

RICHARDSON HOUSE

53 WEST MAIN STREET

Built about 1870, on land leased from the Catholic Church, the Richardson House fulfills the important role of being a significant building at a significant location. Its massive bulk fills its lot, and its wealth of decoration (ornamental brickwork under its east and west eaves, fine wooden cornice, and interesting stained glass over its storefront) relieves it from stolidity. The original issue facing the builder, George Leas, was how to fit a traditional central axis into a six-bay facade. He was fairly successful on the ground floor (no attempt was made to create this centrality on the second and third stories); on the first floor an accessively massive door was placed between the building's two shops to draw one's attention to this center. Furthermore, one is fooled into thinking this door actually is in the center because the western shop has had its edge removed, so one tends to read the diagonal length of the door (located at the edge) and the western window as being a part of the south front, giving it necessary western length.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Carr 428
0704285511

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC George Leas House

AND/OR COMMON Richardson House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 53 West Main Street (MD 32)

CITY, TOWN Westminster VICINITY OF _____ CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 7

STATE Maryland COUNTY Carroll

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Carroll County Bank and Trust Company Telephone #: 848-8100

STREET & NUMBER 45 West 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 #: 584

STREET & NUMBER Center Street Folio #: 10

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

It has been noted often that Westminster's fortunate in having buildings that rise to their locational needs, that is, that where a strong building is needed, such as at an important intersection, a strong building is present. This is true at the intersection of Main and John Streets, which has no. 53 West Main Street filling its south-east corner. The building looks to the north and solidly sits on its low fieldstone foundation. Built in two perpendicular gable-roof sections which result in an L-shape, a standard form, the building has long since had its L filled-in, and has assumed a square form, at least on its ground and second stories.

The principal facade, looking north onto Main Street, is six bays long and 3 stories high. The ground floor, which has always been used for commercial purposes, is approximately divided in half by a central (more or less) door which leads to upstairs apartments. The door is a half-wood, half-glass affair, now resting behind a modern glass and aluminum storm door. The door is flanked by three side lights, and is transomless. The door surround more than makes up for this lack of glass, and is, in fact, almost overpowering for the door; it consists of side, unfluted pilasters, and a heavy three-part denticulated entablature, which is supported by large end brackets with applique at their base and rosettes at their top. The door is approached by a modern, brick, wrought iron balconied set of steps. To the east, is a relatively unchanged late-Victorian storefront, until recently occupied by Eckard's paint and wall-paper store. The shop is approached by a central, fifteen light, entrance door which is diagonally recessed between large display windows. The storefront is enframed by narrow pilasters which lead to a modillioned cornice. To the west, at the corner of the building nearest the intersection, is another storefront. This store is approached diagonally from the intersection (the corner of the building has been cut through and removed) by a large, plate glass, entrance door above three granite steps. This second store has a large, plate glass, display window facing Main Street above a panelled wooden base (a matching window fronts John Street); this store - entrance door and two display windows - when viewed from a distance on line with the entrance door becomes enframed by pilasters and cornices similar to those on Eckard's store, but minus the modillions. The two stores work well together in their use of diagonals; Eckard's follows the tradition of having the door recessed diagonally between display windows, the corner shop has its windows leading back diagonally from the door.

Above, a 4 course common bond facade is pierced by 6, double-hung sash windows on both the second and third floors. The windows are six-over-six paned, and have four course gauged, flat arches, white wooden sills, and black louvered shutters. A heavily molded cornice tops the

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 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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Much of the significance of 53 West Main Street has already been hinted at - it unquestionably and excellently fulfills a role of being an important building in an important location, it has superb ornamental brickwork under its eastern eave, and also has a fine wooden cornice on its northern end and western roof line. If one wishes to nit-pick, one could worry that certain original issues have been left unresolved; it's clear that the builders wished to build no. 53 within the traditional local framework - the building fits in plan, in window treatment, in ground story door treatment, etc. However, they had built 53 West Main as a commercial venture, and wished it to bring income from rentals of apartments above and shops below (making it an interesting ancestor of some modern, urban, apartment buildings with their luxury shops). The problem arose when designers seemed desirous of having the principal facade maintain the local tradition based on a strong central axis; how is this to be achieved and have six bays on the second and third floors? The answer, of course, is that it can't, but a stab was made on the ground floor. Here a massive door was placed between two shops, the door draws one's attention to this "center" by its size. Furthermore, one is fooled into thinking it actually is in the center, because the western shop has had its edge removed so one tends to read the diagonal length of the door and the western window as being part of the south front, giving it necessary western length. Thus it is interesting to see how builders 100 years ago tried to build as they wished, yet following the strong traditional lines. It might be too much to say that Leas fought to be free from the building styles of the past, but he certainly felt a bit hampered by them.

The lots are part of a larger tract which was owned by Francis and Ragenia Grandadam (or Granadam). The widow Ragenia left the land to her slave for life: "unto my negro Elizabeth during her life all my real estate. After her death, I request my executors to rent my real estate and the rents arising from the aforesaid property to be paid to the Roman Priest that attends the Roman Chapel near Westminster." Somehow the church managed to take the lands from Elizabeth before her death, subdivided the property, and (probably) used these questionable funds to build the now-doomed St. John's Church. As ye sow....The accepted version of the Church's dealings as written by Miss Mary Bostwick Shellman (of the Shellman House) in 1924, as part of a long essay called "The Early Pioneers",

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 15 and the western 20 feet of lot 14 as shown on a plat of the Catholic Chapel Addition to Westminster recorded among the Land Records of Carroll County in Book 20, Page 446.

