

CAN-418

CHARLES WANTZ BUILDING

21-27 EAST MAIN STREET

One of Westminster's most idiosyncratic buildings, the Wantz Building, rises up three stories in 4 sections in the heart of the business area of Westminster. Charles Valentine Wantz was a scion of a very important local family (several close and distant ancestors were, for example, judges of the Orphans' Court). Wantz doubtless inherited some money, and parlayed this into quite a fortune - if the building he built reflects his economic status, as he doubtless wished that it would. Wantz made his money as a wholesale and retail tobacconist. A 1912 newspaper article says that Westminster was known throughout the State for its cigars, and the Wantz was the pioneer in the business. In 1882, Wantz abandoned his rented quarters and moved his factory to the eastern half of the present building, which was built in that year. As Wantz prospered, he doubled the size of the building, adding the two western sections in 1890. According to Wantz's granddaughter, Mrs. David Taylor, Wantz originally planned to have the buildings two storeis in height but, as a loyal mason, he added the third story as a meeting room for that organization.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Carroll 414
070 414 4611

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC Charles V. Wantz Bldg

AND/OR COMMON _____

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 21-27 East Main Street (MD 32)

CITY, TOWN Westminster VICINITY OF _____ CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 7

STATE Maryland COUNTY Carroll

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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input 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 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 David H. Fairbanks Telephone #: 922-2937

STREET & NUMBER 3622 Langrehr Road

CITY, TOWN Baltimore VICINITY OF _____ STATE, zip code Maryland 21157

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Carroll County Office Building Liber #: 572

STREET & NUMBER Center Street Folio #: 56

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 type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED (Ground Floor Only)	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Wantz building, it proudly proclaims on its third floor plaques, faces the north side of East Main Street about 180' east of that street's intersection with Railroad Avenue in the heart of downtown Westminster. The building gives the appearance of being composed in four, approximately equal, 3-story sections divided by Tuscan red brick pilasters; each pilaster is topped by a curved, white, wooden band which follows the contour of the curved, red, terra cotta tiled roof. These curved white bands have a (somewhat ironical) colonial shell motif at their base and are topped by bulb-spindel finials. Three narrow brackets "support" the roof between each pilaster, with a cusped band running beneath the brackets. Each section has a different shop on its ground floor (shops having frontage of approximately 16½ feet). The western two shops, at present occupied by Mark Alan, and Eshelman Shoes, appear to be little changed from their original appearance, at least as revealed in an 1887 engraving of the shops; the eastern two shops present modern glass and aluminum fronts (however, perhaps these fronts are merely tacked over the original fabric).

The building, which superficially presents a picture of total unity, seems to have been built in two separate sections; Wantz acquired the land at different times, the already mentioned 1887 engraving shows the building of two sections (rather than 4), and other contemporary advertising implies an expanding building. So, given that the building was built in halves, it is fairly easy to establish that the eastern 2 sections are the older. The differences between the 2 sections consist entirely of upper story window treatment - the eastern 2 sections have 4 closely - spaced windows per floor per section, whereas the western 2 sections have 3 windows per floor per section. Second floor windows have similar treatment in all 4 sections, however, being tall, double-hung sash windows (the lower sash consisting of a large single sheet of glass, the upper sash is a smaller central section of glass surrounded by bands of smaller panes). The wooden window-surrounds are intricately carved, with a pelleted band running across the top of each window. All windows on both the second and third floors have dark sills. Third floor windows are identical to those on the second floor, i.e., there are four, similarly-enframed, double-hung sash windows in each section of the eastern half, and three in each section of the western half. However, on the third floor the upper sashes are of stained, leaded glass.

