

Carroll History Journal

Historical Society of Carroll County, Maryland

A WESTMINSTER MONASTERY

BY ELEANOR DARCY

On the corner of Willis Street and Court Place, just across from the courthouse, there is a small park, a memorial to Carroll Countians who fell in Vietnam. On a slight rise, set back from the street, sit three stone plinths backed by shrubbery. Nearby is a bench and in the foreground flagpoles. It is a peaceful spot. Only a double row of boxwoods on the right suggests that the lot once had a different purpose. For nearly ninety years, a house stood here, the home of the first Episcopal monastery in the United States, the Order of the Holy Cross.

James Otis Sargent Huntington (1854-1935), son of the Episcopal bishop of central New York, founded the Order of the Holy Cross in 1884. Raised by parents who were always involved in social causes—his father had taught moral ethics at Harvard at one time—Huntington graduated from Harvard and attended St. Andrew's Seminary in Syracuse, where he was ordained in 1880. Moving to New York City in 1881, he served at the Holy Cross Mission run by the Sisters of St. John Baptist, an Anglican order on the Lower East Side. There he joined fellow Episcopal priests Robert Dod and James Cameron in founding the Order of the Holy Cross, modeling their organization on the English Anglican Society of St. John the Evangelist founded



James Otis Sargent Huntington

in 1866. They dressed in black, hooded gowns like those worn by the Benedictines and spent much time in silent meditation and prayer in addition to their work in social welfare. Soon, however, Dod became ill and Cameron withdrew to become a parish priest, leaving Huntington as the order's only member. For some years, Huntington immersed himself in the problems of poverty, working among German immigrants. A supporter of Henry George, the

nineteenth-century economist who advocated a “single tax” on real estate as a means of leveling wealth, and of Father Edward McGlynn, the founder of the Catholic Anti-Poverty Society, Huntington championed the rights of women and children who worked in the clothing trade and set up a summer camp for boys with an emphasis on agriculture. In 1887, he founded the Church Association for the Advancement of the Interests of Labor, involving the Episcopal Church in the labor movement. He served as an arbitrator of many strikes, notably that of the miners in Spring Valley, Illinois, 1889-1890. Eventually, however, Huntington withdrew from national affairs and the welfare of the Lower East Side, turning to evangelism and the need to develop the Order.

If the Order were to grow, however, it needed a home. Westminster became that home in 1892 when Lucretia Emory Van Bibber (1816-1896) offered Huntington the use of her house on the courthouse square.

Lucretia—later described by the *Democratic Advocate* as a “devoted Church-woman” and a “lady of much travel and culture[,] noted for her charity and for her liberality to the Church”—was the daughter of Washington Chew Van Bibber and his wife, Lucretia Emory, who had long lived at Avondale, the house Legh Master built southwest of Westminster on Stone Chapel Road. Washington inherited the property from his grandfather Isaac Van Bibber, a wealthy Baltimore merchant. Episcopalians, the Van Bibbers were instrumental in the founding of Westminster’s Ascension Church

in 1844, and many members of their family are buried in the churchyard there.

Although Lucretia was a resident of Washington, D.C., she and her sister Nannie appear to have lived in Westminster as well, perhaps just during the summer. The 1887 publication, *Westminster, Its Location and Advantages as a Place of Residence or for Business*, lists the “Misses Van Bibber” as living in Joseph M. Parke’s house at 33 North Court Street. The Rev. Sylvanus B. Pond, rector of Ascension also lived there. On July 6, 1888, Lucretia bought, for \$750 from John K. Longwell, a nearby lot on the southwest side of Willis Street, an acre and a quarter stretching from the courthouse to Center Street. The 1887 Sanborn insurance map shows no dwelling on the site, and the low purchase price suggests that the lot was still vacant when Lucretia bought it. Three days later, on July 9, she gave it to Lillian G. Emory, her sister’s adopted daughter.

