

WESTMINSTER FIRE ENGINE AND HOSE COMPANY BUILDING

As originally designed by Jackson Gott, the Fire Hall was a three-story structure fronting with the south side of East Main Street for a distance of 40' and running back perpendicular to the street for a depth of 70'. Built of buff brick laid in common stretcher bond, with trimmings of white brick and Baltimore County marble, the building is topped by a tower which gives the structure a total height of 92', easily the most dominant feature of the Westminster skyline. The tower contains a Gibbsian center section and a large domed roof which covers a tall Seth Thomas Clock, donated in 1879 (at a cost of \$1040) by Mrs. Margaret Cassell Baile. The bulk of the building was built in 1896; in 1927, another three-story bay was added, giving the building a more cubic appearance.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

CA3R-421

070421 4601

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Westminster Fire Engine and Hose Company Building

AND/OR COMMON

Fire Hall

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Westminster Fire Department

Telephone #: 848-1800

STREET & NUMBER

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 #:

Folio #:

STREET & NUMBER

Center Street

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Westminster Bicentennial

DATE

October, 1964

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Historical Society of Carroll County

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

STATE

Maryland

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 (Later Additions)	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

As originally designed by Jackson Gott, the Fire Hall was a 3-story structure fronting the south side of East Main Street for a distance of 40' running back perpendicular to the street for a depth of 70 feet. Built of buff brick laid in common stretcher bond, with trimmings of white brick and Baltimore County marble, the building is topped by a tower giving the structure a total height of 92 feet, the dominate feature of the Westminster skyline. The tower was built in 3 separate sections. The first, moving upwards from the bulk of the building, is a 4-sided Gibbsian belfry composed of 4 square sides, each having a large, round-arched opening. This open box is topped on all 4 sides by a balustrade having urns as finials at each of the 4 corners, and pedimented projections between the urns more or less directly above the large arches below. The second section is octagonal in shape and functions as a clock tower and belfry; on the four sides that continue the plane of the square section of the tower, there is a clock (each dial being 4 feet in diameter), and between each section is a round-arched opening giving access to bells and sirens. A full denticulated entablature separates this middle section from the shingled hexagonal dome which tops the tower and is, in turn, surrounded by a ball finial. The clock was built by Seth Thomas Clock Company of Stamford Connecticut (at a cost in 1897 of \$1040), and was donated by Mrs. Margaret Cassell Baile.

The body of the building is, as noted, 3-stories tall. As originally designed, it was 3-bays wide, as defined by the round-arched doors on the ground floor, the eastern most being smaller and designed for human use, the western two being of larger scale and intended for vehicular use. There are 3, round, marble medallions which decorate this first section; the first 2 (from the east) have the dates of the founding of the Fire Company (1823) and the date of this building (1896), the western one is decorated by a monogram of the fire company. The second and third floors are in sections defined by the ground floor doors; one section above the pedestrian door, a larger 3-bay section above the western doors. Fenestration in each of these sections is similar; all windows are segmentally arched, the second floor having double-hung sash windows with one over one panes and topped by massive gauged arches. The second floor is more elaborately treated with its sash windows being topped by round arches which echo the ground floor doors' as well as those in the tower. The eastern section has one window on each floor; the western section has three. The eastern section is given a certain unity by a recess which completely surrounds the windows on all three floors and on all four sides equi-distantly. The western section is similarly unified, but the recess, runs from the sills of the first floor windows to the bottom of the deep, full, entablature which tops both sections, thus forming a rectangle. White brick is used for sills in all windows; as indicated, sills are united on the first floors of the western section, and the sill on the east

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 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	1896;1927	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Jackson C. Gott
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certain buildings have a significance which transcends their relative architectural merits. This transcendent importance is generally a result of use, either past or present, and is often times emotional and local in nature and intensity. Churches, it would seem, epitomise these feelings; being houses of worship, they are thought of as being houses of God, and thus receive an imputed divinity, often becoming objects of devotion in their own right (or rite). The Fire Hall in Westminster, over its near-century of existence, has similarly, but perhaps more intensely, become an object of local veneration. There is no doubt that its architecture is striking and unique in the area; when the neighboring St. John's Church is finally destroyed, the Fire Hall tower will provide the only vertical emphasis in the City, and the mere size of the buff main section of the building makes it an integral and fundamental part of the streetscape in the Westminster business district.

