

SPRING 2002

Neighborhood News

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 27 – October 31, FARMER'S MARKET, Thursdays, Allegheny Avenue (except July 4, market will be held on Wednesday, July 3).

TOWSON AT NIGHT CONCERT SERIES (FREE)
Sunday evenings, 7PM, Courthouse Plaza.
Sponsored by: Towson Business Association, American Legion - Towson Post 22 and the Greater Towson Jaycees.

June 9 Mickey Light "Sounds of Sinatra" (in front of Courthouse)

June 23 Helmut Licht Orchestra

July 7 229th Maryland Army National Guard Band

July 21 Shades of Blue

August 4 Dick Erlanger and The Good Timers

August 18 The Zim Zemarel Orchestra*

September 8 Peabody Ragtime Ensemble*

**U.S. recording companies have funded (in part) the instrumental music for this performance, with the cooperation of Local 40-543, American Federation of Musicians.*

2002-2003

RRLRAIA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- Peggy Squitieri

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'S ANNUAL MEETING

At the May 22nd meeting President Biff Hearn thanked outgoing board members Barry Truax, Herb Mittenthal, and Bill Heller for their service. Jeffrey Budnitz, Kimberly Warren, Louise Hildreth and Christopher Kroft were elected to the board.

Joseph Coale reported that the Baltimore County Planning Board approved the Community Plan and will forward it to the County Council for a vote to be amended to the County's Master Plan. Several Planning Board



This house, located in the village of Rockland on Falls Road, is an example of our neighborhood's rich historical significance.

members commended the community for such an impressive plan.

Two goals of this plan are to educate the community of its history and to utilize State and County programs to preserve it. Recognizing that the history of our communities is

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JOIN RRLRAIA—YOUR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

This year, RRLRAIA has introduced a new bumper sticker in its membership drive. The 2.75-inch square sticker depicts an image of RRLRAIA's new home, located on Bellona Avenue across from the Riderwood Post Office.



For those of you who have joined RRLRAIA for 2002, your sticker is attached. Thank you for your support! We hope you will display the sticker on your car as a resident of our special community.

For those of you who have not yet joined RRLRAIA this year, we hope you will consider becoming a member of the Association. Your participation assures that the Association will continue to act on all the issues that will affect the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

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RIDERWOOD STATION PURCHASED FOR PRESERVATION

by Joseph M. Coale

For the past six months there was a "clear and present danger" that the Riderwood Railroad Station would be lost. Last December, the Riderwood Railroad Station, which has served as a private residence for the past 30 years, was put on the market for sale. At the same time, a local resident nominated the structure for the County's Preservation Landmark List. The station's owner opposed this listing since she believed that a

Landmark-listed property would be more difficult to sell with the ensuing restrictions. Soon, a developer's bid for the property was accepted. This developer planned to demolish the station and construct three houses on the site.

The stage was set for a classic confrontation over what clearly is an important historical

structure. When the developer learned that only two houses could be built on the site, he withdrew his offer. Over the following months, the owner declined several other offers that were under the asking price.

On February 14th, the Baltimore County Landmarks Commission heard the nomination and voted unanimously to place the station on the preliminary Landmarks List pending final approval by the County Council. The Council was to consider the nomination on May 6th but a competitive bid had been received several days prior from a married couple who wanted it as a residence. While under consideration, it was determined that the septic system did not meet code and termite damage had been discovered. Who was to pay for this was an issue that threatened an already-tenuous deal. The Ruxton, Riderwood, Lake Roland Foundation, Inc., a newly formed 501c3 foundation, was successful in obtaining an anonymous \$10,000 grant toward these costs (provided the new owner agreed to the Landmark listing). So the purchase offer was accepted one hour prior to the Council hearing.

How and why did this become an issue of community concern? Ruxton and Riderwood were developed at the turn of the last century as railroad communities. The confluence of Roland Run as an important mill site, Joppa Road as the I-95 of the County's early history, the Northern Central stop at Rider's Switch, and Bellona Avenue made what is now Riderwood a local economic center. Improvements in railroading made commuting with Baltimore practical and the Northern Central decided in 1903 to invest in a substantial station to serve the prosperous, growing community.