Lillian’s house was probably built soon after, but she did not live there very long: she died unmarried in July 1890 at the age of 32. The property reverted to Lucretia according to the terms of Lillian’s will. Had Lucretia not survived her much younger niece, the house would have gone to the All Saints Sisters of

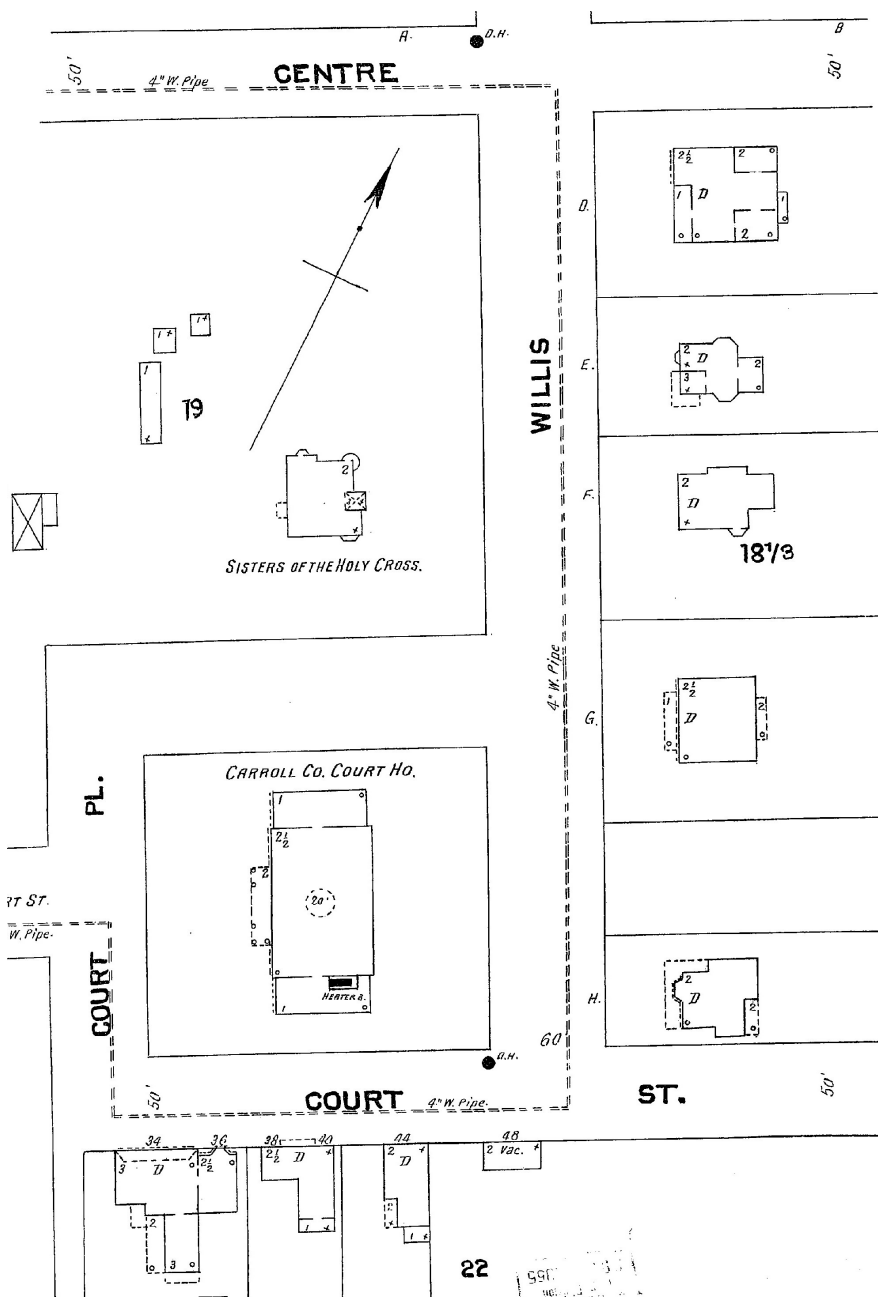


Church of the Ascension, North Court Street, 1862.

the Poor, an Episcopal order in Baltimore, to be used as a "home in conducting a Parish School" affiliated with Ascension Church. Nannie, who died in 1889, had also made provision for that church. Had her sister Lucretia not survived her, Ascension's vestry would have received \$2,000 to ensure the daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist, a practice begun by the Rev. J. Stewart Smith in the early 1880s. Clearly, these ladies were all devoted to the Episcopal church and helping those less fortunate than they.

