Neighborhood News

Spring 2011

Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Improvement Association

Too Many Riders for One House

by Joseph M. Coale

An observant reader of this newsletter pointed out there have been numerous references to "Rider houses" in recent editions. This is true. There have been numerous Rider houses because the family was as successful in producing offspring as they were in business and politics. When Edward Rider, Sr. and his wife, Rachael Gorsuch, moved here in 1827, their young family occupied a pre-Revolutionary stone farmhouse that still stands on the north side of Joppa Road between the light rail bridge and Rider Avenue. Although not an imposing structure, its interest lies in its antiquity and early American vernacular character. Its history gives it life and value today. Rider acquired the house and surrounding 140 acres from Charles Ridgely of William who had purchased the property in 1780 for the grist mill that was situated on what is now the northwest corner of Thornton and Joppa Roads. The mill had been constructed in 1743 by Nicholas Haile and is referred to in the historic record as Haile's Mill Land (see photograph above).

1743 grist mill known as Haile's Mill Land
Photo courtesy Joe Coale

Rebecca McConkey Rider
Photo courtesy Rider Collection Maryland Historic Society

By 1832 everything was in place for Mr. Rider to become a very rich man—the railroad ran through his farm, Joppa Road was a main county thoroughfare, the Bellona Gunpowder Mills was located just to the south and he owned the active mill site. Soon he purchased another farm to the north, naming it Thornton, where he built a handsome county estate house. As contiguous properties became available, he bought them too. Edward Rider, Sr. had 12 children and he liked having them close by. Most were given property or purchased land from their benevolent father so they could enjoy the family's success and status in the local community—small lots for the ladies and farms for the gentlemen.

Edward Rider, Jr.
Photo courtesy Rider Collection Maryland Historic Society

In 1845 Edward Rider, Sr. purchased a 250 acre farm to the south and later sold it to his oldest son Edward Rider, Jr. and bride, Rebecca McConkey. Granted in 1694 as Young Man's Adventure this property was renamed Malvern (see photo on p. 22). Locust Avenue was the entrance to the farm house located at the top of the hill. The center of the farm was roughly where Graul's is today. Unfortunately, it burned down in December of 1910.

Daughter Elizabeth and her husband, Dr. John Stevenson, inherited the Thornton estate at her father's death in 1876. The property is shown on

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the Hopkins map of the ninth district in 1877. A more current structure (1905), or one greatly renovated from the original, occupies the site on Landrake Road (see photograph at right).

1905 Landrake Road structure replacing original Thornton estate home Photo courtesy Joe Coale

The Rider House on Bellona just north of Joppa, now occupied by RRLRAIA and the Baltimore County Historical Trust, is shown on early maps as belonging to Edward Rider. It appears he built a structure here sometime prior to 1850 probably for the purpose of overseeing his commercial and rail operations where the Riderwood shops are now located. The current house was constructed in the 1880's and occupied by Mary Rider who served as postmistress for many years.

Malvern property farmhouse (Locust Ave.) destroyed by fire in 1910
Photo courtesy Rider Collection Maryland Historic Society

More information and maps are available in *Middling Planters of Ruxton* by Joseph M. Coale.