

230 EAST MAIN STREET, WESTMINSTER

JUDGE REIFSNIDER HOUSE

Conservative Westminster has very few pure and whole examples of the transient styles that briefly dominated other areas. However, the City does have 230 East Main, the Charles Reifsnider House, an enjoyable essay in the Second Empire Style. Unique in Westminster, notable almost anywhere, the sculptural quality of the place, highlighted by very "French" chimneys, roofline trim, windows, doors....Built for a local attorney (later judge) the house has lost little of its air since being turned into apartments (c. 1930). Interestingly, for all its being up-to-date, the house vigorously retains a traditional L-shaped 5-bay central hall plan.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Judge Charles Reifsnider House

AND/OR COMMON

Virginia Robrecht House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

230 East Main Street (MD 32)

6

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Carroll

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE S
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Virginia E. Robrecht

Telephone #: 848-4184

STREET & NUMBER

230 East Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21157

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Carroll County Office Building

Liber #: 174

Folio #: 199

STREET & NUMBER

Center Street

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>	<b>CHECK ONE</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

Westminster has very few original, wholly conceived Second Empire Buildings; most of the structures that seem to be of that style are merely remodelings of older structures. However, the Reifsnider-Robrecht House, 230 East Main Street, which fills the southeast corner of the intersection of that street (Md. Route 32) and Ralph Street, is a glorious exception, as it was conceived and built all-of-a-piece as the residence and office of a prominent local attorney (later judge).

The complex has a triadic composition giving it an L-shape, open to the southeast - there is a 2 story (plus Mansard roof) cube at the vortex, with a 2 story - 4 bay hipped roofed service wing to the south (along Ralph Street) and a 2 story 3 bay flat roofed office wing to the east along Main Street. All three sections give a rather fancified, not to say gambolling, appearance. The Mansard roofed section dominates all views. From the north, this main section is basically a standard 5 bay central door building, with the western 2 bays being composed of a large bay window; the whole rests on a roughly coursed fieldstone foundation and below the high slate Mansard roof. The roof possesses the necessary curbs at all its edges and is pierced, on the north, by 3 regularly placed dormer windows (the central one being a double window). These windows are all round-arched with segmental arched pediments above, supported by scroll brackets. Windows have double-hung sashes with one pane per sash.

Separating the roof from the rest of the house is a thick deeply molded cornice (with a 3' overhang) supported by modillions and pairs of scroll brackets. Brackets are regularly placed on axis with the centers of the wall between the windows.

The 5 course common bond wall is, as noted, regularly pierced axially about the entrance door, on the ground floor, and the center hall window on the second. To the east of this axis are 2 vertically aligned 2/2 segmentally arched windows per floor, with white wooden sills. Those, on the second floor, possess a variation of a triangular pediment -- the base, with its denticulated cornice, runs the width of each window, but the triangle is compressed towards the center. Scroll brackets flank the windows and support the pediments. Windows on the ground floor have similar treatment, but with compressed round arches, not compressed triangles; ground floor windows are further enlivened by a cartouche-keystone arrangement.

The ground floor entrance doors are topped by a denticulated cornice whose simplicity is made up for by the giant scroll - pelleted brackets which support it and flank the door. Between this cornice and the segmented arched transom are simple panelled spandrels and a central cartouche. The double doors each have 2 round arched panels. Hardware

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	c. 1870	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Unknown
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As noted, the Reifsnider-Robrecht House is Westminster's only example of a completely Second Empire Building. This uniqueness alone makes the house and office important, but its unaggressive but proud air would make it notable almost anywhere. This "air" is created by all the well executed factors already discussed; on the exterior by the cornice, window treatments, brackets, chimneys, entrance doorway, and on the interior by lofty ceilings, marble fireplaces, and handsome wood-work (including the stairs, with its heavy turned newel, and balusters, and bracketed risers decoration). Happily, when the house was adapted for multi-family use (c. 1930), little of the original character seems to have been lost.

Charles Reifsnider purchased the lot (number 40 of the original town of Westminster) on January 14, 1863 (Deed 29/303) for \$575, and, one assumes, built his assertively fashionable house about 15 years later. (No documents pertaining to the house's construction or architect have been found, except a mid 1880's lot plan showing the present L-shape; the 1887 city directory lists Reifsnider as having his residence at 230 East Main, and his office at 232.) Reifsnider died intestate, an unusual occurrence for an attorney, and his heirs sold the place on September 30, 1914, for \$4,000 (Deed 125/305). The present owner, who grew up across Ralph Street, purchased the house on December 31, 1940 (Deed 174/199).

The Reifsnider family has given Westminster some of its most individualistic residences; besides Number 230, another branch built "Terrace Hill", a Franco-Italian chateau with Tudor arched windows near Western Maryland College. Besides being a powerful stamp of character, the Reifsnider-Robrecht house is significant on the first architectural attempt to acknowledge that to live in Westminster was to live in town.