In any case, Lucretia apparently had no use for the Willis Street house, and in the summer of 1892, she

offered the use of it to Father Huntington and the Order of the Holy Cross, intending it as a memorial to her young niece. Accompanied by Sturges Allen, who had joined the Order in 1888, and one other man, Huntington moved to Westminster that August, celebrating the first Mass in what was now to be called Holy Cross House on August 4, the feast of St. Dominic. It was not until a month later on September 10 that the deed was drawn between Lucretia Van Bibber and the Order, "a body corporate of the State of Maryland." Lucretia specified that if the monks should abandon the property, it "shall revert to me, my heirs or assigns." Holy Cross House would be the Order's home for the next twelve years.



One of Huntington's first priorities was to attract new members. Men joining the Order first passed a probationary six months as postulants and then entered the novitiate for another two years, donning the habit and taking preliminary vows. Only after this training did they become full members of the Order and take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Their days, which began at 5 a.m. and ended at 10 p.m., were measured by prayer. Not only did they celebrate Mass daily, but they sang Primo, Terce, Sext, and None at the first, third, sixth, and ninth hours and completed the cycle with Vespers and Compline. In between, the monks meditated, studied, kept long periods of silence, and performed manual labor. The ringing of the bell that called them to these offices was a regular sound in the courthouse neighborhood, and the men in their black habits were a familiar sight in town.

Holy Cross House, although fairly large with nine rooms, had not been designed as a monastery. There was a chapel, a dining room, a library housing some 3,000 volumes, and perhaps a common room, but the number of bedrooms soon proved inadequate, forcing the monks to convert the attic into cells so cold in

Detail from the 1904 Sanborn map of Westminster, showing the location of Holy Cross House. The map mistakenly refers to "Sisters of the Holy Cross."

winter that water froze and yet stifling in the summer heat. Even so, the Order was happy in Westminster. The town, according to Father Shirley Carter Hughson who spent his novitiate in Westminster, had an ancient, almost insular feeling.

The town was small; there was one long street; the houses in most cases abutting immediately on the pavement, with gardens behind. For a distance of two or three squares only, there was one street parallel to the main road on either side, and immediately beyond these lay the wide stretches of farm lands. In the lower part of the town a street ran about three hundred yards east, to the Court House Square. Here in the midst of the square stood the great massive court house, with its high tower dominating the situation. Around the four sides of the square were built houses [including the church, the rectory, the

monastery, and the residences of two judges] so disposed as to give a mediaeval flavour rare in our western world. . . . A little distance away on the edge of the fields, which came up close to the houses, stood the prison.

The main work of the Order was evangelism. Although there were still only a few members in the Order, sixty priests and two societies were affiliated with them. The monks ran a summer school for priests, held retreats and revival meetings, started a magazine, assisted other parishes when called, founded new churches, and even cared for the sick. Although Bishop William Paret refused to accept the Order of the Holy Cross as part of the Maryland diocese or to allow them to minister outside their home, seats were reserved for them in the choir of Ascension Church. Occasionally, one of the priests would preach at Ascension—vestry minutes show two payments to specific monks and mention a funeral service in which two other brothers took part;



Holy Cross house as it appeared in the 1970s.

otherwise the records are silent on the subject of the Order. Upon the occasion of the church's fiftieth anniversary in 1894, the monks, their numbers swollen by visiting priests, constituted most of the procession and gave several sermons.

Not all their time, however, was spent in work or prayer. Father Hughson remembered with great pleasure long summer rambles with the brothers through the fields and woods, carrying lunch and books and singing the offices at the proper times wherever they might be, sometimes to the surprise of the local residents. In particular, he mentions the joy of singing Vespers in a quarry and the brothers' amusement when they were spied upon by a young boy.

By 1902, the Order had grown to six priests. When called to do so, they were able to send two men to the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, to preach in Episcopal missions there. Soon, they were asked to establish a school for mountain boys. Starting with only four boys and a rudimentary curriculum, St. Andrew's School opened in 1905 but by year's end had grown to 21, including 14 boarders. Today, the coeducational Episcopal school, no longer run by the Order of the Holy Cross, is known as St. Andrew's-Sewanee. The Kent School for boys in Kent, Connecticut, followed in 1906. It too is now coeducational and independent of the Order. St. Faith's in Tarrytown, New York, a home for unwed mothers, was another of their foundations dating from this period.

