

## CHARLES ROBERTS HOUSE

34 COURT PLACE

The Roberts-Wood-Adams House is significant in Westminster as a superb building in its own right, and as a key element in that City's Court Square. Although there is evidence to suggest that a building occupied this site as early as 1830, the present structure dates from a generation later. Charles Roberts bought a part of this large lot from Lydia Kelly on August 2, 1875 for \$500.00 (Carroll County Deed Book 45, Page 387.) Roberts apparently owned other land in the area extending to the rear of the Ascension Church. He was a prominent lawyer and later judge of the Circuit Court and was active in several local organizations such as the Union National Bank, and the Forest and Stream Club, as well as having been instrumental in the Telephone Company's early history here.

It was no doubt Roberts who either built the entire present structure, or who expanded the older building into the present form. Whichever he did, the result was superb as his house was, and to some degree still is, thought of as a local "showpiece". To achieve his effect, he abandoned the axial quality of most of the City's early dwellings, placing his entrance door to one side. He also abandoned the City's fondness for the gable roof, installing a mansard roof, and thus following fashions of the Great World rather than the dictates of the local vernacular tradition. In doing so, Roberts was the first, along with the Reifsnider family, to attempt to introduce cosmopolitan elements into the City's building pattern. Charles Reifsnider was at about the same time, erecting his second empire pile on the corner of Main and Ralph Streets in Westminster; Roberts must have been following similar fashions, for his efforts here include not only a mansard roof, but a very fine pavilion at the southern corner of his house. Interior details are equally fine, including elaborately wrought radiators, swirling cast brass hardware (including hinges) and a warming oven built into the dining room radiator. Equally fine interior woodwork exists, at least on the first two stories. The 23 rooms in the house are extremely irregularly laid out, but many still have the fine mid-Victorian fireplaces.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

CARR 506  
MACI #070705604

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Charles Roberts House

AND/OR COMMON Wood-Adams House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 34 Court Place

CITY, TOWN Westminster VICINITY OF \_\_\_\_\_ CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<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 Mrs. N. Floyd Adams Telephone #: 848-2472

STREET & NUMBER 34 Court Place

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 #: 222

STREET & NUMBER Center Street Folio #: 71

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED	DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED			
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	Principal Facade			

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This fanciful pile, originally a home of Judge Roberts, faces the east side of Court Square in Westminster. Although the building presents one of the liveliest facades anywhere in the City, it can conveniently be broken in half, each half of which is manageable. The southern section, no. 39-41, is a five-bay, white-painted, Flemish bond, brick pile. This facade is two full stories in height, plus a mansard roof. The main door in this section, and of the whole building, is the northern ground floor bay. The door opening is in the form of a round arch with four enriched recessed panels in it. The door is double, and rests above three granite steps. Plain spandrels enliven the area between the arch and the full pediment which tops it. Scrolled brackets with acanthus leaves at their bases, "support" the pediment. There is another secondary door which is the second bay from the south. It is, correctly, plainer and is a single door with two enriched panels below a rectangular transom--a plain bracketed cornice tops the transom. This door led to Dr. Adams' office.

All other bays on this facade's section are 6/6 double-hung sash windows with black louvered shutters and white wooden sills and three course gauged flat arches. Windows are regularly spaced; there are three of them on the ground floor and five above. An extremely heavy-molded cornice tops the facade separating it from the mansard roof. The cornice is enriched by massive dentils placed between the six intricate scroll brackets which are, in turn, placed alternately with the windows; a string course connects these brackets at their bases. The mansard roof has three round arched dormer windows with segmental arched wooden hoods; the hoods are supported by mild pelleted scrolled brackets. A fine pavilion marks the end of the roof on the south side; it has a double set of round arched 1/1 windows, both placed below their larger version of the other dormer windows' hoods. The pavilion is topped, above two quatrefoil decorated recessed circles, by a small crown molding. The entire roof is still sheathed in its original grey slate.

The other section of the building acts as a foil to this larger section. The larger section is calmer except where it is enlivened by means of rounded shapes. This other section, added as a ballroom, however, is lively and much liveliness is a result of the extremely steeply-pitched gable roof which more than balances the already discussed pavilion. This roof continues, after a fashion, the cornice and brackets and dentils of the other section but at an acute angular manner. A pair of 6/6 windows is placed within the dormer. Most of the rest of this facade is taken up by a three-sided, two-story bay window. Each story has one round-arched bay per side, all being 1/1 windows except for a ground-story entrance door. This door, largely of glass, is

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 checked="" 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 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. 1875

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Roberts-Wood-Adams House is significant in Westminster as a superb building in its own right, and as a key element in that City's Court Square. Although there is evidence to suggest that a building occupied this site as early as 1830, the present structure dates from a generation later. Charles Roberts bought a part of this large lot from Lydia Kelly on August 2, 1875 for \$500.00 (Carroll County Deed Book 45, Page 387.) Roberts apparently owned other land in the area extending to the rear of the Ascension Church. He was a prominent lawyer and later judge of the Circuit Court and was active in several local organizations such as the Union National Bank, and the Forest and Stream Club, as well as having been instrumental in the Telephone Company's early history here.

