

"The Blizzard of 1924"

Carroll County Times Article for 14 March 1999

By Jay A. Graybeal

Although the last two Carroll winters have produced only a modest amount of snow, the historical record reveals that blizzards frequently visited the region, occasionally at this time of year. The March 14, 1924 issue of the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper reported on such a storm:

"BLIZZARD STRIKES CARROLL.

ROADS BLOCKED BY DRIFTS-NO MAIL DELIVERY--TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH WIRES BROKEN DOWN--TRAINS DELAYED BY WRECKED FREIGHT TRAIN THAT WAS DERAILED BY DRIFT. ---

The worst Spring blizzard since March 4, 1909, visited Maryland Tuesday and isolated our city and county from the outside world until Wednesday. The snow started to fall Monday evening about 7:30 o'clock and was accompanied by high wind that piled the snow in huge drifts, blocking roads, interrupting railroad traffic and demoralizing telegraph and telephone service. In Baltimore two persons were killed. One by suffocating under a collapsed chicken house roof and another fatally injured by a street car from the blinding snow. It is estimated by the C. & P. Telephone Company that 15,000 telephones in the state were out of commission, 5,000 poles down and that the total damage would represent a loss of about \$500,000. It will require 10 days to restore service again. Some of the effects from the snow storm were: The Westminster and Reisterstown Bus and the Union Bridge Bus abandoned all of its schedules on Tuesday, as the roads were drifted to an impassable state. On Wednesday morning the running of the busses were resumed on schedule time. The Gwynn Oak Bus did not attempt to fill its schedule until yesterday morning, as the Washington road was not opened until Wednesday afternoon. The State Roads Commission snow plows were sent out at midnight Monday to open the State roads. One succeeded in reaching Bridgeport by the way of Taneytown going up, but experienced difficulty on the return. The one that started down to Reisterstown made it as far as Sandyville where it found trouble in bucking the drifts and turned and came back to this city. On the Manchester road Thomas, Bennett & Hunter rigged up a truck with a plow in front and sent it out. The road was drifted badly and at Brummel the driver of the machine was blinded by the heavy fall of snow and went up a bank and stuck. After releasing the machine it was brought back to this city. In the evening the plows were again sent out and cleaned the snow from the roads with some little difficulty, except where drifts were too large to buck a gang of men were used to shovel a path wide enough to allow traffic to proceed. The county roads were drifted shut and were shoveled open by men. The mail carriers on the rural mail routes made an attempt to despatch, but only one succeeded, and that was on Route 12, but he was ten hours longer than usual. The rest only serving a part of their patrons and then only returning after a hard try to move through the deep snow. A number of automobilists were caught out in the snow Monday night and abandoned their cars and walked to their destination after they became wedged in a snow bank. The next day they returned and dug their cars out. Some of the cars were covered completely over. The loss of the C. & P. Telephone Company will be very heavy as hundreds of telephone poles and numerous wires leveled to the ground which will require some time to repair. Gangs of men are busily engaged in restoring the service throughout the county and in this city. Westminster was cut off from the rural districts for a few days and no word of the extent of damage could be estimated. Large tree limbs were smashed off by the heavy weight of the snow clinging to them. The W. M. Railroad trains run late for three days on account of the telegraphic interruption. Poles

and wires were down at various places from Hagerstown to Baltimore, which disarranged the block system at different points along the line. Operators, Frank Butler and Harry Ryland, at this station directed the running of the trains between this city and Emory Grove and Union Bridge. A freight train was wrecked in a snow bank on the Western Maryland Railway, west of Glyndon, Tuesday morning. Passenger and mail trains were delayed several hours. Our city was a sea of slush and water for two days but the snow is disappearing rapidly. Our public schools were closed all day Tuesday and some of the rural ones were not opened until yesterday."

Snow removal in 1924 was somewhat easier than it had been for the 1909 storm. Motorized equipment replaced horse drawn vehicles of that earlier era, however, much of the snow was still removed by large crews of workmen with shovels.

Photo caption: Snow drifted more than 10 feet high on the Washington Road near Westminster in a February 1947 blizzard. Similar drifting closed the road during the 1924 storm. Thomas, Bennett & Hunter Photograph Collection, Historical Society of Carroll County.