Meanwhile, great changes were unfolding. The house in Westminster was overcrowded, and when the Order received a bequest of \$3,000 in 1898, the monks set about finding a larger, permanent home. Eventually, they purchased seventy acres in West Park, New York, a few miles north of Poughkeepsie on the west bank of the Hudson River. There, they built a campus with a large chapel and several smaller ones (so that each of the priests might say Mass daily), common rooms, a library, a refectory, some thirty cells for priests,

novices, and guests, and a cloister. It took time to complete, but by the spring of 1904 all was ready. The dedication of the new monastery on May 19 was attended by clergy from across the country. Although the Order now has three other houses, this is still its mother house, where the monks continue to offer hospitality to all.

Hughson, for one, was sorry to leave Westminster: "We never think of old Westminster days without a sense of gratitude to the good God who amongst these dear people, gave us so much of blessing, and showed us the way out of many problems."

Bishop Paret, however, had no regrets: "the removal of the Order of the Holy Cross . . . to a site on the Hudson . . . will not have any effect upon the diocese, as none of the members of the Order are members of the diocese of Maryland. . . . The Order of the Holy Cross advocates extreme High Church doctrines, and the members have never been identified with the Diocese of Maryland."

When the monks moved to West Park, the house on Willis Street reverted to Lucretia Van Bibber's estate, as specified in her 1892 deed. According to the terms of her will, the house now went to Ascension Church to be used as the rector saw fit. That change of ownership did not go unchallenged.

Lucretia Van Bibber's niece and nephew disputed the transfer in court but lost on appeal in June 1906. In the meantime Ascension had no immediate use for the property and so rented it out while turning down a request from the All Saints Sisters, who wanted to use the property. Once the suit had been settled, the vestry, sorely in need of funds, painted the house and put it on the market for \$6,000. It did not sell and was again rented. In 1919 the church finally sold the property for \$4,821.25 to James H. Allender, whose executors in turn sold it in 1951 for \$26,500. It was later turned into apartments and then, in July 1977, demolished.

The monks of the Order of the Holy Cross lived in Westminster for only twelve years, but their



Father Shirley Carter Hughson

presence must have been felt in the little town. Although never part of Ascension parish, they lived across the street from the church, and their bell rang loudly throughout the day in the neighborhood. In a sense, they balanced Western Maryland College at the far end of town. When they left for New York, taking their bell with them, there must have been a palpable silence and emptiness in the courthouse square. Today their name lives on at Ascension Church in both the 1961 Sunday-school building, Holy Cross House, and in Holy Cross Hall, built in 2000.

Sources:



Carroll County's Vietnam memorial stands on the site once occupied by Holy Cross House.

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Jubilee Celebration Commemorating the Semi-Centennial of Ascension Parish, Westminster, MD., July 15-17, 1894. Account reprinted from the *Democratic Advocate* of July 21, 1894. Maryland Diocesan Archives.

Newspaper clippings from the J. Leland Jordan Collection, Historical Society of Carroll County.

WHAT IS A SANBORN MAP?

BY CATHERINE BATY

In 1866, Daniel Alfred Sanborn, a young surveyor from Massachusetts, was hired by the Aetna Insurance Company to do several maps. The result of his work, the *Insurance Map of Boston, Volume 1*, was published in 1867 and proved so successful that Sanborn started his own map company, D.A. Sanborn National Insurance Diagram Bureau.

Sanborn's company was part of a growing industry in mid-19th century America. The making of fire insurance maps began in England in the 18th century and then spread to the United States. During the Industrial Revolution, fire insurance underwriters and business owners relied on these maps to protect

their businesses. The maps allowed underwriters to access the risks to a client's business, even if they were unable to inspect the property in person. This protected the insurance company from setting a premium too low and risking too much liability. On the other hand, the maps protected the customer from a premium being set too high. Initially, the insurance companies and map makers were based in England but the severing of relations between Britain and the United States during the War of 1812 led to the growth of American companies.