It was no doubt Roberts who either built the entire present structure, or who expanded the older building into the present form. Whichever he did, the result was superb as his house was, and to some degree still is, thought of as a local "showpiece". To achieve his effect, he abandoned the axial quality of most of the City's early dwellings, placing his entrance door to one side. He also abandoned the City's fondness for the gable roof, installing a mansard roof, and thus following fashions of the Great World rather than the dictates of the local vernacular tradition. In doing so, Roberts was the first, along with the Reifsnider family, to attempt to introduce cosmopolitan elements into the City's building pattern. Charles Reifsnider was at about the same time, erecting his second empire pile on the corner of Main and Ralph Streets in Westminster; Roberts must have been following similar fashions, for his efforts here include not only a mansard roof, but a very fine pavilion at the southern corner of his house. Interior details are equally fine, including elaborately wrought radiators, swirling cast brass hardware (including hinges) and a warming oven built into the dining room radiator. Equally fine interior woodwork exists, at least on the first two stories. The 23 rooms in the house are extremely irregularly laid out, but many still have the fine mid-Victorian fireplaces.

Court Square possesses an atmosphere of often-mentioned serenity. While this is true, it is a serenity not based on unified design of buildings, but on buildings that blend together well despite

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 the parcels number 2, 3 and 4 as shown on the plat accorded among the land records of Carroll County in Book 142, Page 515, measuring approximately 56 feet along the eastern side of Court Square in Westminster and with a depth of about 257 feet.

**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

August, 1977

ORGANIZATION

Westminster Historical Sites Survey

TELEPHONE

STREET &amp; 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

47  
a recent addition. The top of each of the gables of the dormer's two stories is marked by a delicately dentiled cornice. Acanthus-leaved brackets are placed about this cornice. Elongated slender turned columns are placed flush with the wall between all brackets on the bay window. The north side of this peaked-roof section has recently had a flat-roofed, two-story, clauboard, one-bay extension off of it for offices. The extension runs the depth of the original structure below the roof which is pierced by two pediment dormer windows in the attic. The five-bay section is one room deep; its south wall is blind.

The rear of the building, which has a T shape, has had much recent work done on it, and is now covered in a massive series of aluminum siding additions which are alternately covered with casement windows and iron fire escapes. The rear of the extremely steeped-roof section is covered with a two-story, screened-in porch. All in all the confused jumble of the rear, recess to contain the houses 23 rooms, is a marked contrast to the otherwise unified placid principal facade and betrays the building's many uses today as well as the bold principal facade represents the building's unified, dignified past.

there differences in design. Some houses along the Square's eastern side are traditional, but these are a minority when compared to the stylistically up-to-date and obviously built-for-show places such as the Roberts' House, the Ascension Church Rectory, the Holy Cross - Allender House, and the Court House and Ascension Church themselves.

The building stayed in the Roberts family until July 1, 1905, when heirs sold the place to the Realty Company of Westminster for \$5,000.00 (192/41). The company then sold to William E. Dixon on March 12, 1923 (142/84) and to Harry W. Schaeffer and J. B. Myers on February 29, 1924 (143/205); their heirs sold the building, described as 34 Court Place, to John Wood on July 1, 1953 (222/71) John Wood's widow, who has married Dr. N. Floyd Adams, still owns the house. Mrs. Adams and her husbands have made some alterations to the place, remodeling the cellar into offices (occupied by the Carroll County Branch of the Sunpapers) and using the secondary (southern) door and area for offices for their various professions. (Roberts added the steeply-pitched, gable roof section on the northern side of the building as a ballroom; the section a variety of owners and uses since the property was divided into four sections - this being Section #1 on a plat made in 1923. The former ballroom, now lawyers' offices, has been owned by the Heltibridge and Hoff families since 1925; present owner took title on July 16, 1970 in Deed 472/77).

According to the late Judge F. Neal Packer  
 this home was built circa 1830. He told  
 me he played here as a boy and was  
 told by his parents it was built the main  
 part) then by a lawyer (his understanding) named  
 Pabner (this is a guess) He said around  
 1850 it was a girl's boarding school. The  
 latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the  
 addition of a beautiful ballroom was added  
 (now few offices <sup>Hotel</sup> Street Bureau)

He told me the floors were beautiful  
 when he was young. Do you know imagine  
 my surprise - through several layers of  
 paint + oil + dirt the oak and walnut  
 (alternating boards) were discovered. The old  
 book cases are made of the same <sup>dark</sup> wood.

The old radiator (date 1885) with  
 a good warmer is rather unique.

There are three fireplaces on  
 my property. The old beams and  
 thick (24") stone walls in basement are  
 interesting. This was built according to  
 him before the Episcopal Church and earlier  
 than the Court House.

Douglas H. (Edwin)  
 (owner)  
 November, 1977

11016



115

P. 76  
78

CVIII

CARR 466  
34 Court Place  
Westminster  
5/17 C. Weeks

132 7/8



13270

~~13~~ (J-5)

CARR 466

31 Court Place, Westchester

W. Yucate

5/77 C. Wecker



CAN 466

34 Court Place Westville

E. Jacobs

5/77 C. Weeks

S/S



116 P.78

118

0.2578

C1\*

Roberts House, ballroom  
addition.

CARR 466 (a)

43 n.

71 Court Street

Westminster

5/77 c. Uechi