

FALL 2002

Neighborhood News

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 4:00 P.M.

■ **Community Bon Fire** at the old rugby field off L'Hirondelle Club Road.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 5:30 P.M.

■ **Caroling service at St. John's Chapel**
7534 Bellona Avenue.

Refreshments will follow. All are welcome. The trustees of St. John's Chapel ask that you bring a canned good to donate to a local food bank. RRLRAIA suggests you also bring a donation toward the upkeep of this treasure in our midst. Questions, call 410-494-7757.

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 10:00AM – 5:00 P.M.

■ **Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage** in Bare Hills.

EMAIL US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

If you are one of the nearly 800 people listed in our email distribution list, we hope you appreciate the messages you receive from us regularly. To be added to our list, simply send a message to ruxrider@bcpl.net. We can quickly and efficiently send out notices, reminders and updates about community events. These addresses will only be for RRLRAIA use.

2002-2003

RRLRAIA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

- Jeffrey Budnitz ■ Jamie Cahn ■ Michael Chasney ■ Sibley Classen
- Joseph Coale ■ Ty Cook ■ Tom George ■ Sophie Gerard ■ Joe Gerlak ■ Leigh Hall
- Biff Hearn ■ Louise Hildreth ■ Mona Hoff ■ Aviva Hord ■ Christopher Kroft ■ Cecily Matthai ■ Neil Meyerhoff
- Michael Ragan ■ Janet Reynolds ■ Tate Showers ■ Michael Sicher
- Snowden Stanley ■ Skip Stuart ■ Kimberly Warren ■ David Whitman
- Peggy Squitieri, Executive Director ■

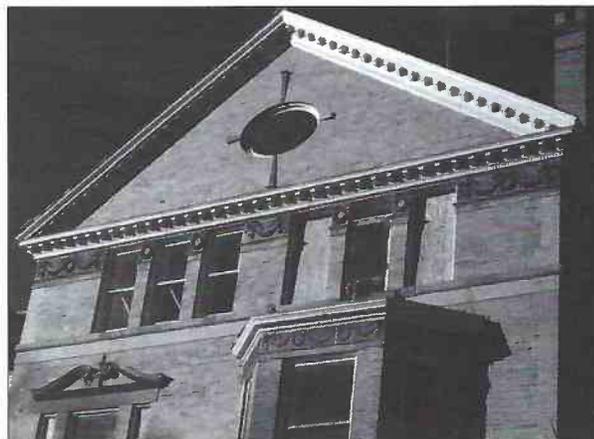
ANNUAL HOLIDAY BON FIRE RETURNS — WE HOPE !

The RRLRAIA holiday bon fire is a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new ones. The last few years, this community tradition has been cancelled due to weather conditions, but this year we hope to see family, friends and neighbors gather around a roaring fire while enjoying cookies and cider donated by Graul's Supermarket. Christmas carols liven up the evening and Santa often stops by.

We hope to re-ignite this event on Sunday, December 15th from 4pm to 8pm at the old Rugby Field off L'Hirondelle Club Road. We have received the necessary permit from the Fire Department, but are still awaiting approval from the City of Baltimore (it's Robert E. Lee Park property). Save **Sunday, December 15** and watch for the sign at Ruxton Road and Bellona Avenue. You will be notified by email if we have your email address. Dress warmly—wear boots for cold or muddy conditions. Park along L'Hirondelle Club Road. No pets, please.

COMMUNITY PLAN ADOPTED BY COUNCIL

The Baltimore County Council passed a resolution jointly sponsored by Councilmen Wayne Skinner and Kevin Kamenetz adopting the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Community Plan as an amendment to the Baltimore County Master Plan 2010. For the past three years, RRLRAIA and our local residents have worked with consultant, J. Christopher Batten, Baltimore County Office of Planning, members of the Planning Board, and the County Council to provide a comprehensive plan for enhancing the quality, safety and continuity of our community. RRLR now has increased standing and credibility when dealing with local government and our concerns and ideas now have the attention of elected officials. This is also a benchmark by which to measure our progress and to guide future members of the Association. It is a fluid document which should be reviewed every year so that it continues to be relevant to issues as they develop. Our appreciation to all who contributed time and energy to this successful effort, especially former President Barry Truax under whose sagacious leadership this mission was undertaken and to Joseph Coale who chaired the Community Plan Committee. Copies are available for RRLRAIA members at the Association Office or online at: http://www.co.ba.md.us/p.cfm/agencies/planning/communityplans/po_ruxton.cfm