The building has virtually no surface that is free from decoration. In the band between the second and third stories, each section has identical, naturalistic design of pressed or molded brick (or perhaps of terra cotta) surrounded by a band of perforated bricks, rather resembling a cribbage board. The pilasters have, just below the tops of the second and third floor windows, a similar aerated design. Above the third floor

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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" 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. 1882, c. 1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Wantz building is one of the finest examples of what might be called Victorian commercial mentality in the City, if not in the entire area. Commercial structures built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries appear, at least in Westminster, to be freer to deviate from long-established building standards than do residential structures. If one wished to read a significance into this (perhaps a significance that does not exist), one would be tempted to wonder if a comparable attitude existed (or exists) in personal behavior - does this difference in building treatment reflect a difference in ethics as well - was there a comparable easy going business ethic as opposed to a stricter domestic ethic? Certainly far greater liberties were taken with such buildings as the Wantz building, the Babylon Building, the "White Palace", the Charles Carroll Hotel, and the Albion Hotel than were taken with contemporaneous residential structures. These commercial buildings are all extremely idiosyncratic, and appear not to follow any known rules, while the houses of the era (such as 101 East Main Street, which Wantz built for himself or 256 East Main Street) are much more reserved, and adhere strictly to the century-old standards of behavior. For all the intense behavioral freedom evidenced in the commercial buildings, there is generally speaking, a corresponding strict conformity in the homes these merchants built for themselves, and in the homes their customers built.

Charles Valentine Wantz was a scion of a fairly important local family (several close and distant ancestors were, for example, judges of the Orphans' Court). Wantz doubtless inherited some money, and parlayed this into quite a fortune - if the building he built reflects his economic status as he doubtless wished that it would. Wantz made his money as a wholesale and retail tobacconist. The American Sentinel, a local paper of large circulation, had a long article on Wantz in its December 8, 1912 edition. In this article it is stated that,

There was a time when very few cigars were used in Westminster and when nearly every man you met chewed tobacco. Now, a large number of cigars are used and the chewers of tobacco are becoming fewer....A large number of good cigars are consumed yearly by the men of Westminster and the City has become known for the character of the cigars manufactured here. Cigar making on a large scale began in this City

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Being all of lot 9 and the western 6" of lot 8 as shown on a plat of Winter's Addition to Westminster recorded among the Land Records of Frederick County in Book JS 2, Page 195, 196

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

February, 1977

ORGANIZATION

Westminster Historical Sites Survey

TELEPHONE

STREET & NUMBER

c/o City Hall - Public Works Department

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

#7

windows, and below the band around the brackets, is a centrally-placed plaque (possibly of brick, possibly of iron) with WANTZ BUILDING in relief.

The east and west facades are blind and display the northward sloping shed roof that covers all 4 sections.

in the year 1869 and Mr. Charles V. Wantz, of this City, was the pioneer in the business."

The article goes on to discuss his pedigree and his early starts in business, and the numerous changes of location he was forced to make. Apparently, his early stores were sometimes thought of as dens of corruption, being loitering places for the City's youth. The paper notes, "Just imagine 12 to 15 young men all smoking pipes in that room at the same time and doing their utmost to make all the smoke possible. Is it any wonder that Mr. Cassell (the clerk), who was afflicted with asthma, was forced to flee and leave the store to the tender mercies of the boys?" The article also notes that Wantz would give away one imported breech-loading shotgun to each purchaser of a thousand cigars, and that, over the years, he gave away over 5,000 of these shotguns.

The paper says that in 1882, Wantz abandoned his rented quarters and moved his factory to "the present handsome one he built that year. Here he fitted up one of the finest retail stores in the state. The walls are papered with sample cigar labels, no two being exactly alike, and when completed it presented the most unique appearance of any cigar store in the United States. One of the trade journals published a full page description of it." Wantz, the man, must have been quite a local character. A bag, in possession of the County Historical Society, that was used by Wantz in his store (presumably as a tobacco pouch) has him depicted as a camel with his face, (complete with Napolean III beard and mustache), topped by a Boumi Temple fez. He, apparently, took no objection to a rhyme that probably enjoyed wide circulation around the turn of the century;

A question in the mind of man
About our good friend Wantz
Is how on earth he stuffs his gut
And still keeps up his pants.
The pressure of his blood is low,
It has the doctors beaten
To figure out what has become
Of all the stuff he's eaten.

