bay building once housed the city's Post Office. Boyle was Postmaster here from 1885-1897.

Walk to 47-49 E Main and View:

47-49 East Main Street

8. WHITE PALACE 1880

Quite a departure from the vernacular style of other commercial buildings, the facade of the two and half story "White Palace" is the repository for a variety of brick work. Samples of Greek and Roman cross forms, Romanesque arches, dentils, corbeling and pilasters adorn the second story.

55 East Main Street

9. SCHMITT'S REXALL 1870

This flat-roofed commercial building was originally built as a private residence for the Ira C. Crouse family. Now it is a reminder of what drug stores used to be like. "Doc" Goodman, pharmacist and previous owner, had received nationwide publicity for his refusal to raise the price of five cent coke.

Cross over at crosswalk by Library, stand in front of Gilbert House

54-56 East Main Street

10. GILBERT HOUSE 1875

Recently restored, the Gilbert House now looks much as it did in 1875. It has had a variety of owners, one of which was the Taylor Motor Company. This business may have built the garage located behind and to one side of the house. Note the missing bricks in the gable of the garage. This provides an outlet for the hot air that accumulates in the loft. It is reminiscent of ornamental brick end barns built in this vicinity by Pennsylvania Germans.

66 East Main Street

11. WESTMINSTER FIRE COMPANY 1879

Following the city's growth pattern, the Westminster Fire Department moved west for the third time to this site. Baltimore architect, Jackson Gott, designed this towering structure of 92 feet in yellow brick and Baltimore County marble. A Seth Thomas clock, donated by Margaret Cassell Baile, a Westminster resident, decorates the tower. Marble plaques which date structural additions are visible along the front of the building.

Near corner of Longwell Avenue and E. Main Street, stop to view:

82-82 1/2 East Main Street

12. MRS. FRANK MYERS HOUSE 1885

The Myers House was altered in the late 19th century to the Second Empire style to create a contemporary look. Its tower and porch arrangement give it an asymmetrical appearance. Key hole shaped dormers provide light for the third floor which was created when the steep Mansard slate roof tile was added. The heavy cornice and arched window also added to the new look.

Also, note the Historical Marker on the corner of Longwell Avenue and East Main Street. It reads: "The first complete county rural free delivery service in the United States was inaugurated by the Post Office Department on December 20, 1899 covering the whole of Carroll County and small parts of adjacent counties with Westminster as the central distributing point." (Boyle was Postmaster during this time.)

Cross to the other side of East Main Street to view:

101 East Main Street

13. WANTZ HOUSE 1875

This three story Victorian townhouse is unrivaled in its elegant dimensions and in exquisite handling of the doorway and other woodwork. Note the elaborate fan light, the door and window moldings, heavy scroll brackets and French doors opening out to the cast iron balcony.

100 East Main Street

14. BENNETT HOUSE 1870

Another townhouse, simpler in tone to its large look-alike across the street, this three story Common bond was built five years earlier by the Bennett Family. Note the interesting pattern brickwork on the sides of the house near the roofline, window lintels, roofline brackets, and cast iron balcony. The door molding, transom and sidelights are also handsome features of this home.

107-109 East Main Street

15. DR. CHARLES BILLINGSLEA HOUSE 1880

Removed in 2003.

117 East Main Street

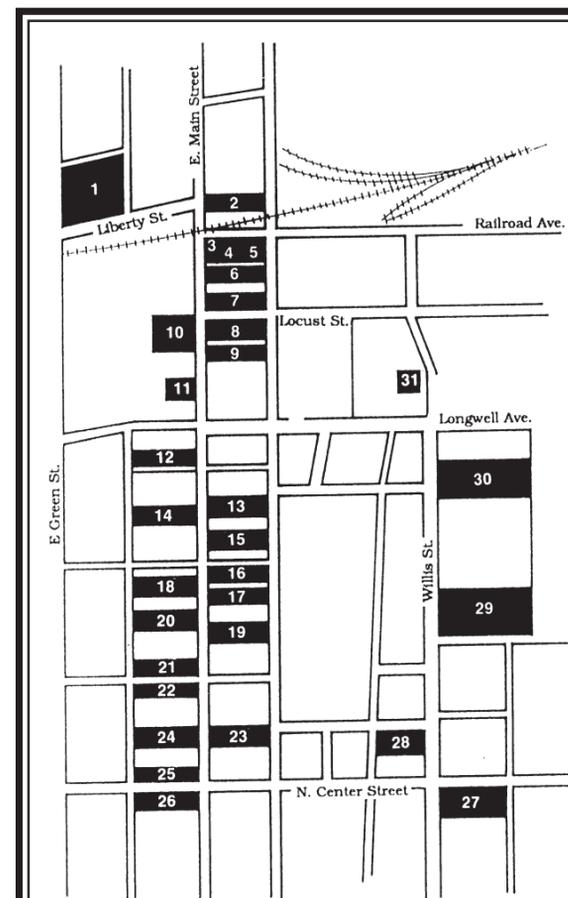
16. CHARLES CARROLL HOTEL/WESTMINSTER HOTEL 1898

According to an 1899 newspaper article, "The Westminster is one of the best furnished and equipped buildings in the State, and contains over forty large sleeping apartments and private parlors, and its enterprising owner, Mr. George W. Albaugh, deserves the thanks of the traveling public for giving them a hotel equal to the best." Its eight bay, 3 1/2 story yellow brick facade is accented by a massive stone pilastered doorway. Note the broken entrance. It was a one-time doorway to the Westminster Deposit and Trust Company which was located on the ground floor of the hotel. In 1975, it was restored as headquarters for Union National Bank.