A view of the Ridge Mansion. See page 5, **PLANS FOR THE RIDGE SCHOOL ANNOUNCED**, an update on what is planned and the historical significance of this site.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

IT'S WORTHWHILE TO BE INVOLVED AND TO BE A MEMBER OF RRLRAIA

by Ty Ford

My wife Bette and I moved to Ruxton Hill Manor about five years ago. It's that small area between Joppa and Ruxton roads, just west of the lightrail tracks. We looked for over a year before finding our 1954 rancher. To our great surprise and delight, within a week of our move, our immediate neighbors came by to introduce themselves, bringing small baskets of flowers or snacks as welcoming presents. Most of our neighbors were a few years older than us and had lived here for fifteen years or more. All of them were pleasant and their acts of kindness and friendship set the tone for us as we welcome new neighbors.

We joined the neighborhood association as much out of curiosity as out of any sense of duty. We noted the comments in the newsletter, appreciated the efforts on our behalf, albeit at some distance. It wasn't until last year that we came to realize how the organization could help us directly. That realization began when a large white notice from the Baltimore County Planning and Zoning Office appeared at the bottom of what had been a dead end street for the last fifty years.

The sign declared that meetings would be held to discuss the development of the property. The word "development" caused quite a bit of concern. We soon learned that, in this case, "development" meant subdividing an existing three lot tract in such a way as to shave off one more lot on which the owner wanted to build another house. On the surface, this didn't sound like a problem, except that all of the new houses would have driveways that emerged from our dead end street. A closer look at the development plan, and a conversation with someone from the zoning office, revealed that it might be possible to build at least seven more houses on the land, making a total of nine houses. All of them with access via our dead end street.

Nine houses with three vehicles per house equals 27 new vehicles going through what had been an extremely quiet neighborhood. Quiet enough to allow families with small children to take walks almost anytime they wished. Due to the narrow streets, the added traffic would create a very dangerous situation. In addition to negatively altering the intrinsic quietness of the neighborhood, 27 new vehicles would most certainly curtail the walks. In addition to the loss of exercise, we would also lose the front yard and curbside chats with our neighbors during such meanders.

When we addressed these issues at one of the zoning hearings, we came away unsettled by the fact that the owner of the property gave absolutely no assurances that our worst fears would not come to pass. I spent the next few weeks meeting more of my neighbors than I expected while carrying a petition from door to door that requested some specific restraints on the degree of development.

With almost 90% of the neighbors signed to the petition, I contacted the neighborhood association and explained the situation. They, in turn, communicated our position to the owner and within weeks we achieved a mutually agreeable position. The

Devil is in the details and there were several clarifications that were required. Again, with only a quick and pleasant phone call, RRLRAIA made it happen. Had it not been for their efforts, we might still be facing a contentious situation.

The moral to this story, if there is one, is that it pays to become involved in the neighborhood and with the neighborhood organization. There may be issues of lesser or greater importance in your immediate neighborhood. If you are reading this story, and have not yet joined the association, I suggest you do so. If you are a current member, you may already know of the fine work they do on our behalf.

A TIME FOR CHANGE LAKE ROLAND AND ROBERT E. LEE PARK

by Jeff Budnitz

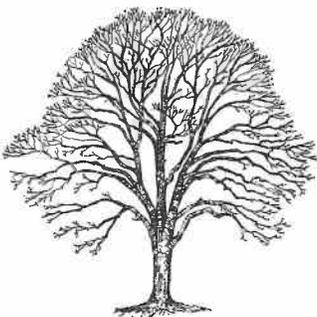
The Ruxton Riderwood Lake Roland Area Improvement Association is currently working with the Baltimore City Parks Department in formulating strategies to alleviate many of the problems that currently ail and plague the park. The primary objectives are to restore the park to its former glory—create a park everyone can enjoy, replace the pedestrian bridge, address maintenance and beautification issues and general park restoration, etc. We will keep you informed as progress is made with regards to these and any other issues related to the park. Stay tuned.

