

“Palm Sunday Blizzard of 1942”

Carroll County Times article for 8 April 2001

By Jay A. Graybeal

Carroll Countians awoke to a heavy snow on Palm Sunday 1942. This newspaper carried a front page article about the storm:

“Thirty Inch Snow Fall Here Over Week-End – We have often heard and read of deep snows that have fallen in some sections of the country, but to be blanketed under a thirty inch fall was something new to this vicinity. Snow began falling Saturday night and continued throughout Sunday. Baltimore reported 22 inches, Hagerstown a similar depth, with the fall ranging from a flurry to a 10-15 inch snow noted from other sections.

Reports indicate it to be the second heaviest twenty-four hour fall in Maryland’s weather history, the other recorded in 1922 at 24.5 inches. Older residents report it to be the heaviest in their memory.

Due to the wet and clinging nature of the snow very little drifting was reported. Traffic on all roads was tied up and the State Roads Department had difficulty in opening the main arteries of travel.

Throughout Westminster and the county, hundreds of cars were abandoned, many completely covered.

The removal of the snow has been extremely costly throughout all sections of the state. Baltimore called in approximately 2000 extra men to assist in the 'clean up.'

Our municipal authorities, for the first time, saw fit to clear the greater portion of Main street, and some of the important cross streets. Whatever the cost, we would say it certainly was an important step, one that the merchants have requested for years, and one that the trading public appreciates. The work was done by Thomas, Bennett and Hunter, road contractors, using their large road graders. The removal was rapid and proved to be a most successful method.

The C & P Telephone Company reports only slight damage to their system. Although many lines were out, all were restored by Tuesday. They report damage principally from falling tree limbs. The Gas and Electric Company also report slight damage to their lines. Passenger busses and freight lines were stalled for many hours.

The principal damage reported from all sections was to trees and shrubbery, much of the latter completely down. Farmers will be delayed in their spring work, but they state that 'it is worth it.' No doubt many of the wells and springs will be revived from the excess of water. With warm weather the early part of the week the snow is about gone.”

Local correspondents also mentioned the storm. The Dennings column included:

“It was said by one of our old friends and neighbors a few weeks ago that winter was not over and that we would get a heavy snow before spring would open up. Saturday night and Sunday brought what we call the largest and deepest snow that has fallen for many years. It was measured in a yard on Tuesday morning where it did not drift or thaw and it measured 26 inches. It put a stop to most all traffic on Sunday and Monday. The school bus was not run on Monday and the farmers were handicapped in

getting their milk away on Sunday and Monday. Tuesday morning you could see people on the county roads with wagons and tractors hauling the milk out to the state roads. We hope that it will bring water back into the wells and springs that are dry.”

The Frizzellburg correspondent wrote:

“The March blizzard was quite a surprise to every one on Sunday morning. Coming so late in the month made it seem worse that if it had come in February or the first of March. Lewis D. G. Wantz’s barn collapsed from the heavy snow, and also part of the roof of the barn of Mrs. Maud Lawyer. Everyone was “drifted in” and it took a lot of hard work to get through the drifts.”

Editor H. P. Gorsuch of The Times summed up the storm and “weather predictions” in his First Page Editorial:

“If the big snow of last Saturday night and Sunday had fallen a couple of weeks earlier while the groundhog was still ruling the weather his supporters might have claimed that he had again proven his infallibility as a weather prophet and had given us the six weeks of winter predicted when he saw his shadow February 2nd and returned to his hole for a six weeks’ nap.

But the six weeks, instead of cold, rough winter, were mild, without snow, sleet, or zero days. But will take more than one miss to shake the faith of Mr. Groundhog’s loyal supporters and next year they will tell us he never fails, and that is more than can be said of the 12 months in advance predictions of the Hagerstown Almanac.”

As noted in the newspaper articles, the unusual Palm Sunday storm was a notable event throughout the county. The Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper noted that Palm Sunday Church services were sparsely attended and that some programs were cancelled.



*Carroll County received 33 inches of snow on Palm Sunday 1942. By the time this image of Westminster’s West Main Street was taken most of the snow has been removed. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Ed Haifley, 1989.*