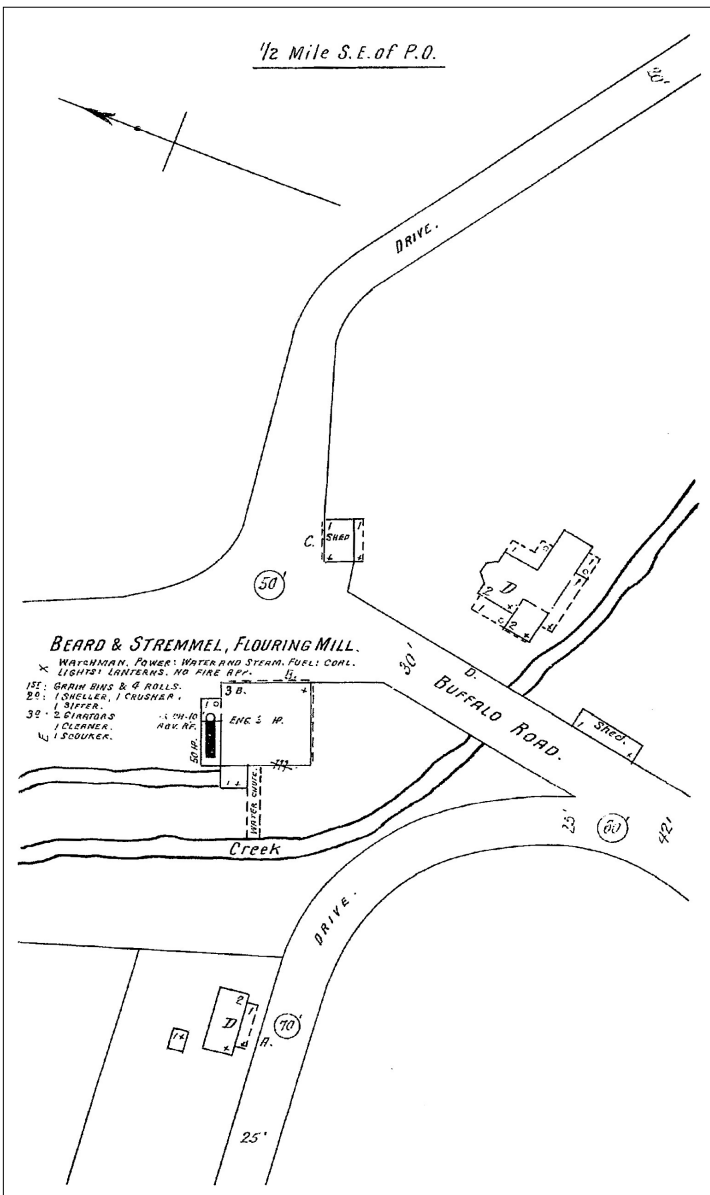
In 1876, Sanborn opened a new office in New York City and began updating the maps by pasting corrections on older maps. The company continued to prosper, even after Sanborn's death in 1883. In 1902, the company changed its name to The Sanborn Map Company. By the early 1900s, the company had three to four hundred map makers working across the country. A field guide for map makers provided detailed instructions to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the maps. Ultimately, the company issued maps of over 12,000 cities.

Sanborn Maps were drawn at a scale of 50 feet to an inch and printed on 21" x 25" sheets. In 1868 Sanborn copyrighted his key, the *Symbol Key of Construction Attributes*. The maps used colors to indicate various building materials: yellow indicated a frame building; red = brick; blue = stone; gray = iron; brown = adobe; green = special materials. Other symbols represented types of windows, partition walls, cornices, and doors.