Land was acquired on the northwest side of the double tracks at the Joppa Road crossing and construction was completed in 1905 in time to salute Teddy Roosevelt as he passed by on his way to assume the presidency at the death of Wm. McKinley. The station served the community well during the intervening years that saw two World Wars and a Depression. We can only imagine the personal stories of local players who came



In the waning days of passenger operations in 1964, train No. 548, carrying through cars from Chicago to Baltimore and Washington, rolls past the former suburban station at Riderwood, Maryland. The station, designed by Philadelphia architect Frank Furness, has become a private home. H. H. Harwood, Jr. photograph. (The Story of the Northern Central Railway by Robert L. Gunnarsson)

and went through the Riderwood Station.

In 1962 a proud employee of the now Penn Central Railroad purchased the Riderwood Railroad Station, now in the shadow of the Joppa Road bridge. He raised a family here and passed on in 1991. During these years, the station had largely disappeared from public view and public interest. Research documents show that the famous architect, William Furness, designed the station. His structures represented the unique American style of the Gilded Age. Much of his work was done for the national railroads, most notably the Baltimore and Ohio. Mr. Furness also designed numerous buildings in his home city of Philadelphia including the University of Pennsylvania Library. As a young Union second lieutenant, Mr. Furness was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for gallantry during the Civil War.

The Riderwood Station was designed for a public purpose to serve the community, but also as a home for the stationmaster. A recent tour of the station revealed that its basic structure is very much intact with the original details, windows, doors, wood paneling, brass hardware, brick and stone

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LAND PRESERVATION TRUST

YOU can help preserve the rural character
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LIGHT RAIL AND RRLRAIA: A CAUTIONARY TALE

by Sarah Fenno Lord

Starting in 1987, for several years the RRLRA Board was consumed with studies, polling, projections, and sifting all the implications of a Light Rail takeover of the quiescent Penn Central train tracks in our communities' midst. In the end, the RRLRAIA said "No Thank You" to proposed Light Rail stations in three out of four locations within its boundaries.

MTA had promoted three possible Bellona Avenue parking lot sites: the former rugby field where the yuletide bonfire is held in drought-free years, opposite Graul's Market, and what is now Arden Courts. Despite awareness of the benefits of Light Rail, at each site opposition was vociferous. RRLRAIA voted down light rail stations for the heart of Ruxton, because:

- Bellona Avenue was envisioned by the MTA as the designated conduit for people-moving between the Inner Harbor and Towson.
- The Ruxton/Riderwood MTA parking lot(s) were to be served by extensive bus traffic ferrying ridership to and from Towson.
- A Light Rail spur up the Townson Run stream was contemplated (to branch from the rugby field station).
- Bellona Avenue would no longer be treated as a neighborhood street, but as a regional thoroughfare.

At Bare Hills, the context was different. Falls Road historically functioned as a regional thoroughfare, and mass transit access to Robert E. Lee Park seemed appropriate.

Neighborhood opposition remained fierce on several counts, however. Big ticket issues needed coordinated problem-solving: crumbling bridge replacement, weakened dam repair and 20 years of dumping and floodplain abuse at the proposed station site. Bare Hills residents were wary both of MTA's goal of encouraging commercial development around Light Rail stations and of the size of the proposed station, which, it was proffered, should be 150 cars. In the end the RRLRAIA board and the MTA agreed that:

- the MTA should purchase the "informal dump" in its entirety
- the parking lot would be for 75 cars
- a larger parking lot would result ONLY when the local neighborhood associations supported expansion

Today, the Bare Hills station continues to be a sore subject because:

- A majority of the cars parked at the Bare Hills station come from outside RRLRAIA neighborhoods (MTA data, March & May 1995).
- MTA purchased only a portion of the "informal dump." On the remaining acreage unattractive, and sometimes environmentally abusive, dumping recurs periodically, and cars park haphazardly on this land.
- MTA restriped the Bare Hills parking lot to accommodate 35 additional cars (totaling 110) without asking for neighborhood consent.
- During 1994-6, MTA campaigned hard for further lot expansion. After studying MTA traffic data, the surrounding neighborhood associations unanimously said No, concluding that a larger lot would further exacerbate traffic influx on Lake Avenue and



The Falls Road Light Rail stop parking lot.