BARE HILLS HOUSE TOUR MAY 18

Nine houses, old and new, in Bare Hills will be in the *Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage* on Sunday, May 18, 2003 from 10am to 5pm. Proceeds will help protect the 1837 Scott Settlement. To be a patron you can make a *tax-deductible* contribution of \$20 or \$30 per couple. For further information please call Adelaide Rackemann at 410-823-4709 or Aviva Hord at 410-296-1640. We could use your help as host or hostess, driver, parking director, ticket taker or to make signs for the event. We hope you can volunteer your time to this worthy cause.

LAND PRESERVATION TRUST

YOU can help preserve the rural character
of our communities
and
receive a **tax deduction.**
Call 410-494-7757 to inquire



EDITOR'S NOTE On a beautiful fall afternoon in October, St. John Chapel hosted an open house to showcase the newly painted church and the parsonage at 7534 Bellona Avenue, a quarter-mile south of the Ruxton Road bridge. More than 300 visitors enjoyed lectures by author/historian James A. Holechek.

HISTORIC ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL

by James A. Holechek

The African American church was first built as a log structure on the site in 1835, as was the stone parsonage. Fire claimed the old church sometime after its first minister, Aquilla Scott, died at age eighty-four of a massive heart attack while preaching on Sunday, February 28, 1858. While his body was buried near his home in Bare Hills, many other free and slave members of the congregation are buried at the Ruxton cemetery next to the present church which was built on the earlier foundation in 1886. Rev. Edwin W. Scott, one of twelve children of Aquilla Scott, laid the cornerstone. At the time he was pastor of St. Andrews in Mt. Washington, St. James in East Towson and Tyson in Cross Keys Village. All were affiliated with the African Union Methodist Protestant conference. Rev. Edwin Scott and his wife, Henrietta, are interred in St. John's cemetery.

According to Carolyn Scott LeVere, great granddaughter of Rev. Aquilla Scott, the church and parsonage have been recently painted light gray with ivory trim and dark green shutters. Interior repairs include floor finishing, some floorboard replacement and new and refurbished picture frames and scriptive brass labels. The gravestones have been repaired and power washed. Historians have now made a list of names of fifty-eight persons buried in the three-quarter acre cemetery. Many more graves had their stones removed by vandals. Also there are reputed to be several bodies located under the entrance road to the church. Mrs. LeVere noted that the cost of the painting and gravestone restoration were made possible by donations from a local garden club.

St. John's is one of the oldest "colored" churches in Baltimore County. After the live-in servants of Ruxton died off and passenger trains no longer stopped in the area, St. John's was closed for several years. It fell into disrepair until community activist Gail O'Donovan headed a drive to raise funds and organize a volunteer group including county agencies, Boy Scouts and prominent government officials who made the restoration project possible in the early 1980s.

Aquilla Scott was the son of Tobias, a slave manumitted for saving his master's life aboard a slave ship. Aquilla moved to Bare Hills where he bought a small parcel of ground on Falls Road across from Princeton Sports. There are now eighteen homes in the Scott Settlement Historic District, most inhabited by Scott descendants. Efforts are underway to protect this unique enclave and its family relationship with St. John's Chapel.

St. John's Chapel measures 35 feet 7 inches by 20 feet 7 inches and has board and batten siding. Its steep roof originally was cedar shake. Windows are lancet

design with shutters, gingerbread trim and stained glass ornamental windows at either end and double entrance doors. Throughout the nave are pine floors and pews for about seventy persons. There is a communion rail and a raised altar and lectern. On the wall behind is a hand-lettered inscription: "Welcome to All."

Aquilla Scott, Jr., took over as minister after his father passed away. In 1850, he bought and married Anar Gough, a slave from a plantation on Cuba Road in the Oregon Ridge area. They had six children.