Wantz was also a man of some civic interest, being influential in the founding of the library and phone company, (the phone company's first headquarters was, in fact, on the second floor of his building) and having served, of course, on the boards of several local banks.

Because Wantz bought the land for these buildings, and because he built them in sections, title information on the property is more than a little complicated. The Wantz Building, as an entirety, sits on 3 separate parcels of land. The first portion consists of 6,230 square feet which Wantz bought in 1883, from Josephus Bankhart. The metes and bounds description in this deed (dated January 25, 1883, and recorded in Carroll County Deed Book 58, Page 214) indicates a parcel 35' by 198'. Bankhart got the land on March 29, 1879 from Philip H. L. Myers (51/375) who got the land from W. Scott Robert's trustee, on February 6, 1864 (30/366).

The second piece Wantz bought was a 6" by 198' piece just to the east of the earlier section (Wantz bought this February 27, 1893, Deed 58/313). Wantz bought the strip from the Westminster Fire Company, which then had its Fire Hall on this side of Main Street, across the street from its present location; Wantz was here merely buying party wall rights. These 2 pieces of land are the land upon which the first, or eastern, half of the building was built.

Then, on May 22, 1889, Wantz bought the other half of lot 2 from Hashabiah Haines (deed 69/537), and built the other half of the Wantz building. From then on, all three parcels were treated as one. (Title information for all properties goes back to the beginnings of the 19th century, but, as it is the late Victorian structure that interests us, there seems less point than usual in tracing the properties' history back into the early fog-bound history of the City.) Wantz and his wife, Caroline Virginia Wantz, sold the lots on April Fool's Day 1919 to Jesse C. Sharrer (134/65). The land stayed in the Sharrer family, Jesse selling shares in it to his three sons in various transactions, until title vested in Nathan Weinstock on July 26, 1949, (202/387). Weinstock kept title for a quarter century, until he sold to the building's present owner on June 7, 1974, in deed 572/56.

W-1
Fol. 2-4



Buy Your Tobacco & Cigars

-OF-

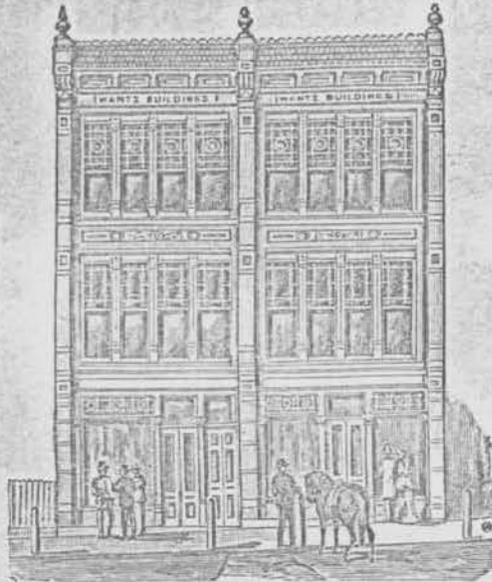
CHAS. V. WANTZ,

Wantz Building, Westminster, Md.

BEST 5-CENT CIGAR IN WESTMINSTER.

21-27 East Main St.

75



CHARLES V. WANTZ,

Manufacturer of

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And Wholesale Dealer in

Plug Tobacco.

Best 5 Cent Cigar in the
County.

E. LYNCH.

M. J. LYNCH.

E. LYNCH & SON,

Wholesale and Retail Dealers in

Coal, Lumber, &c.

Office in rear of W. Md. R. R. Depot,

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WESTMINSTER, MD.

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(C-4)

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2/77

C. Weech



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CXXVII

414



CARR 414

"WANTZ BLDG."

Westminster

S. facade - detail of

E. end

2/77 C. Wecker



CARR 414

"WARTZ BLDG"
west side
S. facade - detail of
W. end

c. week 2/77

U.S. X

83-126

Camera

O LINE
O HALFTONE
O DUOTONE

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS



CARR-414

126

Same
size

P. 8

414

CXXXI - 12th Phone Co. in town -
Located on 2nd floor of WANTZ BLDG.