Falls Road.

- MTA planners now threaten to remove the landscaping to enlarge the lot, while conceding that they are supposed to get community association approval first.
- Regional planners exploring development and recreation opportunities in the Jones Falls Valley also urge that the Bare Hills parking lot be doubled or quadrupled.
- Some local activists are working toward a contract with the MTA stating that further expansion will be off the table for seven years (MTA will not agree to more) and that a 215-car parking lot will be agreed to — if purchase of the dump's remaining acreage is concluded.
- Other local activists are opposed to expansion, stating that enlarging the lot worsens residential quality for Bare Hills and Lake Falls neighborhoods. Certainly, large parking lots are no friend of healthy residential neighborhoods. Increasing the size of the Bare Hills station lot means amplifying incoming traffic from other neighborhoods. Lake Avenue, too, has become a thoroughfare.

Neighborhoods need to be defended, not overwhelmed and obliterated. If government is pushing Light Rail for the collective good it accomplishes, then this system needs to be expanded laterally throughout the city. Neighborhood-friendly lots serving more neighborhoods would mean that historic communities would be less likely to endure out-of-scale traffic and zoning battles. ■

REVISITING THE BARE HILLS I-83 INTERCHANGE

In 1983 the initial public hearing regarding a possible I-83 Interchange off Falls Road in Bare Hills and Mt. Washington was held, attracting residents curious to understand the studies and judge the proposals on their merits. The three options were:

- Clarkview Road (where the Bare Hill Tennis Barn is located)
- Old Pimlico Road

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■ "No Build"

Clarkview was the most expensive; "No Build" was no cost. Flush with federal financing, the state and city and county pushed hard for Clarkview Road (east ramps) and Smith Avenue (west ramps).

However, the studies showed that the interchange would increase, not decrease, traffic on Falls Road. The access ramp would carve property away from the historic "Gothic carpenter" Bare Hills house and further compromise the 1830s African American Scott Settlement.

Smith/Greenspring neighborhoods and Mt. Washington were aghast at the bisecting of their communities, which interchange traffic would cause. The No-Build Coalition was formed and eventually prevailed.

Interestingly, today it is likely that traffic studies would project that building an interchange at Old Pimlico Road would DECREASE traffic on Falls Road. Would this increase or decrease traffic on Old Pimlico Road? The extraordinary vehicular burden from all the new condominium developments along Old Pimlico is about to worsen, as the 600 units of the Greenspring Quarry are completed.

It never made sense to convert Clarkview Road to an expressway ramp, because Old Pimlico Road traffic would still have to force its way onto Falls Road, only to immediately loop off again and double back to I-83. Yet shortening the drive for all the new residents along the Old Pimlico Road corridor does have merit. Before 8:00 AM, southbound Falls Road traffic is stacked from Lake Avenue to Joppa Road. Waiting to get on Falls Road — to inch toward Northern Parkway — is not time well spent.

City Councilwoman Rikki Spector and County Councilman Kevin Kamenetz are problem-solvers, able to get the ball rolling, as are our 42nd District legislators in Annapolis. It is time the state, county and city undertook another traffic study to see if an expressway exit at Old Pimlico Road would be beneficial. ■

BARE HILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

National Register historic designation is working its way upstream on the Jones Falls. The city's milling neighborhoods of the Jones Falls Valley recognize how precious they are and preservation efforts are in full cry. This is heartening — and particularly handy for our Association which, while already a county community conservation area, still must wage reactive, costly, time-consuming zoning battles.

One "pro-active" strategy for legal control over the scale of intruding development comes with county historic district status and resulting covenants. Achieving National Register List of Historic Places district status can then provide an entree to the more restrictive local landmarks controls, which eligible communities are seeking so as to keep out-of-character development out of their neighborhoods. For Riderwood and Ruxton this is a tactic to consider closely.