Anna Julius Marie Scott Brown, 91, who lives in Bare Hills, is the last of her Scott generation and a leader in the movement to keep the historic St. John's Chapel functioning as a house of worship. A Deed of Easement, given by the Scott family to the Baltimore County Historical Trust, will protect the church in the future. To retain its nonprofit status, the church, cemetery and property are governed by a board of trustees led by Mrs. LeVere. In its deed, it is stipulated that at least five religious services are held and open to the public annually. The St. John's Chapel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

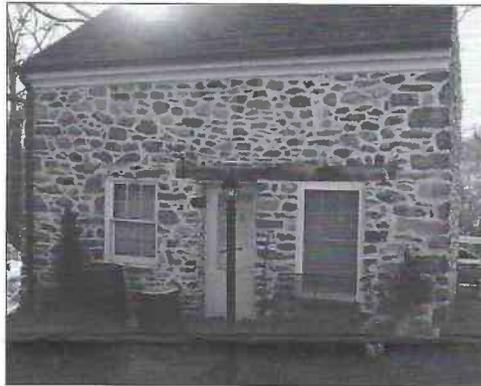
The chapel may be rented for weddings, funerals and other appropriate meetings for \$225.

Longer periods at higher rates are also available. All events must receive the approval of the board.

Interested persons may contact Mrs.

LeVere at 410-747-6969.

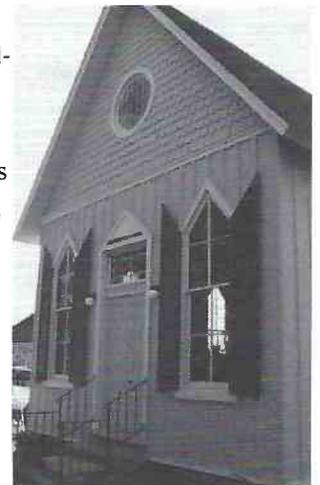
Mr. Holechek has written a book on the two villages of Cross Keys on Falls Road, (one black, one white), Jones Falls, Bare Hills and St. John's Chapel to be published in the spring. If anyone has further information about the subjects of his book, you may call him at 410-433-6847.



The 106-year-old St. John's parsonage.



The restored St. John's Church graveyard is the final resting place of at least 58 people.



The entrance to the restored St. John's Chapel.

CHARLES STREET VILLAGE STREETScape UPDATE

By Elise Butler

In response to community input and the comments of the State Highway Task Force for Charles Street, the State Highway Administration has stepped back from its proposal to add a left turn lane on Charles Street. This Spring, in response to redevelopment and expansion plans announced by several commercial owners on Charles Street between

Stevenson Lane and Bellona Avenue, the State Highway Administration proposed the addition of a left turn lane. The left turn lane would have made this section of Charles Street five lanes wide and necessitated the widening of the street. The State

Highway Administration was receptive to the concerns of the Task Force and community input including a letter in opposition to the turn lane submitted to the State Highway Administration by the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Improvement Association, the Murray Hill Association and the Woodbrook Village Community Association. Concerns centered on the importance of Charles Street as a designated state scenic byway, and safety and traffic volume issues.

The concept plan established by the Task Force and presented to the public this past winter will remain in place. That plan calls for narrower lanes and four foot shoulders for bike use. Sidewalks will be added along the entire east side of Charles Street and a landscape plan will be introduced. The Charles Street Streetscape project is now in the design phase.

EDITOR'S NOTE A few years ago RRLRAIA was concerned over rumors circulating about plans for the Chalet

Charles and surrounding buildings to be razed and replaced with a 24-hour pharmacy. Since then, we have had many meetings with the property owner, Councilman Skinner, SHA, and community members. We are happy to report that the buildings have been razed, and will be replaced with an 11,000 square foot single story office building, a bank, and a proposed coffee shop. Based on the



On Charles Street, south of Bellona, construction has begun on a one-storey office building, a bank and possibly a Starbucks. The community fought to keep a big box store from being built on this site.

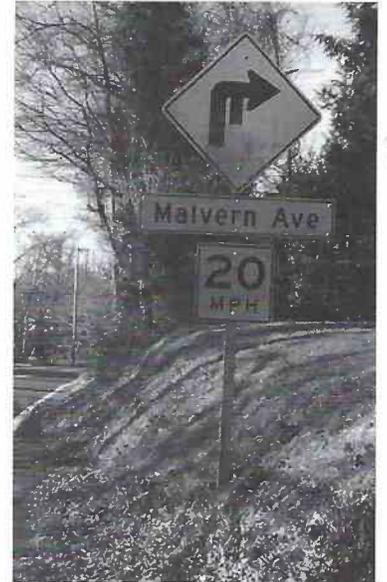
building and landscape plans we have seen, our business/community/government partnership is yielding very positive results! Thanks to all who participated.