The maps provide a wealth of information such as

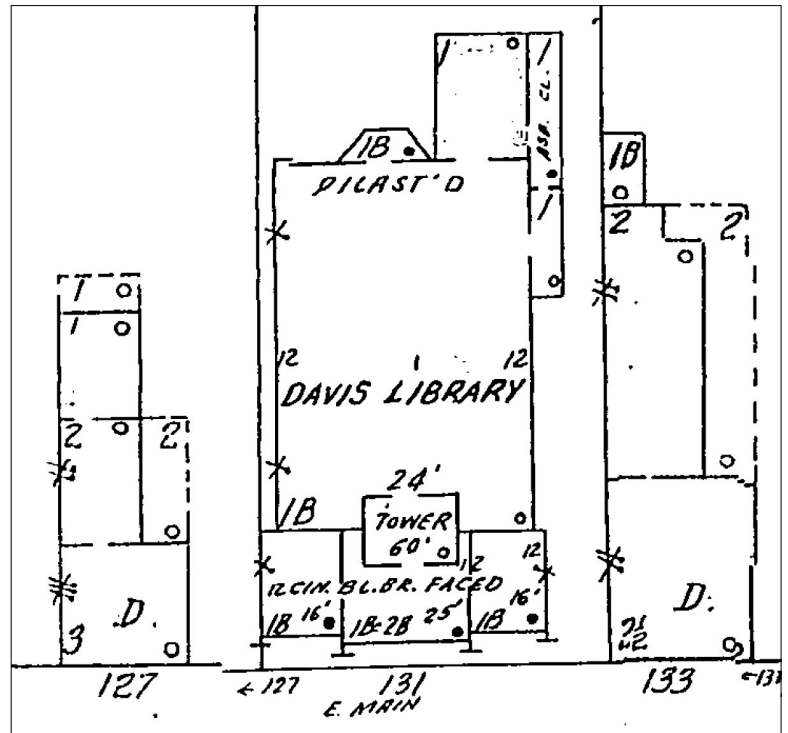
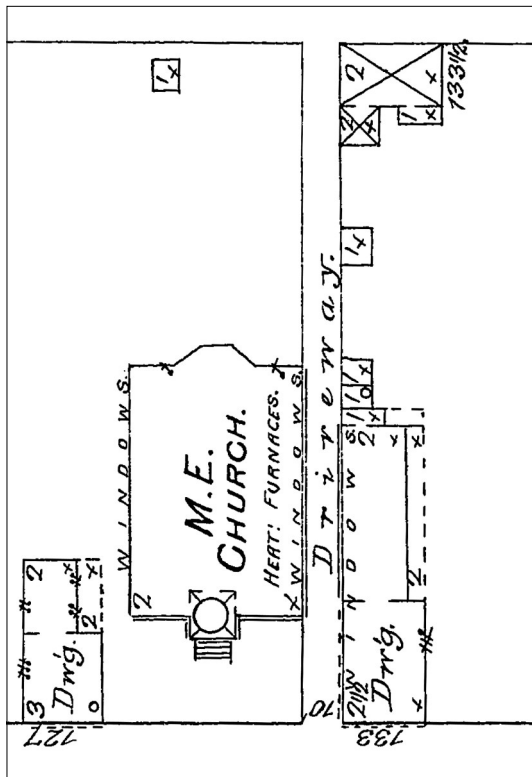
This detail from a 1904 map of New Windsor shows the Beard & Stremmel Flouring Mill. Notes indicate that the facility has a watchman but no firefighting apparatus.

KEY	
NO OF STORIES	FIRE WALL 6 IN. AB. ROOF
SHINGLE ROOF	" " 12" " "
COMPOSITE ROOF	" " 18" " "
SLAT ROOF	FRAME PARTITION
STEAM BOILER	OPENING & IRON DOOR
	WINDOWS " SHUTTERS
	STABLE
	WINDOW IN 1 ST STORY
	" 1 ST & 3 RD "
	" 2 ND & 4 TH "
	B'LDGS COLORED YELLOW ARE FRAME
	" " RED " BRICK
	" " BLUE " STONE
	" " GREY " IRON
	" " BROWN " ADOBE
	" " GREEN " SPECIALS
	MARKED (C) ARE CLOTH LINED
	(H) INDICATE RELATIVE HEIGHTS
	ALTERNATE STREET NO'S ARE ACTUAL
	CONSECUTIVE " " ARBITRARY
	BROKEN LINE NEAR B'LDG WOOD CORNICE
	SOLID " " METAL "



building outline, size and shape, construction materials, height, building use, windows and doors, street and sidewalk widths, boundaries, lighting and heating. They also show the size and location of outbuildings such as stables and garages. For industrial buildings the owner's name, products manufactured, the uses of individual rooms, the presence of watchmen, pipelines, wells, fire brigades, streets and railroads and other detailed information is included. The maps were revised every few years to keep pace with the changes in American cities. The first Sanborn maps in Carroll County were created of Westminster in 1887. Over the years the company mapped several communities: Hampstead (1911, 1924, 1939), Manchester (1911, 1924), Mount Airy (1911, 1921, 1931), New Windsor (1904, 1910, 1922, 1935), Sykesville

(1911, 1924), Taneytown (1904, 1910, 1924) and Union Bridge (1904, 1910, 1924), as well as Westminster (1887, 1892, 1897, 1904, 1910, 1918, 1927, 1959).



The map at left, from the 1887 Sanborn, shows Immanuel Methodist Protestant Church (misnamed as “M.E.” church) at 131 East Main Street in Westminster. The above map, from 1959, shows the same property after the building was renovated and expanded for use as the Davis Library. The marble façade that was added across the front can clearly be seen.

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