So, be glad that Lake Roland and its area neighborhoods already have. Eighteen years ago, Rockland won National Register historic district status. Ten years ago, Louise Hildreth and Jane Lawrence, the exemplary founders of the Robert E. Lee Park Conservancy, were successful in creating the Lake Roland Historic District listed on the National Historic Register. And now, though it has taken 20 years and three studies, Bare Hills is on the threshold of becoming such a district, honoring its mining, farming, and African American roots. Bare Hills is indebted to Preservation Maryland and the Baltimore County Historical Trust for their encouragement and financial aid.

For a year now, sites historian Wayne Nield has been assessing the architecture of Bare Hills and has documented 56 "contributing structures." For Bare Hills preservationists, it is dangerous to blink. We lost a gorgeous bank barn last winter and several more houses are under the gun — even though the owners wish to preserve them. It helps that at last the Bare

Hills Historic District has a magic number: MHT-BA-2998.

Wayne Nield has been working prudently with Peter Kurtze of the Maryland Historical Trust so that our efforts are both realistic and streamlined to the task of winning district status (ultimately conferred by the U.S. National Park Service). So, within RRLRA boundaries, three historic districts will soon exist — making it all the easier for the rest of our Association to form into districts as desired. At the Association's annual meeting on May 22 a brief, fascinating slide show—the tip of the iceberg of Bare Hills history—was shown.

By the way, through the new RRLRA Foundation, you can do us a world of good by making a tax-deductible contribution ear-marked "Bare Hills Historic District."

Our next step is to preserve and renovate the Scott Settlement homes, which date from the 1840s.

DUMPSTER DAY GAINS POPULARITY

We know this event is catching on... because our office received several calls this spring asking "When is Dumpster Day?"

Thanks to board member Michael Chasney for coordinating the 4th RRLRAIA-sponsored Dumpster Day which was held on Saturday, April 13. Our residents filled six large dumpsters. We were able to rescue a few items (a bench, table, lamps) that have already been put to good use in our new office. In addition to community volunteers, we would also like to acknowledge Baltimore County government who funds the dumpsters for community cleanups such as ours.

Baltimore County publishes an informative *Reuse Directory*--a tool for matching people who have material to give away with organizations in need. This directory is available online at <http://www.co.ba.md.us/p.cfm/agencies/pubwks/reusedir.cfm> Copies are also available in our office. ■

ROBERT E. LEE PARK: A CRYING SHAME

by Sarah Fenno Lord

The days when Robert E. Lee Park was a sleepy green and blue asset which bird watchers had to themselves, while Baltimore City elementary school children picknicked by the pond, seem long ago and far away.

Mountain bikers have carved a maze of new trails throughout the park, caused shocking erosion, cut down vegetation, painted tree trunks and wiped out whole areas of fragile understory. Dog owners determined to create an off-leash park converged in such numbers that erosion and excrement and canine aggression turned the peninsula area, in particular, into a dispiriting, unsanitary wasteland.

The sky-rocketing cost of replacing the unsafe bridge in front of the dam caused the City to balk at repairs. The volunteer Robert E. Lee Park Conservancy backed away



RRLRAIA board members inspect existing conditions in the Park. We encourage everyone to get involved in protecting the park to ensure that it will be around for years to come.

from asking garden clubs to help with beautification — as plantings were ruined by dogs and the Department of Public Works crews had even cut down new landscaping.

Now when you think of Robert E. Lee Park, you think of arguments. Of people yelling at each other about the rights of dogs to run free and of bikers to trammel the woods unhindered. There are people who want rules, people who threaten to ignore the rules, people who want the name changed, people who want to know what to do about the rapidly filling-in lake, people who want a park service ranger, people who want bigger parking lots, people who want paved trails going through it from the Inner Harbor to Pennsylvania, people who would lay their bodies on the train tracks to prevent this. The “park experience” is not a placid one these days.