Although it is difficult to imagine what other use the building could have been built for, nevertheless, thinking hypothetically, if it had been built for another occupant, it is doubtful that it would be as venerated as it is today. The fire company is, not unnaturally, extremely highly regarded here as it is in other towns and cities (although perhaps towns have more intense regard for such local organizations than do cities - a query only). The Westminster Fire Company - known as the Westminster Fire Engine and Hose Company - was organized in 1823. Its first home was located on Church Street, the center of the early town, and was a plain board building rather resembling a garage. During the 19th century, the company's location continuously moved west, as did the City's growth, changing locations in 1834, and 1879, before it finally settled in this building in 1896. The history of the fire company, its personnel and equipment, has been told and retold many times in local publications - copies of some of which are attached to this report.

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 part of the "Busby Lot" located on the south side of East Main Street about 60 feet west of that street's intersection with Longwell Avenue in Westminster.

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

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

ern section runs the entire length of that section.

In 1927, an extension was built to the west, giving the building a more cubic appearance. The addition had one, large, arched door for fire engines on its ground floor and is three bays wide on its second and third, thus being similar in design to the former westernmost section. The ground floor is decorated by a round, marble, modillion, similar to those already described; the modillion is decorated by the date of this addition. In later years all ground floor doors became rectangular.

The first floor contains a large fire apparatus room with a cement floor, a small fire apparatus room and a smoking/relaxation room for the firemen. A wide stairway leads from the street to the second floor, on which are a meeting room for the fire department, a "parlor", the former City Council Chambers, Clerk's Office, and some lavatories. On the third floor are lodge rooms, reglia rooms, committee rooms, the banquet hall and kitchen. An article in the Democratic Advocate, printed to celebrate the 1896 opening of the building, notes that the roof of the building is of Spanish tiles, and the cornices are of galvanized iron.

Balto. Sun. Sun 7/18/71



Philip Myers, above, writes about Westminster and how the city fathers frugally turned off streetlights on moonlit nights early in the 1900's. View, right, is of Westminster's Main street in 1911. Note carbon arc lamp that hangs over center of street.



Photo from collection of Stanford Hoff, Westminster

72
701

The New Building of the Firemen.
The first building was of the design represented by the cut immediately below:



FIRE BUILDING ERECTED IN 1823.

This building was erected by the fire company organized in 1823. It was located on Church street, which then led from King, or Main, street to the Manchester road. It was a plain board house, built with two large doors, no windows, a shingle roof, and only large enough to hold a hand engine, with circular copper dome and wrought brakes. The company was named "Union Fire Company," which formed the nucleus of the department. Then Westminster extended from what is now Centre street to the Washington road and Manchester or York road, which was the dividing line between Baltimore and Frederick counties, the stone with initials "F. C." and "B. C." now standing corner Washington road and East Main street. In 1834, the town growing west, the engine-house was moved on Main street, opposite Court street, where ex-Judge James A. C. Bond's residence is now located. Then it was used as a lockup, as well as engine-house. When a fellow got 'boozy' the engine was run out and he was run in and the key turned. Among the prominent men who were presidents of the early organization, and, in fact, up to 1857, were John Wampler, Jacob Yingling, John C. Cockey, David Keef-er, Col. James M. Shellman, William Reese and Francis Shriver, all now deceased. In 1840 the citizens petitioned the legislature to pass an act enabling them to hold a lottery to raise \$5,000 to purchase a new fire engine, build a new engine-house, town hall and market-house, but nothing came of it.

An amusing incident in connection with the history of this first fire organization is related. A short distance from what is now Avondale Station, on the Western Maryland Railroad, about three miles from this city, was located the first iron furnace erected in the United States. The hilly range east of the furnace was known as Furnace Hill, along which charcoal burning was occasionally done. On one occasion, in 1834, the timbers took fire, and the Westminster boys seeing the fire, ordered out the old engine, and away they went up street to the Goose Pond lane, now Liberty street, and down to the farm lately owned by Mr. Jacob Myerly. They were asked what they were going to do with the fire engine. They replied going to put out the fire on Furnace Hill. They were asked where they would get the water. They then let the fire engine stand, and ran to the hill. The engine remained in the country over two weeks before it was brought back to the town for the protection of her citizens.