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

DATE

STREET & 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

#7

building; pairs of scroll brackets support the cornice and are located on axis with the central space between the windows, and at the end of the building. Dentils are strung between pairs of brackets. The pairs of brackets are further unified by a wooden string course which runs through their bases, another popular late-Victorian motif. Two, wide, corbel-capped chimneys rise at the ends of the building, at the gables' peaks, and help give the building symmetry it is otherwise lacking or, rather, a symmetry it apparently desires, but it is uncertain how to achieve.

The cornice, overhanging about 2 feet continues around the east and west facades of the building, attempting a baseless pediment. The west facade of the three-story section has two, small, four-light attic windows and five, 6/6, normal-size windows (2 each on the second and third floor, and one to the south on the ground floor). Windows are similarly treated to those found elsewhere except for the southerly third floor window which is shutterless. The rear L extends four bays to the south; second-story bays are all 6/6 windows; ground-story bays have the pattern WWDW, the windows also being 6/6, and the door being the many-paned door which is topped by a narrow transom. The southern end of this facade shows the edge of the two-tiered porch which -- presumably -- once ran across the rear of the L. It has been filled-in with brick below and with aluminum siding above. From the south, the "original" porch can be seen extending across the entire south facade of the building, below a tin shed roof. The porch has a central, solid, entrance door on the second story and four 6/6 windows on either side. The entrance door leads to a modern second-story balcony which runs, uncovered, the length of the former porch. Two, small, 4-light attic windows are in the gable end of the L, above the original porch, and a central, inside, corbel-capped chimney rests about halfway back the L, at the gables peak.

It also seems likely that the L had a two-tiered porch on its eastern side; this has also long disappeared and has been replaced by a gradually sloping shed roof which makes the building a solid rather than an L. The eastern part of this infill has three, 6/6 windows on its second floor, which is slightly set back on the ground floor which, below its shed tin roof, has had its three windows filled in. The east front of the Main Street section is blind except for two, four light attic windows. This facade is not, however, dull by any means; its interest is achieved by very fine brickwork at the eaves; 3 step corbelling, with, below them, two rows of staggered brick dentils. This wall is laid in 5 course common bond (as are all walls other than the principal facade); the wall has recently had a three foot wide extension built off of it, an, extension which takes its peculiar shape from the stairs it was built to shelter; one 6/6 window is on the second floor of this extension, to light the dark at the top of the stairs. This extension is roofed in asbestos tile, but the rest of the building is roofed in slate.

#8

is as follows:

The tract next extending to Liberty Street was "Bedford" or Winter's Addition, then came the Grandadam property which subsequently became the property of the Roman Catholic Church, and is now part of the prosperous business section of the town between the Railroad and Carroll Street, and consisted of 30 acres of land which were leased by the church, and the rents go annually, one-fourth to the Church, and the balance to the priest in charge. The property was originally willed to Betsy Frantz, a negro woman belonging to Mrs. Grandadam. It was a fine farm, with a red frame house in good condition just beyond the "Goose Pond Lane," now the bed of the Western Maryland Railroad. On the opposite side of the street were the barn and orchard, all in good condition. By the provision of the will, the property, if neglected and not taken care of, was to go to the Roman Catholic Church. Betsy, not being a business woman, rented to what were known as "poor white trash," who neglected everything, used the fences for firewood and did not pay any rent, so the poor old woman was glad to take in washing for a living, lost the property, which reverted to the Church, and she received a small pension from the Orphan's Court of Frederick County.

After the Church kindly took the 30 acres from Elizabeth, enabling her to gladly "take in washing for a living", and after it created its subdivision, George Leas took a lease to lots 14 and 15 (our property) on March 30, 1868 (Carroll County Deed Book 35, Page 297). Leas then built no. 53, leasing the eastern 25' to William Coon, selling the western 25' to Martha G. Sharrer (43/337) on March 16, 1874; Sharrer paid \$3850 in cash, and took a \$2000 mortgage. The Sharrers are listed in the 1887 City Directory as living at 51 West Main Street; their tenants were E. P. Brundige, John B. Brundige, Denton S. Gehr, Mrs. Martha G. Starr, William G. Starr, Rev. A. S. Wheeler, and Henry Wilson. Unless they were living a la Hong Kong, the present massive building must have then existed.

All these names appear in the place's chain of title; on May 18, 1908, the executor of Ms. Starr sold her half to Carris Brundige for \$4000 (109/121). Various confusing things happen to the two sections (divisions into quarters, then sixteenths so that at one time it is possible that individual rooms were individually owned) until the Richardson family gradually assembled complete, fee simple title, beginning in the later 1920's (see 136/513, 121/13, 134/492, 152/232, 148/424, and 171/420), through til 1973 (482/309, and 557/655). Then, on December 4, 1974, Charles Gehr Richardson sold the complete building to its present owners, the Carroll County Bank and Trust Company (584/10) who plan on destroying it, and, with it, its rather remarkable history.



CANK 428
53 W. Main St.
Westminster
NE facade
2/77 C. Weck



CARR 428

53 W. Main St.

Westminster

W. Jacobs

2/77 C. Week



Eckard's

PAINT
WALLPAPER

MOVING
SALE

THE CASHY BO

CARR 428
53 W. Main St.
Westminster
N. arcade
2/77 C. Weich



CARR 428

53 W. Main St.

Westminster

NW facade

(Weeks 2/77)