TRAFFIC ISSUES

By Mike Sicher

It's bad. We know. Let us know what issues concern you and what you would like to see done.

- There are terrible intersections mostly due to the combination of limited sight distance, speeding traffic and congestion
 - Darnall and Ruxton, Old Court and Joppa, Malvern and Bellona, Malvern and Charles, Malvern and Ruxton, Falls Road and Lake Avenue, etc.
- There are winding, narrow, residential streets that are being used as short cuts
 - Ellenham, Rider, others
- There are streets that are just short of speedways
 - Malvern, Ruxton, Bellona, Old Court, Falls Road, others



Yes, we are aware of all these (and more) and we are trying to do something about it. We have met with Darrell Wiles, the head of Baltimore County Traffic Engineering, to see what can be done. We have formed a committee to look at these and other issues and to come up with a comprehensive recommendation that we will present to the county. Please give us your feedback— e-mail ruxrider@bcpl.net

WEST NILE VIRUS ALERT

by Cecily Matthai

While was walking on my street, I noticed two dead crows at the edge of a neighbor's property. When I returned home I called the *West Nile Virus* hotline to report them. I found that dead birds are not picked up or tested for the virus once two birds are found in any one zip code. My zip code is 21212 and two dead birds have already tested positive. It was suggested that the birds be disposed of by burial or by putting in a tied trash bag and putting them out with the garbage.

All zip codes within the RRLRAIA, with the exception of 21209, have had dead birds testing positive. 544 birds in 22 jurisdictions have tested positive since May 8, 2002. The majority are crows. It is important to report where and when you saw a dead bird. Call the *West Nile Virus* hotline at 866-866-2769 or report it on-line at edcp.org. Additional information is available from the hotline or on-line.

PLANS FOR RIDGE SCHOOL SITE ANNOUNCED

Plans for the former Ridge School property on West Joppa Road are making their way through the Baltimore County development process. This property fronts on Joppa Road and goes back to Bellona Avenue and Charles Street. At an October Community Input Meeting, owner Marc Munafo presented plans for a gated community containing thirteen additional building lots on this 16-acre site. Access for twelve of the homes is planned via a private road off Joppa Road. Access for the other two homes is from Bellona Avenue. According to Mr. Munafo, he will develop one-half acre +/- lots and sell them for traditional-style homes. He hopes to begin construction in ten to twelve months. The Ridge Mansion, which Mr. Munafo is restoring for his private residence, will be on a one-acre lot. The former school building and parking lots will be demolished.



The Beaux-Arts style Ridge Mansion was built in the late 1800s. Work has begun to renovate the mansion and transform the 16-acre property into a gated community of 14 homes.

Several questions were raised about storm water management, sewer, forest conservation, orientation of the proposed homes, and existing large trees. These issues will be addressed and incorporated into the development plan to be presented to the County agencies during Development Plan Conference.

The next step will be for Mr. Munafo to submit his development plan for approval by the County. For any development that "involves" a landmark structure (the Ridge Mansion), County law requires that the plan must be referred to the Planning Board. The standard procedure then is to schedule the matter on the agenda for two consecutive Planning Board meetings. At the first meeting, the developer will make his presentation and the Board will receive comments from County staff and the public. The Board's vote, taken at the second meeting, will be binding on the Hearing Officer (Zoning Commissioner) in relation to the historic preservation aspects of the development plan. Finally, there will be a hearing before the Hearing Officer who has approval authority over all other aspects. Please contact our office if you would like to be notified of the dates of these hearings.

RIDGE SCHOOL HISTORY

Excerpts from the Maryland Historical Trust, Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, Inventory No. BA 214. Prepared by Baltimore County Office of Planning, Emily Paulus, Architectural Historian/Planner; John W. McGrain, County Historian.

Ridge Mansion is possibly the only fully developed Beaux-Arts style house in the county and was designed by a notable architectural firm for the manager and president of Baltimore's leading daily newspaper. The house is constructed of the best materials with terra cotta trim to accentuate the hydraulic brick walls. The setting is one of the best points available near Towson for a notable structure. No expense was spared in its construction. The first owner was a noted philanthropist. The original family donated the entire premises for educational purposes, and their bequest was carried out for almost fifty years.