In 1851 the mayor and council ordered the old engine and engine-house sold,

but by the efforts of Col. James M. Shellman, John Fisher and others, the organization was remodeled and improved in its make up, and permitted to go on until 1857. Then, owing to getting in bad repute again by the burning of all the barracks near the town, and a number of stables in the town, the City Council sold the engine to the late Michael Baughman, and he ordered it destroyed, using the iron and selling the copper. The wheels of the engine are still in use at England & Bryan's tannery.

The engine-house was finally sold to John H. Mitten, who removed it to 97 Pennsylvania avenue, where some of the boards are to be seen yet. After the sale of the fire engine, the Council ordered hooks and ladders, thinking that they would be less fun for the boys and more protection to the citizens. The town still growing west, in 1868 an effort was made to start a hook and ladder company in the West End, but objection was raised by some of the older citizens, and the project was abandoned for a time. After several disastrous fires, the old department was re-organized on New Year's night, 1879. Land was bought, and the department was incorporated in February, 1879. The name given by the court was the Westminster Fire Engine and Hose Company, No. 1. The old objections were again raised and some talked of laying an injunction to stop the organization, but as the men were recruited from among the most solid business men, the boys were prepared to fight fires two years before any occurred. The first president under the reorganization was Dr. W. H. Rippard, who was succeeded by W. L. Seabrook, and the next president was Oscar D. Gilbert. The present incumbent is Edwin J. Lawyer, who was one of the reorganizers of the department, is a member of the Veteran Firemen's Association of Westminster, and is also president of the Maryland State Firemen's Association.

The department has fifty active members, a hook and ladder truck, four chemical extinguishers, three hose carriages, and plenty of hose. In addition to this, there are two other hose houses in different parts of the town. As there is a strong water pressure, there is no need for engines.

The officers of the department are: President, E. J. Lawyer; vice-presidents, M. J. Lynch and J. H. Mitten; secretary and treasurer, A. W. Hahn; assistant secretary, A. T. Smith; chief, F. K. Herr; assistant chief, F. T. Shaeffer.



FIRE BUILDING OF 1879.

This building and the ground upon which it stands was recently sold and

the foundation for a new structure, on the Busby lot, on East Main street, is now ready and the corner-stone will be laid as soon as the weather shall permit further progress on the work. Plans for the new building were prepared by Architect Jackson C. Gatt, of Baltimore. The materials used in its construction will be buff brick with trimmings of white brick and Baltimore county marble, for the front, ordinary brick to constitute the body of the structure. The building will be three stories high with a bell tower ninety-two feet high. There will be a large fire alarm bell and a clock with four dials, each four feet in diameter. The structure will have a frontage of forty feet and a depth of seventy feet. The first floor



THE WESTMINSTER FIRE ENGINE HOSE COMPANY BUILDING
THE NEW FIREMEN'S BUILDING.