123 East Main Street

17. ANN ELIZABETH BABYLON HOUSE 1870

One of two brownstones in the city, the Babylon House achieves a feeling of massiveness with its use of large stones, embedded arched windows, double doors, and broad sandstone steps.



- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1 B.F. Shriver Co. | 17 Ann Elizabeth Babylon House |
| 2 Babylon Building | 18 Beaver House & Shop |
| 3 Albion Hotel | 19 The Methodist Protestant Church |
| 4 John Christmas Residence and Restaurant | 20 Philip Jones House and Store |
| 5 Winchester Exchange Entrances | 21 Opera House |
| 6 Wantz Building | 22 Mary Mathias House |
| 7 Old Post Office Building | 23 William Frazier House/Shop |
| 8 White Palace | 24 Mathias-Rhoten House |
| 9 Schmitt's Rexall | 25 Utz House |
| 10 Gilbert House | 26 Dr. Daniel Shipley House |
| 11 Westminster Fire Co. | 27 Diffenbaugh-Weant House |
| 12 Mrs. Frank Myers House Historical Marker | 28 Double House |
| 13 Wantz House | 29 Shriver-Babylon House |
| 14 Bennett House | 30 Zepp-Myers House |
| 15 Dr. Charles Billingslea House (removed) | 31 Longwell Mansion/City Hall |
| 16 Charles Carroll Hotel/Westminster Hotel | |

126 East Main Street

18. BEAVER HOUSE & SHOP 1845

Small and unpretentious, this two bay structure is typical of lodging for skilled workers a century and a half ago. Three generations of Beavers turned out tombstones and mantelpieces from the marble yard west of the house. Examples of their craftsmanship can be seen in the marble mantels within the house. Knowing that the owners were master masons helps to explain the seeming extravagance of four marble steps in front of such a small house.

129 East Main Street

19. THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH 1869

In 1869, the Methodist Episcopal Church, a Gothic structure with a beautiful spire, was built. The building, with its furnishings cost nearly \$16,000. In 1924 the steeple was condemned as unsafe and removed. The marble front was added when the house of prayer was converted into a public library. (The library moved to new quarters on E. Main Street in 1980.)

132-132 1/2 -134 East Main Street

20. PHILIP JONES HOUSE AND STORE 1817

Among the oldest buildings in the city, the eastern portion of this structure was originally living quarters for the Jones family, while the far western section was built to house the Jones' store. The business dealt primarily in the sale of iron, a needed commodity of the day, and bacon, a popular food item. Later 132 1/2 was added in an expansion phase for their rapidly growing family. Philip Jones, son to one of the three men who laid out Baltimore Town in 1730, came from Baltimore to Westminster in 1815 to escape the insecurities of a city recently in the throes of the War of 1812. He became "one of Westminster's first merchants." During the 1870's and 80's, the building became an office for one of the local newspapers, *The American Sentinel*.

Cross E. Main Street at corner of Lincoln Road and Main to view:

140 East Main Street

21. OPERA HOUSE 1854

The site of the Jacob Mathias tanyard, shop, and residence in 1820, the lot was sold to the International Order of Odd Fellows for \$375. As the town grew in importance, so did the ideas of its citizenry. The IOOF

built an Opera House to grace the County Seat. Its three stories and imposing three sectional facade of Flemish bond dominated the scene of the 1850's. Few tales survive from its heyday, but one account that did reach this century concerns an impersonator who chose to belittle Lincoln and Grant in his performance. His body was found the next morning, a victim of a Northern sympathizer's sense of justice.

142 East Main Street

22. MARY MATHIAS HOUSE 1870

Imagining the hexagonal tower away, this home is typical of traditional three bay structures built in Westminster. By adding the tower and decorative door, this gable-roofed, weatherboard house is seen in the innovative light which the owner hoped to cast.

153 East Main Street

23. WILLIAM FRAZIER HOUSE/SHOP 1820

Practically hidden between its neighbors, this small two bay home (similar to the J. Beaver house and shop at 123 E. Main Street) is an example of the combined residence and craft shop popular during the beginning of the 19th century. In this case the craftsman was a silversmith.