The jewel in the crown of the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland area needs our attention — and city, county, state, federal and foundation dollars. Anyone who has gotten involved admires the job that the estimable Mary Porter, with the Baltimore City parks department, is doing to sift through the issues. But public money to improve the park has evaporated again. And Robert E. Lee Park is a crying shame. ■

REGARDING THE APRIL 6TH LAKE ROLAND AND AREAS CLEAN-UP

Special thanks to Susan Nestler and friends in the Thornton Road area; to Valga Morrow, Ed Hord and Veronica Kor in the Falls Road area; to Allfirst at Ruxton bank manager Christine Hammann and pals who worked on Towson Run; and to canoeists Judy McMullan, Richard

Jamison, Kay and Bill McConnell, as well as two ninth grade environmental warriors from Boys Latin School named Chip Oneil and Scott Matthews, who scooped muck out of Lake Roland.

Say, next spring, let's get onboard with Irvine Science Center in a BIG way. Cleaning out lake litter turns out to be big-hearted fun. ■

work all very much undisturbed by the passage of time and people. Patios and roof overhangs on each side of the building accommodated summer time passengers and the large doors of the baggage area still slide neatly open as they first did nearly a century ago. The large recessed passenger room with dormer windows and high-beamed ceiling is complete with an original circular steam radiator.

It was incumbent on our community to help find a solution that provided both a fair price for the owner and a way to save the building for the future. The Foundation was helpful in doing exactly this. The Foundation was formed last year, in part, to accept from Manor Care, the “Yellow House” on Bellona Avenue that now serves as the community association’s office. As a tax-exempt foundation, contributions to it are tax deductible, and it has special standing when applying for grants. Working closely with the Association, the Foundation provides a broader range of tools by which to work for our community. One of its missions, as stated in its articles of incorporation, is historic preservation. When appropriate, the Foundation will assist in preserving those elements of our local area that make Ruxton, Riderwood and the Lake Roland area communities unique and that give them a sense of time, identity and permanence.

The Foundation attempted to help find a private buyer or, if no other option was forthcoming, was prepared to negotiate a fair price that would result in the Foundation acquiring the site with the financial assistance of the Maryland Historical Trust, Preservation Maryland and Baltimore County. Maryland’s Historic Preservation officer, Rodney Little, has ruled the building fully qualifies for listing on the National Register of Historic places. The “clear and present danger” of losing this unique link with our proud past was averted by the proactive involvement of your community Foundation. ■

As an umbrella organization with a Board consisting of residents from our community, it is RRLRAIA's mission to lend professional and experienced support, gained through our familiarity and liaison work with governmental, business, and other community groups to accomplish our community's goals.

The annual dues for each household for 2002 remain at **\$40.00**. To become a member, please send your check made payable to RRLRAIA to P. O. Box 204, Riderwood, MD 21139, along with a note showing how you would like to be listed in the directory (name, address, telephone, e-mail). As always, if you have any concerns or comments, please do not hesitate to let us know. You can contact Peggy Squitieri, our executive director, at 410-494-7757 or office@rrlraia.org ■

important in promoting a sense of continuity and permanence in an age of rapid change and uncertainty. It is a common history that we, as residents, can share. We can learn from, and appreciate, the efforts of the earlier residents who established our neighborhoods and see how they met the challenges of their day. One of our tasks is to promote awareness of the historic assets in our area and develop a consensus of preservation.

With these goals in mind, Peter Kurtze of the Maryland Historical Trust—and a Ruxton resident—was chosen as our keynote speaker. An architectural historian with over 20 years experience in historic preservation, Peter administers the National Register of Historic Places program in Maryland. Peter explained the National Register criteria, the nomination process and the benefits of Register listing.

The National Register of Historic Places recognizes the significance of historic properties and identifies them as worthy of consideration for preservation. Listing in the

National Register honors the property by recognizing its importance to the community, State, or Nation, and confers a measure of protection from harm by government-funded or licensed projects. National Register designation does not restrict the rights of private property owners to do anything they wish with their property.

Owners of properties listed in the National Register may be eligible for financial assistance for historic preservation projects, including income tax credits. For additional information, MHT's web address is www.marylandhistoricaltrust.net.

Wayne Nield, sites historian, presented a wonderful slide show on the history of Bare Hills and the Falls Road corridor. His extensive research will be used to apply for Register listing of this area. Read *Bare Hills Historic District Designation* on page 4 for more information on this fascinating project. ■

**RUXTON-RIDERWOOD
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