

Carroll Yesteryears

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Story of One of Only Two Stone Buildings Left in Westminster

By Mary Ann Ashcraft

Thirty years ago Joe Getty, one of Carroll County's leading historians, wrote several articles for this newspaper about the "industrial heritage" of the stone building at 14 Liberty Street in Westminster. That building today houses O'Lordans Irish Pub where many Times readers may have dined.

Joe's early career included serving as the director of the Historical Society of Carroll County although now he serves as Chief Judge on Maryland's Court of Appeals. Many of us remember his contributions to local history and are grateful for the work he did. His "industrial heritage" articles in 1991 explained how a 150-year-old building in the heart of Westminster had been recycled. Now there is a bit more to the story.

Few people drive past 14 Liberty Street today without taking a second glance at the huge stone structure. It and the old Carroll County jail on North Center Street are the only stone buildings left in the city. Kevin Dayhoff recently shared the jail's story. Now discover the evolution of that other stone building.

About 1866, Elijah Wagoner and George W. Matthews built a large metal foundry out of stone along Liberty Street near the intersection with Main Street and within a stone's throw of the Western Maryland Railroad tracks. A foundry is where metal goods are produced—where metals are heated in a furnace until molten and poured into molds to make machine parts. Wagoner and Matthew advertised they could make just about anything from metal—plows, stoves, hollow anvils, corn and cob crushers, cellar window grates, bake oven doors, etc. Obviously their operation required a fireproof building and stone was their material of choice. Local tradition holds that Adam Rickell, a German-born brick and stone mason who lived nearby on George Street, was responsible for the construction.

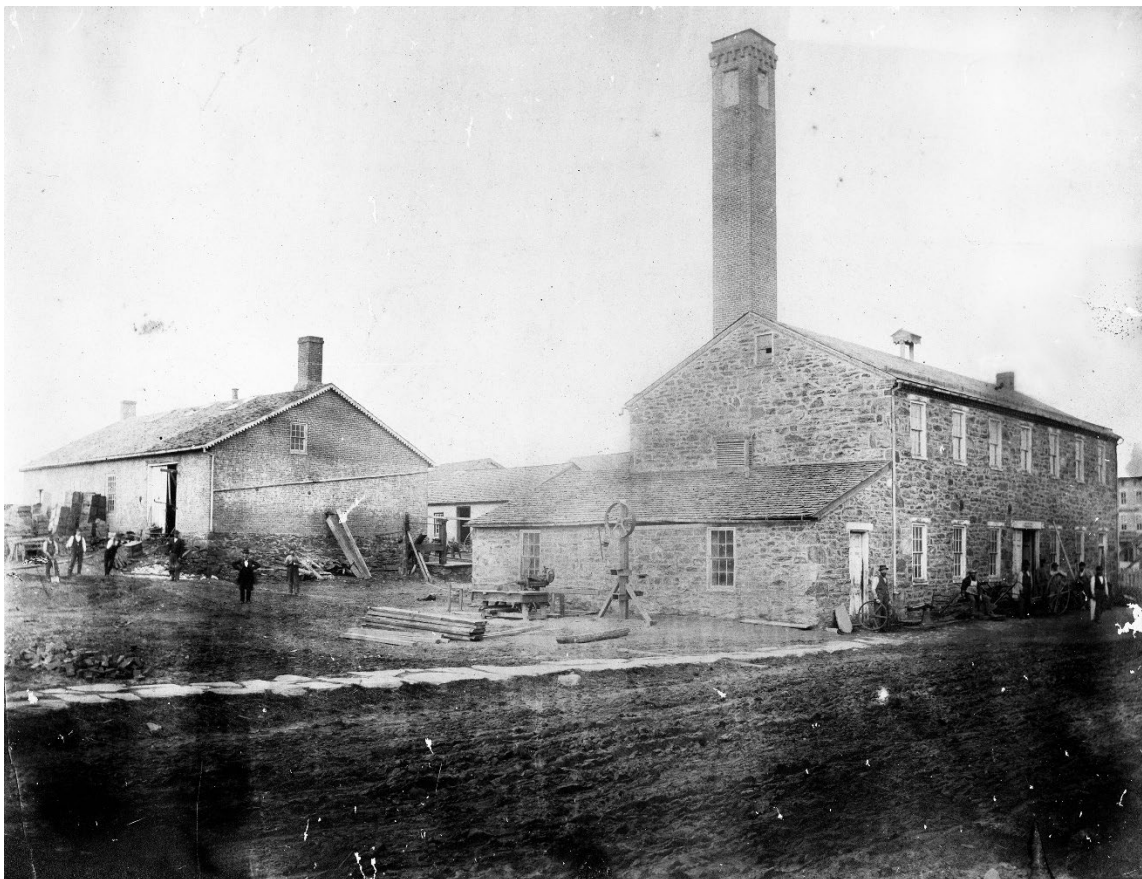
Inside the south end of the building was a huge furnace; that is the side that now faces a multistory apartment complex on the corner of Green Street. Today's diners at O'Lordans can enjoy the warmth from a fireplace with a massive interior chimney which was likely part of the foundry's furnace. The chimney originally had a much taller smokestack than it does now. There are two floors in the building today, but originally it was a single, full-height open space with a slate roof. Despite the work that went on inside, there is no record the building ever caught fire.

In the 1877 *Illustrated Atlas of Carroll County*, the Westminster map shows a building on Liberty Street labeled as a foundry, but in 1881 Edward H. Shriver bought the property and the patterns for various implements that Wagoner and Matthews made. He quickly turned the building over to the B.F. Shriver Canning Company which used it and other nearby structures as part of its canning operations until about 1901 when it moved north along Railroad Avenue to the edge of town.

By 1917 the various buildings were owned by Farmer's Supply Company and the United Machinery Company which ran a machine shop in the stone building. By that time the second floor had been installed. Farmer's Supply still owned the building in 1956 but later it housed "B's Coffee Shoppe and Dining Room" on the ground floor. B's was a popular gathering place in the center of town before Westminster had as many eateries as it offers today. Somewhere along the line an attractive front entrance was added, most likely for B's customers. The second floor was accessed through another door in the front. That floor once housed a dance studio and the Westminster Municipal Band practiced there for forty years—1956 until 1996!

Today 14 Liberty Street's stone building is home to O'Lordans Irish Pub, a thriving restaurant which occupies both floors, offers outdoor dining in warm weather, provides a welcoming fireplace on cold winter days, and houses a bar dispensing the liquid refreshment for which Ireland is known the world over. O'Lordans represents quite a transformation from an 1866 foundry!

*Mary Ann Ashcraft is a volunteer at the Historical Society of Carroll County.*



*Image 1 – Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County. This very early photograph shows the Wagoner and Matthews Foundry located along Liberty Street in Westminster, probably before it was bought by the B.F. Shriver Canning Company in the 1880s.*