156-156 1/2 East Main Street

24. MATHIAS-RHOTEN HOUSE 1845

At first glance this gabled house takes on the appearance of a single dwelling. A closer look shows it to be a double house. Placement of its chimneys, windows, doors, and steps give it a very symmetrical look. From 1811, when Jacob Mathias bought two vacant lots, to 1920, when the Rhoten family became the new owners, three other prominent Westminster families had called this home (Shriver, Herring, Orendorff).

166 East Main Street

25. UTZ HOUSE 1800

A Westminster diarist remembers the Utz house as being a "resort for children, as it was the only place where licorice was sold." Bought in 1794 by Jacob Oates (deanglicized to Utz, perhaps at the insistence of his German neighbors), a saddler, for £105, it was occupied by the same family for 100 years. Typical of the early Pennsylvania German farmhouse, this five bay, two story, L-shaped home served as a model for other houses built in town at the turn of the 19th century. Its balustraded porch lends this home an "air of country" at a very busy town intersection.

172 East Main Street

26. DR. DANIEL SHIPLEY HOUSE 1900

A cross between Queen Anne (1870) and the later Shingle style (1900) the Shipley house shows the taste of an individualist. A gabled roof, corner turret and highly ornamented veranda are features of Queen Anne architecture. Single color shingles echo the Shingle style.

Turn left on Center Street and proceed to Park Gates where you will note the War Memorial plague. Proceed on Center Street stopping to view the Diffenbaugh-Weant House just before reaching the corner of Center and Willis Streets. The house sits diagonally across the street.

171 Willis Street

27. DIFFENBAUGH-WEANT HOUSE 1885

The L-shaped residence is the oldest Willis Street house on this tour. It was among the first "mansion sites" to be purchased from the Longwell estate. Its basic plan was taken from *Villas & Cottages*, a book of houses designed by English designer Calvert Vaux. Design #3, entitled "Suburban Cottage," was chosen. Attractive brickwork near the roof line, heavy chimneys, stained glass windows, and a barn/carriage house command the viewer's attention.

Turn left on Willis Street to view:

156-162 Willis Street

28. DOUBLE HOUSE 1900

Continuing to fulfill the prestigious nature of Willis Street is this six bay double house built in the Second Empire style by Joshua Hering, possibly as rental property. Note the key hole shaped dormers in the slate mansard roof and the nearly identical double entrance doors and porches which create a pleasing impression of elegance.

131 Willis Street

29. SHRIVER-BABYLON HOUSE 1915

The two families (Shriver and Babylon) which shared ownership of this home were prominent in the business, social and political worlds of Westminster. This type of rambling structure, with its wide porch, was popular in the early 1900's. It is associated with the Shingle style school of architecture which was also in vogue at this time.

101 Willis Street

30. ZEPP-MYERS HOME 1910

James Zepp bought one of the "mansion sites" in 1908 for \$381. He built this eye-catching residence which bears a resemblance to the Longwell Mansion with its wrap-around Doric columned porch. Its own distinguishing features are octagonal pavilions at each end of the porch and, of course, the most obvious departure from the usual - the rare placement of its gable end facing the street. Nine years later Zepp sold the property to J. Edgar Myers for \$6200.

Turn left on Longwell Avenue - walk to parking lot entrance to view:

Longwell Avenue

31. LONGWELL MANSION/ CITY HALL 1842

Described in the 1882 *History of Western Maryland* by Thomas Scharf as "one of the most elegant private residences in the country," the Longwell Mansion retains much of that same elegance as Westminster's City Hall (since 1939).

John K. Longwell was owner and editor of the "Carrolltonian," bank director, two-term commissioner and a state senator. His mansion boasts marble mantels attributed to William Rinehart, a Union Bridge sculptor who achieved international acclaim. The public is invited to tour City Hall during business hours.

End of tour.

The information contained in this tour represents many hours of research and writing by Diana Scott. The Building of Westminster in Maryland, by Christopher Weeks, was one major source of information. The Carroll County Office of Tourism expresses its appreciation. Rev. 2004



The Official Seal of Westminster, Maryland



G • L • O • S • S • A • R • Y

- A. Balustrade** - a railing supported by balusters.
- B. Bay** - a vertical section of building represented by an opening, such as a door or window, e.g., above house is 3 bays wide.
- C. Bracket** - support projecting, from the wall.
- D. Corbeling** - courses of masonry, like steps in reverse.
- E. Cornice** - decorative feature found under the eaves of a roof.
- F. Dentil** - series of small rectangular blocks projecting like teeth, under a cornice.
- G. Finial** - an ornament at the top of a spire, gable or pinnacle.
- H. Gable** - triangular portion of wall under a double pitched roof.
- I. Lintel** - horizontal beam over a doorway, window, etc.
- J. Pavilion** - decorative shelter, e.g., Zepp-Myers House, or a projecting part of a facade.
- K. Pediment** - triangular piece used ornamentally over doorway, window, etc.
- L. Pilaster** - column projecting partially from a wall.
- M. Vernacular** - native to an area.

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Westminster

Maryland

A
Walking Tour in
Carroll County

Westward Expansion

