

"The Second Annual GWDC Business History Walking Tour"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

The Greater Westminster Development Corporation will hold its 2nd Annual Westminster Business History Walking Tour on Saturday, May 17th. The tour begins at 12:00N the GWDC office, located at 105 E. Main Street and features fifteen historic business locations along Westminster's Main Street and on Liberty Street. The block of Liberty Street between Green and Main Streets is rich in business history and is currently an area undergoing significant business redevelopment.

Three buildings on Liberty Street will be added to the tour this year including, The Liberty Building, The Hickory Stick in the former William F. Myers & Sons Co. Building and Mommy and Me. Harry's Main Street Restaurant, which recently celebrated its 50th Anniversary, is also a new tour site this year.

The histories of these local businesses provide some interesting insights into local business activity and community life. One of the well documented structures is the former William F. Myers & Sons Building on the southwest corner of Liberty and Green Streets. Begun in 1884, the structure was enlarged in the twentieth century. William F. Myers of Pleasant Valley acquired the property in 1912 and the business operated until 1983. An early history of the company was published in the October 1, 1912 issue of the American Sentinel newspaper:

William F. Myers

Pork Packing, Cider, Apple Butter

Since the first article on the Industries of Westminster appeared in the Sentinel another industry has been added to the town and we are very glad to welcome it. It is one which has grown steadily and is calculated to remain because the man behind it has reached his present solid financial condition through years of honest toil and careful attention to business.

Mr. William F. Myers, the subject of this short article, is the son of Lewis Myers and Mary Ann Miller his wife, the latter a daughter of the late John Q. Miller, of this city, and was born at Pleasant Valley, this county, February 12, 1854. Like many other Carroll county boys, his early life was spent upon his father's farm where he remained until 1879. Having then reached the age of twenty five years, young Myers decided to try his hand at huckstering, a business which many of the men of substance of this county followed in their younger days with great success. A few days spent in gathering "the load" from farm house to farm house, a few hours spent at home preparing the same for shipment to Baltimore and then the "trip" to the latter place filled his early life with plenty of work and pleasure. In those days all hucksters from this part of the county "drove the road", and by their patronage helped to keep some of the roadside taverns in commission. It was, however, a mighty slow way of getting the "stuff" to Baltimore - and a mighty disagreeable one too, during a part of the year - and Mr. Myers, like all the other hucksters, "took to railroading" his "stuff" to Fulton Station from whence he delivered it to his customers.

The hours spent in his wagon while enroute for his "load" were not devoid of results. To call at this house and then at that one took some time, many of them being some distance apart, and it gave young Myers many moments to spend in studying how he could increase his business, and, if he should fail at it, what other one could he engage in which would pay him as well or perhaps better. The more he thought over the matter the firmer he became convinced that, in as much as many farmers were even

then beginning to sell their milk to the local creamery, a new industry then being introduced in the strictly rural districts of the county, thereby depriving the hucksters of the butter formerly made by the farmers' wives, the business of huckstering would very soon be in the hands of a few men and that he had better seek other avenues for the means of making a living for himself and family.

While disposing of his load in Baltimore Mr. Myers had often been asked by some of his customers why he did not bring them some "country" sausages, hams, etc., and he became impressed with the idea that, perhaps, it would pay him to buy a dressed hog or two, cut them into sausage, hams, lard etc., and take the same to Baltimore to some of his inquiring customers. Accordingly on November 8, 1896, he purchased three hogs, weighing 340 pounds gross, for which he paid 4 1/2 cents per pound, cut them up into the different parts and that week took the sausage etc, to Baltimore with his load of huckster goods. The venture was such a decided success that Mr. Myers made arrangement to repeat the thing. He kept on during the winter of 1896 and 1897 and has been increasing and increasing the business year by year. The huckster route and business was disposed of and Mr. Myers has devoted the last few years of his life to the packing of pork, cider making and apple butter boiling.

Pleasant Valley is a mighty nice, quiet little village, situated on the road from Stonersville to Frizellburg, but it was too far from railroad facilities for Mr. Myer's business and he concluded to move his plant to Westminster where he could be in touch with modern ways of doing business. He purchased the brick property at Liberty and Green streets and has now about completed the installation of the machinery necessary to handle 10,000 pounds of pork per week and 60 barrels of cider making per day. The plant consists of a 125 horse power steam boiler, 60 barrels per day, cider press, 3 coils for apple butter boiling, 3 steam jackets, 100 pound steam sausage stuffer, 300 pound Boss mixer, No. 52 Enterprise grinder, and a 150 pound boiler steel lard mixer. The building is a two story brick and frame one and affords Mr. Myers ample room for his business and a residence for his family. The products of the establishment will be sold to Baltimore and Westminster dealers and the enterprise should receive encouragement from our citizens. The pork packing part of the business will begin as soon as the weather becomes cooler.

At one time the intersection of Liberty and Green streets was a very quiet spot as the steam mill was the only industry in the immediate neighborhood, but with the building of the Koontz creamery on one corner, the Myers packing house on another and the W. E. Grumbine shirt factory a few feet away the character of the place has been changed. It is a very welcome change to those who are working to increase the number of industries of the town. We are informed that another industry will be established shortly in the rear of the Myers packing house.

Mr. Myers married a daughter of Mr. Absalom Bankard, of Pleasant Valley, and they have eight children; C. Herbert Myers, of Pleasant Valley; Carroll E. and Oliver E. Myers, Mrs. Joseph H. Hahn, Nettie, Goldie and Sadie Myers of Westminster, and Mrs. Norval Hahn, of Baltimore.

The tour will also likely be the last opportunity to tour two key historic buildings on East Main St., the Firemen's Building and the Post Office. Both agencies will be moving to new facilities in the near future. Although both structures will be used for purposes other than as originally designed, these new uses will open a new chapter in the long history of each site.

Photo caption: A group of motorcycle enthusiasts posed c1920 for their photograph near the intersection of Main and Liberty Streets in Westminster. Several structures in this block will be open for tour during the 2nd annual Westminster Business History Walking Tour on Saturday, May 17th. One of the tour sites, the former Farmers Supply Co. and recently renamed The Liberty Building, is barely visible

at the left is the corner of the image. Historical Society of Carroll county collection, gift of Mrs. Mary Herbert, 1988.