The ground at the Ridge Mansion site was acquired by George W. Abell from Charles F. Pitt, Jr., on March 5, 1890. (1) It was Abell's intention to build a major country residence. Abell was one of the heirs to the fortune built up by Arunah S. Abell, the publisher since

1837 of the Baltimore Sun. The elder Abell had owned the entire area now known as Guilford, and the family had sold out for development in 1888. "Guilford" was originally a very large mansion built for General McDonald in an Italianate style and it was demolished by the Roland Park Company to build their choice suburb.

George W. Abell selected the Beaux-Arts style that was coming to the fore and engaged the architects Baldwin and Pennington of Baltimore to design it. (2) The firm of Baldwin and Pennington was responsible for a great deal of the downtown financial area of Baltimore and for most of the stations and office buildings of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad throughout the territory of that rail line. They also designed numerous Catholic churches and church-related institutions, Mr. Baldwin being a noted Catholic, and almost thinking he had a corner on the church's building program, was dismayed that church contracts were going to George A. Frederick and Thomas C. Kennedy.

(3) At the December 13, 2001, meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Dr. Douglas Carroll, as a citizen, brought up the concerns of preservationists about the lack of final protection on this structure. The Commission voted then and there to hold a hearing on the next possible date, allowing for the 45-day notice required by law, which would be February 14, 2002. This house has been on the Maryland Historical Trust Inventory since March 20, 1968, when the survey of notable buildings was in the hands of volunteers from the Baltimore County Historical Society. The mansion was listed in the earliest days of identifying significant structures and bears MHT Inventory Number BA 214.

NOTES 1. *Baltimore County Deeds, JWS178:593.* 2. *Baltimore County Union, October 1, 1892.* 3. *Andrew A. Green, "County to Sell 20 Acres," Sun, Dec. 24, 2001, p. B-1. Also, adv.p.B-11. Walter Herman, "History in the Making, Ridge School Property in Ruxton, Garrison Station Up for Sale, Jeffersonian, January 10, 2002.*

A CORRECTION

by Joseph M. Coale

In the last edition of the RRLRAIA newsletter I mistakenly said the Riderwood Railroad Station witnessed the passage of Teddy Roosevelt on his way to assume the presidency in 1901 at the death of William McKinley. In preparing this story, my early research from the county tax assessment records stated the construction of the station to be 1900. I later found the 1905 date to be more probable which I then included in the story, yet I failed to correct the reference to TR. I would like to thank several of the TR aficionados who ever so politely, yet firmly, corrected the record. I stand corrected and humbled. Historic preservation's credibility must be based on accuracy of facts and documentation. I regret the oversight.

NOTARY SERVICE NOW AVAILABLE

Complimentary notary service is available to RRLRAIA members at the association office. If possible, call 410-494-7757 before stopping by.

RRLRAIA MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Thank you to all who have supported RRLRAIA this year! To date we have just over 1200 members, both households and businesses. We did not quite meet our goal of 1250 members, but we look forward to improving our numbers next year.

We will begin our membership drive for 2003 in January or February. Please watch your mailboxes for the 2003 member request letter. If you prefer to be contacted by email, and have not already given your email address to the association, please send an email request to ruxrider@bcpl.net. Also, if you have recently moved into the area or are moving elsewhere, please let us know so we can update our files.

THANKS ARE DUE

We would like to acknowledge the generosity of our members who have donated their time and services:

JILL STEUART, drew the lovely sketch of the Association Office.

CLARK PARRIOTT, Lawn Doctor, 410-823-3659, or on the web at www.lawndoctor.com, applied weed killer and performed a soil test to the Association lawn.

MONA HOFF planted and donated the beautiful flower boxes. We will look to her for guidance as we implement a wonderful landscape plan this spring.

A. J. MICHAELS COMPANY Plumbing, Heating, Drain Cleaning, 410-435-5400, provided emergency drain cleaning service.



A sketch of the Association Office by Jill Steuart. In years past, this building was the post office for Ruxton/Riderwood. Please drop by anytime the flag is out.

**RUXTON-RIDERWOOD
LAKE ROLAND AREA
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION, INC.**

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PHONE 410-494-7757

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