

## "Westminster's Inns and Hotels, Part I"

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Throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, inns, usually known as taverns, and hotels provided lodging for travelers. Former Historical Society Curator Miss Lillian Shipley wrote an article for the Society's September 1971 News Letter entitled, "What Ever Happened to our Hotels," that provided some early history and anecdotes of Westminster hostelrys:

"Around the turn of the century Westminster had seven churches, seven hotels and eighteen saloons. The hotels Eastern or East End, the Main Court, the Central, the Westminster, the Albion, the Montour House, and the Anchor. I can still see the horse-drawn carriages going to meet the visitors arriving on the train. The carriages would hold six to eight passengers sitting opposite each other. The names of the hotels each represented appeared in large letters on each side of the carriage. Mr. Edward Chrest of Manchester Road owned and operated them. As for baggage transportation, 'Sing' Dorm had the express wagon that hauled trunks and salesman's sample cases to the hotels and sample rooms where merchants would select their spring, summer, fall, and winter merchandise.

I remember very little about the Eastern Hotel near the Washington Road except that it was large and dark with a pump and horse trough on the flagstone walk.

The Main Court Inn, Main and Court Streets, was a handsome old pre-Revolutionary War tavern which accommodated stagecoach travelers on the Pittsburgh-Baltimore route. Built about 1770, it was billed as a place where 'all conveniences of the period are available in the 40 rooms, with stabling for 150 horses.' Among the early owners were Jacob Sherman and Isaac Shriver. While leafing through old newspapers, I found many changes in the name. For many years, covering the Civil War period, it was called Dymock's; in 1870, Henry's. Later it was known as the City Hotel. Many pictures show the wide second floor porch extending over the flagstone walks on both streets, with an entrance on both streets. A barber shop and lawyers' offices on Court Street. The office, reached from both entrances, was a large room with a counter, back of which was the key and letter rack. The room just described opened on the large dining room. The bar was on one side of the hall at Main Street entrance leading to the office and dining room with large parlors on the other side of the hall. The second floor of the old part had a wide dark hall with bedrooms on both sides containing large windows. There were dormer windows on the third floor. This hotel with its gracious atmosphere was the gathering place for all social events for many years.

It went through many changes during the latter years. After the top floor of the annex was removed, the ground floor became an auto show room and garage and the second floor was made into apartments, Zile's ice cream factory took over and many deteriorations went unrepaired. That was a sad day in 1940 when, in spite of the protest of some citizens, old Main Court Inn was demolished. Fortunately the Historical Society of Carroll County has preserved its story along with an old daybook and ledger of the 1900 era when it was a busy place during the court season. Old ads carry fascinating details concerning the stabling of horses and the hostelrys who cared for them. As children, we heard of the slave quarters in the cellar. There were tales of chains fastened to iron rings to hold the slaves. By when the building was torn down no trace of rings or chains was found. What memories old Main Court Inn brings back, beginning with the time when William Winchester walked King Street to enter it and ending as World War II was beginning!

Central Hotel, Main and Center, was a large 4 or 5 story brick building painted white when I knew it. Although I was never in it, I became quite familiar with its activities because I lived opposite. The bar which joined was a two-story log house with dormer windows. A tin awning extended over the sidewalk into the street. A row of captain's chairs was placed against the wall for the convenience of the patrons of the bar. An iron pipe to which horses and wagons were hitched extended across the front. As children one of our games was to keep track of the teams of horses that stood without food or water and then tell our parents. They promptly notified the police who then took care of the owners seated at the bar. When the membership of the Church of God who were worshipping in Carroll Hall, over Rose's Drug Store, felt the need for more churchly quarters, old Central Hotel was sold to them as a suitable site. But because it was just two doors from the Centenary Methodist Church, it was decided that the hymn singing in both churches would interfere in the services of the other. Suppose while one congregation was singing, 'Will there be any stars in my crown?' the other might be answering, 'No, not one.' Because the Church of God decided that might be confusing, the hotel was re-sold to Joseph L. Mathias for his marble yard, office and shop, whereupon the Church of God found a more satisfactory site on Center Street."

Photo caption: The handsome Main Court Inn (from Court St.) once stood on the corner of Main and Court Streets, an ideal location to provide lodging for travelers and later for persons conducting business at nearby county buildings. Historical Society of Carroll County copy photograph collection.