

254 EAST MAIN STREET, WESTMINSTER

FISHER-SMITH-FLETCHER HOUSE

Three-and-a-half stories tall, and five bays wide, this house is one of the most powerful forces on the Westminster streetscape. In 1778, David Fisher, progenitor of a powerful local family, built a 15' x 25' log cabin where the ground floor northwest room of the present home is today. Some of the log rafters are still in place. Fisher's son, John, became cashier of the newly-created Bank of Westminster, located across the street. (The Bank was the first bank between Baltimore and Frederick.) Doubtless, such a man found a small log house unsuitable, and, when he inherited the property, he built a 25' x 60' I-house, incorporating the earlier structure's foundations. In 1850, Fisher's heirs sold the place to Judge John Smith, who built the present 16 room cube; a six room service wing was added after 1877.

The house serves as an indication of what a provincial, conservative man of wealth would build in the later 19th century. Smith seems to have been bound to the traditional central hall, double parlor(s) plan. However, the need to express his wealth was (as ever) great and required an architectural outlet. He achieved this in the exuberant, almost Baroque, decoration - in 17 marble fireplaces, and, especially, in what seems today, impossibly carved exterior woodwork; swirling brackets, pendants, and cornices appear wherever possible.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Fisher-Smith-Fletcher House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

254 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 checked="" 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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<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 checked="" 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

Thomas Dale Fletcher, Sr.

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

254 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 #: 571

Folio #: 703

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

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Fisher-Smith-Fletcher house controlled, at its height, two of the original lots in the town of Westminster (lots 35 and 36), on the southwest corner of the intersection of Ralph Street with East Main Street (Maryland Route 32). Three-and-a-half stories tall, and five bays wide between the high slate gabled roof and the low brick and roughly coursed fieldstone foundations, it is still a powerful force on the streetscape.

One of the many superb decorative features of the house is the full-molded cornice which finishes the eaves of the entrance facade, and is supported by six pairs of rosetted brackets spaced alternately with the 5 bays. Second and third story windows have 6/6 double-hung sashes with simple enframing and white wooden sills, all windows are topped by identical full white wooden modillioned entablatures, supported by one small "cabriole" bracket at either end. The five windows on the top floor, and the four on the second and first combine with the doors trim to create a very lively facade. There are two centrally placed doors on this front. The second story eight-light French door leads to a 3' x 4' balcony with anthemion-inspired black painted balusters. This is supported by a full cornice at the base (if such is possible) and by two convolutedly carved scroll giant brackets with decorative pendants. The balcony also acts as a hood for the main door, a 4 panel double door with a (now blind) transom beneath a dentilled cornice and supported by two flanking small rosetted brackets. The door is recessed about a foot, and the alcove is richly decorated with six recessed panels. Two finely carved soapstone steps lead to the door. (The present owner plans on removing them as "someone could fall on them and sue me".) The two windows on either side of the entrance door are finished in the same manner as the rest of the windows, but are elongated and now have immovable single sashes, with eight lights. The Flemish Bond brick is painted a pale green which contrasts nicely with the white of the wood, and the black of the louvered shutters which flank each window.

The east and west eaves of the gable ends are finished with nicely laid three step brick corbelling. The west facade has one 6/6 window lighting the attic, and two regularly placed windows on each floor. The three southerly windows all have three course gauged flat arches. But of all three windows, only the southerly window on each of the second and third stories has not been boarded over. Three simple iron-grated windows light the cellar. Two corbelled capped chimneys create the skyline's rhythm.

Both west and east walls are laid in five course common bond. Although the entire ground floor of the east front is now covered with a stone-faced and stucco funeral home, some of its former dignity remains.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__1400-1499	X ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
X 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION	
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1780; 1876; 1900 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Jacob Fisher, John Smith

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of 254 East Main Street is architectural, both for what it is today, and for the stages the place passed through to get to its present grandness.

William Winchester sold lots 35 and 36 in his newly created town to David Fisher on September 1, 1778, for 6 pounds (Frederick County deed book RD, number 1, page 486). Six days later, Fisher bought the adjoining westerly lot, number 36, RD 1/487. Fisher, the progenitor of a family that has been very prominent in Westminster's economic and political history (judge, mayors, bank presidents, etc.) probably built a log cabin for himself where the ground floor northwest room is now. In the cavernous, multi-portioned cellar, it is possible to see, in this section, that the floorboards and rafters are, in the 15' x 25' section, of log, and the foundations are of fieldstone; elsewhere the rafters and boards are planks, and the foundations are, generally, of brick.