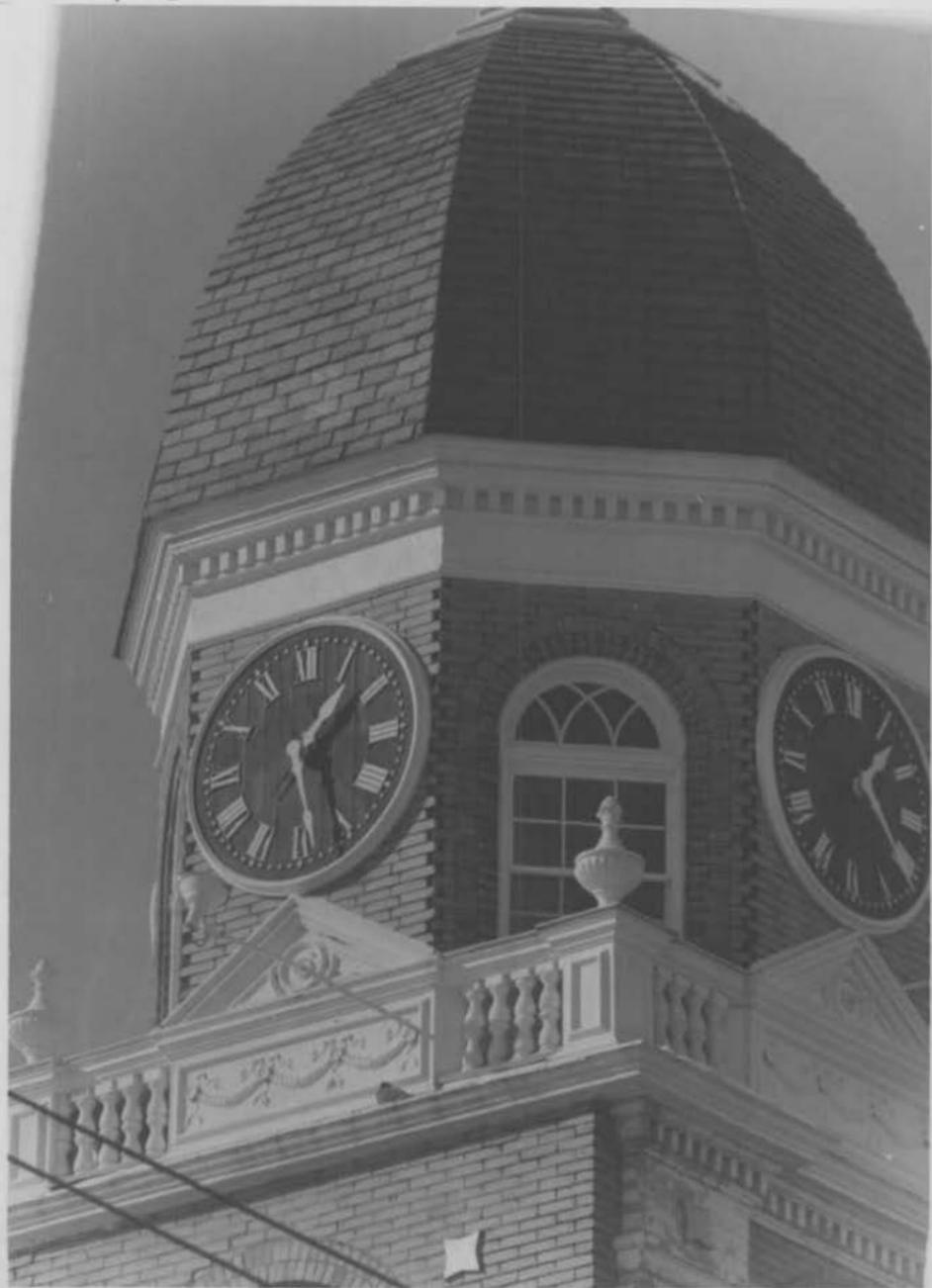
will contain a large fire apparatus-room with cemented floor, a small fire apparatus-room and a smoking room for the firemen. A wide stairway leads from the street to the second floor, on which are a meeting-room for the fire department, a parlor, City Council chamber, clerk's office and lavatories. On the third floor are lodge rooms, ante and regalia rooms, committee rooms, and a banquet hall and kitchen. The roof of the building will be of Spanish tiles, and the cornices will be of galvanized iron.

It is pleasant to record the fact that the clock referred to in the above description is not a myth, but a certainty. Some public spirited citizen, whose name is withheld, has contracted with the Seth Thomas Clock Company, of Stamford, Conn., for a tower clock which the company lists at \$1040, and which will be a contribution to the department. No doubt public curiosity will be aroused as to the personality of the donor of this magnificent gift, but, beyond stating that it will be a memorial clock, President Lawyer declines to divulge the name of the generous citizen contributing it. It will, however, become known in due time. The clock will, as above stated, have four dials, each four feet in diameter, and it will strike the hours and half hours. The act of its donor is well worthy, not only of the most thorough commendation but of imitation also. When the firemen's building shall have been completed it will need furnishing, and the generous deed of the clock contributor is a pointer which might be followed by others in providing furniture for the several apartments requiring it. The boys are entitled to the very best the people can give them.

WESTMINSTER FIRE CO.

J. LELAND JORDAN
L. SECTION OF

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CARR 421

"Wastinck für Hall"

Detail

2/77 C. Weck

35%



35%

C-11

CARR 421

"Fire Hall" Westminster

N facade

2/77 C. Wecker