

"1947 Blizzard"

Carroll County Times article for 20 February 2000

By Jay A. Graybeal

Carroll County has been visited by some record snow storms throughout its recorded history. A February 20, 1947 storm was one of the worst of the century. This paper presented a description of the storm's impact in the February 28th issue:

"SNOW STORM STOPS TRAFFIC

All Roads Leading To This City Were closed Until Monday;
School Sessions Interrupted

One of the worst snow storms or blizzards that has visited Maryland, struck here last Thursday morning, after a spring like Wednesday, starting at 8 o'clock and continuing until Friday morning, covering the ground from 8 to 14 inches.

State snow plows labored during the night cleaning the roads, also the county roads department also worked until late Friday night to clear away the snow and had the traffic moving at a slow pace.

But a heavy wind appeared Saturday morning and closed tight all roads leading out of the city.

In Westminster, the roads are under the State Roads supervision, snow plows worked all night Thursday, traveling through the city and piled the snow high along the streets but kept traffic open. Many piles of deep snow were visible along Main street with automobiles under them.

Left stranded were trucks and passenger cars in deep drifts to stick fast until Sunday afternoon when the roads were partially opened to allow traffic to move through. There were one way passages at many points on various state roads and up to yesterday some of the roads had single traffic lane with high snow drifts on each side, resembling a deep cut.

The county roads are still closed at places and will remain so for awhile.

All schools closed Friday and Monday. All reopened on Tuesday except Mt. Airy, Winfield, Mechanicsville, and Robert Moton, (colored school).

Drifted road prohibited bus transportation on many secondary roads. Some of these are still closed. Condition of main highways prevented opening of Mechanicsville, and Winfield schools until Thursday.

County and state roads people worked hard to get roads open. Many teachers were prevented from reaching schools on Tuesday.

No mail trucks from Baltimore to this city have arrived here since last Thursday morning, causing a great deal of inconvenience to our business places in this city. Since the train mail service has been discontinued the delivery has been very unsatisfactory. It is time to restore train service.

Western Maryland Railroad ran an engine with a cab to Glyndon from Baltimore to take stranded persons to Baltimore.

Citizens living between Westminster and Detour that were in this city Saturday afternoon left their cars at garages and took the train to their town, returning Monday for them.

Twenty-three cars were stalled at one time on Red Hill, on Manchester road.

On Sunday afternoon 65 citizens living along or those using the Bethel Road, worked from Bethel, Carrollton and Patapsco and shoveled the road open.

The New Windsor State road was closed by snow drifts in five different places on Saturday from 11 a.m. until Sunday afternoon. On Wakefield Hill, a truck loaded with baled hay became wedged in the snow, and was unable to move until Sunday when the road was partly opened. There were many other cars on the road that were left until Sunday.

A Blue Ridge Lines bus, which stalled Saturday morning a mile north of Eldersburg, was released Sunday afternoon. The Potomac Bus Lines from Westminster to Hagerstown was unable to travel from Thursday until Tuesday.

All roads leading to this city were closed to traffic on Saturday afternoon, leaving many stranded in this city.

The State Roads experienced great difficulty in trucking the snow. Several plows were disabled Friday and had to be repaired.

Western Maryland Railroad experienced little difficulty from the snow. A freight from Hanover to Baltimore, on the B. & H. Davison, failed to buck a drift at Boring and was held fast until two engines and a snow plow were sent to its rescue on Saturday afternoon. There were several rails broken where Engine No. 114 slipped which was the cause.

A bulldozer was brought into action and pushed snow banks away leaving the small plows to brush it away.

Wolf Hill, near New Windsor, was closed with snow 10 to 12 feet deep."

Perhaps the most striking piece of information in the article is the description of the 65-member volunteer work crew who shoveled out their own public road. There were almost certainly others who performed work that few would undertake today.

Photo caption: Heavy snow filled Westminster's W. Main St. after a February 20, 1947 blizzard. Thomas, Hunter & Bennett Collection, Historical Society of Carroll County, gift of Lloyd Thomas, 1985.