Always before and usually after, Westminster's architecture had as its ideal the 5 bay central door transplanted farmhouse, with plain, unornamented facades. Although in plan Reifsnider felt it desirable to retain the old, he covered this shell with stylish and urbane decoration. A half-century after being incorporated as a City, and over a hundred years after its founding, underneath this surface urbanity, Westminster was keeping its rural core.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/4**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Being all of lot 40 as shown on a plat of the original town of Westminster recorded among the Land Records of Frederick County in Book L, page 472.

**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Christopher Weeks, Consultant

October, 1976

ORGANIZATION

Westminster Historical Sites Survey

DATE

STREET &amp; NUMBER

c/o City Hall - Public Works Department

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Westminster

STATE

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

is probably original - the brass knob has an odd Islamic - looking design. Two gracefully carved sandstone steps lead one up to the door.

The western section of this facade is filled with a brick 3 sided - 2 story bay window. Each side has one 1/1 simply enframed round arched window (topped with a brick stretcher - width round arch). Above each of the bay window stories is a rich cornice with dentils supported by 4 pairs of scroll brackets.

To the east, the flat-roofed office section (known as 232 East Main Street) has a slightly smaller scale replica of the main section's cornice, complete to bracket placement. Windows in this section are identical to and horizontally aligned with those of the main section. There are 2 vertically aligned windows per floor on the eastern two-thirds of this section. To the west is a blind spot on the second floor, and an entrance door on the ground floor, which keeps the same hood treatment as the other ground floor bays, and has a segmental arched transom. The door itself has 4 round arched panels.

In bay-treatment, the Ralph Street facade is the same as the Main Street's. The main section's west side has 2 bays per floor (located away from the center), and 2 similarly placed dormer windows. The second floor north window is a triangular wood oriel window with 1 elongated window separated by plain colonettes on each side of its 2 exposed sides. Otherwise, the oriel's cornice and window treatment are identical with that found on Main Street's bay window, except for an absence of brackets. Two flush massive corbelled chimneys punctuate the skyline between the 2 dormer windows (treated the same as all other dormer windows).

The south (garden) facades continue the same roof treatment, including placement and decoration of dormer windows. Ground and second story window treatment is, however, more modest, with simple enframing and white wooden sills. All windows here have 3 course gauged flat arches. There are 2 regularly placed 2/2 windows on the second floor of the main section, with, on the ground floor, a 6 panel - fanlight door to the west, and a pair of 6/6 windows to the east. The office wing is shaded by a two-tiered flat roof wooden porch supported by 4 finely turned elongated columns. Each floor has a white vertically aligned 4-panel wooden door to the west; the second story has a 2/2 window in its center; the ground floor has two 2/2 windows to the east of the door.

The 5 course common bond service (Ralph Street) wing is 2 stories by 4 bays. The four Ralph Street windows have 3 course flat gauged arches, 6/6 panes, and are flanked by louvered green shutters (the only color, by the way, is an otherwise monochromatic gray composition). Windows are regularly placed.

The hipped roof is covered with slate and has one pediment-roofed gable dormer on its northeast side. The garden side of this wing might best be thought of as having quadrants (originally it had a 2-tiered wooden porch across its whole length). Two square posts still support a porch in the

southern section of the second story, and the north section of the first story; the former is reached by a 4 panel white wooden door in the southern end of low clapboarded north-second-floor section. A similar centrally placed door with one 6/6 window to each side pierces the wall behind the ground floor porch. The final quadrant (the southern section of the ground floor) is, moving to the south, half clapboard and half 5 course common bond brick. Each of these 2 sections has a central 6/6 window. The double-tiered porch still runs the length of the otherwise blind 6 course common bond south front of this wing and is painted under its roof, in good Pennsylvania fashion robin's egg blue.

Although there were originally a variety of outbuildings on the property (including a carriage house and supplemental staff quarters), the only dependency still standing is square, pyramidal roof, stretcher bond brick privy, located about halfway down the lot, in one of the most attractive gardens in the City. Axially laid out with the rear door and parallel with Ralph Street are 3 narrow allees of floribunda roses and annuals. Several randomly placed overgrown ornamental evergreens keep the garden from a strict formality.

Except for the ground floor, the main building has a central hall double parlor plan. (On the ground floor, east of the hall, is one large room, originally a ballroom now a plywood panelled family room.) Several original arched fireplaces still exist - made of at least 2 shades of marble with carved cartouches and spandrals, they heighten the feel of late 19th century elegance that still fills the house. Interior doors are almost entirely original - 4 or 6 panels with architrave trim.

53%



CARR 340

230 E. Main St. Westminster

NEW facade

10/76 C. Wechs

53°/29

A-13

~~150%~~ 150%



Judge Reifneider House

CARR 340

File Sundry VII  
Book

~~105~~ 69  
p. 67

340



CARR 340

230 E. Main St. Westside

SW facade

10/76 C. Weech

XCVII

Charles Keifsnide House -  
Service Wing