

"Westminster's Inns and Hotels, Part II"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

Last week's column presented part one of "What Ever Happened to our Hotels," by the late Historical Society Curator Miss Lillian Shipley. We continue with her early history and recollections of Westminster hostelries:

"Westminster Hotel, known to this generation as the Charles Carroll Hotel, was built by the Albaugh and Babylon Grocery Company. But where the building now stands I can recall a home with a large front lawn. The Westminster Hotel was the first to have such modern conveniences as private baths and an elevator. The latter, however, was short-lived. While Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Franklin, newly arrived from their honeymoon, were riding in the elevator, it fell to the first floor and caused Mr. Franklin a lifelong injury.

Because this was the most up-to-date hotel it soon surpassed the others in popularity for social events. As service clubs were organized this became the weekly meeting place. The Historical Society has preserved menus of elaborate dinners served to visiting celebrities. What caused it to deteriorate and stand idle so long? One might also ask what of the passing of the famous old Baltimore hotels--the Rennert, the Southern and now the old Belvedere? Gone with the stage coach and the surrey with the fringe on top! Perhaps the Hanover Evening Sun, which now has headquarters there, might hear echoes of revels past.

I do not remember The Albion, corner Main Street and Railroad Avenue, in its hotel days but I do recall it as the Red Front Grocery Store run by 'Check' Baile. There were offices and apartments with high ceilings on the second and third floors. On the two occasions when I had to visit the County Health office I counted 29 steps to the second floor.

I well remember Dicie, the daughter of a Mr. Wheeler who was once proprietor of the Albion Hotel. Although when I knew her she was a resident of Ohio, she made visits here to relatives and friends. She would call at the Historical Society of Carroll County of which she was an interested member. Born in the John Evans House of Methodist fame, she remembered vividly the tales her mother used to tell of J. E. B. Stuart's march by their house in 1863.

The popular old Montour House, built in 1868, 59 West Main Street, was probably named for an Indian chief, famous as an interpreter for George Washington. Built by Lynch and Ondorff, it advertised '49 rooms with ample stabling and attentive hostlers.' Noah Smeach, the first proprietor, his sign at the entrance of the bar read, 'Walk in gentlemen. John's at home.'

One day in my memory a fire occurring in that bar caused the keeper to carry cases of whiskey and beer next door to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Scott Roop who were not at home just then. But when they returned Mrs. Roop, who was an active member of the W.C.T.U. (Women's Christian Temperance Union) let it be known that she did not appreciate serving as a rescue mission for liquor. My memory of the Montour House is that of stores on the first floor with apartments above. After the property was bought by Mr. Charles Klee, Griffin's Soda and Candy Store located there. Also the Hat Shop of Mrs. Mary Doyle and Mrs. Marie Beggs. Finally, after a beautiful job of renovation, Benny's Kitchen moved in. So one old tradition of the Montour House lives on, 'a table amply supplied with the best in the market.'

The Anchor Hotel, corner of Main and Anchor Streets, at one time known as the Zacharias Hotel, is tied up with one of the most tragic chapters in national history, our Civil War. Among those who roomed in the hotel was Joseph Shaw, editor of a local newspaper, the Western Maryland Democrat. On April 6, 1865, he wrote a very derogatory anti-Lincoln editorial which inflamed the loyal Union citizens. This emotion reached a tragic climax April 15, the day Lincoln was assassinated. After assembling at the Court House a crowd of citizens marched to the Anchor Hotel and demanded that Shaw leave his room to meet them. During the scuffle in the upper hall Shaw was shot and fell to the first floor. He was taken to the bar where he died. I have been told that the man who carried the gun could never thereafter sleep without a light in his room. The editorial and details of this affair can be found in 'Just South of Gettysburg', the book published by the Historical Society of Carroll County and edited by Frederick Shriver Klein with W. Harold Redcay and G. Thomas LeGore. A handsome residence erected by Howard Koontz replaced the Anchor Hotel.

Whatever has become of all the old hotels of Westminster? They have found their cherished resting place in the city of our fond memories."

Since Miss Lillian Shipley wrote the above article in 1971, several of the old hotel properties have changed hands or been put to other purposes, adding a new chapter to the history of each site.

Photo caption: This postcard view shows the Westminster Hotel, opened in 1899, and the residence of owner George W. Albaugh. The new hotel featured modern conveniences, such as private baths and an elevator, that rivaled hotels in far larger communities. The structure was later known as the Charles Carroll and currently serves as the offices of Union National Bank. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Jessie Fyfe, 2000.