Fisher's son, John, became cashier of the newly created Bank of Westminster (q.v.) located directly across the street. (In fact, we are told that in the early 19th century the bank was known as "Fisher's Bank" - American Sentinel September, 1913.) Doubtless such a man would find a log cabin unsuitable; he probably then built a house in the southern - I style, a style that was competing with the deeper Pennsylvania farmhouse for dominance in the City. Again, in the basement, we can see the foundations of a long, narrow (25' x 60') house that incorporates the log cabin. There is a fine large round arched brick chimney in what was the east cellar room (kitchen?). The diary of Katharine Jones Shellman calls Fisher a "bank cashier and farmer."

Fishers heirs sold the place on December 29, 1850, to Joshua Smith for \$2554 (four lots were included, nos. 35-38 (Deed 17/27). "Judge" John Smith bought the land in 1875. Many old-time residents refer to the present home as having been "built by a judge" (including the present owner). This, plus the later-in-the-century style of the exterior brackets and of the interior details (such as remain), makes it easy to imagine that it was John Smith who built the existing mansion, but adding the service wing later; an 1877 plat shows the house as being essentially square, with only modest extensions to the rear. Smith probably added the ell as his wealth recovered from the enormous expense of building his 12 room mansion.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/2

City Lots

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Being all of lot 35 and the easterly half of lot 36 of the original town of Westminster as shown on a plat 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

September, 1976

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Westminster Historical Sites Survey

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

c/o City Hall - Public Works Department

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Westminster

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

#7

Beneath the three-step corbelled eaves, and the flat-capped chimney five feet south of the gable's peak, two four light windows help light the attic. There are three windows on the third (6/6) and second (six light casement) stories. These work but, unlike the north and west facades, have no shutters.

Stretching to the south is a two story four bay shed-roofed addition. Only the second story is not hidden by the funeral home. Its windows, on line with those of the Main Street sections, are also six light casement. Five pairs of scroll brackets support the full cornice at the eaves; an unusual white wooden string course connects the bases of the brackets.

The south front has changed several times, and is fairly confusing. Beneath the corbelling are three regularly placed (original) 6/6 windows with three course gauged flat arches. Below this floor was, once, a recessed 2-tiered gallery running between two 10' sections of the main building. Today the large shed roofed wing covers much of what is left of the porch; and wood infills cover all but the central five feet of the rest. The shed roof section (with the roof sloping to the west) has one eight-light casement window per floor in the western section of its south 6 course common bond facade (which is the bonding pattern for the entire south front). Three course gauged flat arches top the windows which are flanked by black louvered shutters. The western section of the entire south facade has six 6/6 archless windows on the second story. One glass and aluminum storm door is located on each floor of what is left of the porch; the doors are centrally placed and the spaces are, at least, original. To the west of the porches are the wooden infills: clapboard on the second floor (with a 6/6 window in the center), and board and pattern below, with a set of three 9/6 windows in its center.

The funeral wing, built in 1969, is entered from Main Street through a swan's neck pedimented plate glass door, (beneath a suitable black awning), and from Church Street by a similar but small scale door between two long many-lighted windows. The south side has two 6/6 windows. Although the Main Street section is faced with stone, the other sides are all covered in pure white stucco.

The Main Street double entrance door has very interesting original brass hardware (including a two-key lock and an unusual, later scrolled door bell). The door leads to the central hall with a long rounded-staircase which has a fine heavy turned newel post and balusters. Risers have simple bracket decoration. In plan, the three stories were identical with their central stair hall, double parlors to either side, and, on the ground and second story's a two room ell to the southeast. Serious recent redecorations have hidden or removed almost all of the original interior details - including 16 of the 17 original fireplaces. (The only one remaining is in the ground floor southwest room; it is a typical mid 19th century round-arched affair (made of pink marble) with plain colonettes, simple spandrels, and a carved cartouche in the center.)

The house remained in the Smith family until 1913. It changed hands thrice until the present owner took partial title in 1968 (Deed 477/508) and then full fee-simple title May 22, 1974 (571/703).

Besides the archeological interest of the place, the house is interesting as an example of what a conservative man of wealth would build in the late 19th century. Smith seemed desirous of keeping the traditional central hall-double parlor farmhouse plan of his ancestors. However, the need to display his wealth was (as ever) great and could only manifest itself in exuberant, almost Baroque, decoration - in marble fireplaces and in what seems today impossibly carved woodwork.



Carr 355

254 E. Main St.

Westminster

NW Juvenile

10/76 (week)

72°.



CARR 355

254 E. Main St

Westminster

N. facade

10/76 C. Weech

CXLI-A
Detail

150

72%

p. 4597



THOMAS D. FLETCHER
FUNERAL HOME

Thomas D. Fletcher
Funeral Home

N. CHURCH ST.

BP

CARR-355

Fletcher House
254 East Main St.

CARR 3565

in Area A

~~55%~~ #150 - History Section - Ch. 9 - p. 97

55%

Inventory Section
A-17

Return to City of Watrind

Fletcher



CARR 355

254 E. Main St. Westminster

W. Jacade

9/76 C. Wechs



CARK-355

255

CXL1

152

57%