

# History Of Architecture

## Baltimore County, Maryland

### ***PLAIN HOUSES OF THE COLONIAL ERA***

Some of the prosperous planters and millers built fairly large and comfortable houses in the Georgian era without incorporating balanced Georgian designs. Houses were four bays wide at times and lacked a central entrance. Few of the elements of Georgian design appeared on the exterior. Rooms were seldom elaborately decorated but usually there was a well designed stairway and good mantels in the rooms with fireplaces. These houses often belonged to prominent persons, the deans of founding families, and at the time of the Revolution persons who served in public bodies and in high military ranks. The Ulm mansion of Samuel Owings II was a large house in brick, but not at all Georgian in form; yet Owings had ultimately owned three technologically advanced mills and served in both the General Assembly and the militia. His brother Thomas Owings owned a sturdy stone house that is barely Georgian in layout but still a rural miller's dwelling at the head of a second-order stream. The Owings were not Quakers, but obviously did not care to spend on show. Green Spring was the house that gave its name to an entire valley, yet is more snug than imposing, merely built in frame and clapboard.

There was only one stone house on My Lady's Manor at the time of its confiscation by the State: the Martin Fugate House, a modest one-story structure measuring 18 by 24 feet.

Bloomsbury can be accurately dated as a Cradock family house to about 1761. The Worthington Valley was still a "barrens" when Bloomsbury was built, four bays on the main facade, unbalanced in layout. Later it was coated with stucco.

The Beckly House in Reisterstown was a plain two-part brick house right on the wagon road. It originally belonged to one of the founders of the town, and although as large as any planter's dwelling, was the residence of a blacksmith, Daniel Beckley, who married into the Reister family.

### **OLD HOWARD HOUSE**

Joshua Howard, a veteran of King James II's army in Monmouth's rebellion of 1683, came to America shortly after the event and in 1698 acquired a tract at the Western end of the Green Spring Valley called Howard's Square, one of the few local land grants with a logical shape. His first house survived on the premises until 1898, although overshadowed by a great new house called Grey Rock. The house was stone, 1½ stories, with two front doors and two dormers, shingle-roofed. Cornelius

Howard inherited this place in 1738, and he and his wife, Ruth Eager, eventually owned 1,700 acres in both town and country. Their son, John Eager Howard, was born in this plain house in 1752 and served as a colonel with the Maryland Fifth Regiment in the Southern theater of the Revolutionary War, his deeds remembered by that line in the State song “Maryland, My Maryland” that goes, “Remember Howard’s warlike thrust.” Later he served as governor and attained the rank of General in 1798. The 1798 tax list described the general’s birthplace as “1 old stone dwelling house, 1 story, 40 by 21 feet, with piazza, one story, 40 by 6 feet.” In assessor’s terms, a piazza was nothing more than the usual shed-roofed front porch. The porch appears in Frank Blackwell Mayer’s ink drawing of 1848. The Howard descendants in 1857 sold the place to Dr. James Maynard who commissioned the ornate Grey Rock house designed by Starkweather. The house appeared as a roofless shell in a drawing in *The Garrison Church* (1898), page 35. (Thomas, 1978, pp. 290-296. Also Lantz, 1906.) In 1955, James W. Foster, director of the Maryland Historical Society, interviewed the groundskeeper, a Mr. Turnbaugh, who had been shown by John D. Howard where the foundation could be probed by a crowbar, just below the grass at a spot between Grey Rock mansion and the caretaker’s residence.

### **COTTAGE, WELCOME HERE, OR BLOOMSBURY**

This compact, well built brick house belonged to Dr. John Cradock and is one of the few 18th century houses surviving in Worthington Valley. “Welcome Here” or “Cottage” are the names of the land survey resulting from a subdivision of the original “Nicholson’s Manor.” The Rev. Thomas Cradock apparently called the place Nicholson’s Manor and Bloomsbury, having bought the undeveloped tract in 1761. He left it to son John in 1770, bequeathing his own residence called Trentham to son Thomas. Dr. John Cradock, a native Marylander, studied medicine in Philadelphia and also gained field experience with the English-educated Dr. Randall Hulse, one of the western county’s few physicians. Cradock was married in 1775, which might be a clue to the age of the house. The Cradocks were a prosperous family, yet they chose to build a plain house, four bays wide, one that could not qualify as Georgian or Palladian design; the dwelling was otherwise comfortable and the rooms fitted with Georgian interior trim. The brickwork was good workmanship, reminiscent of Annapolis with Flemish bond on front and rear facades. The 12-over-12 sash windows were surmounted by rubbed-brick jack-arches nearly two bricks high.

*Welcome Here*

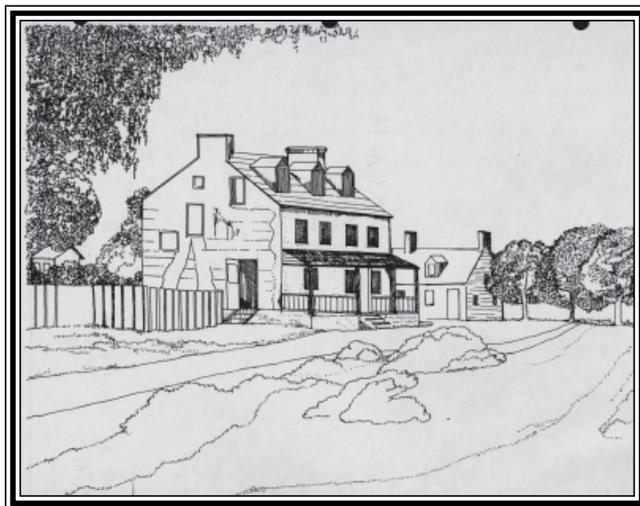


The house clearly appears in the 1798 tax list as a two-story structure, 26 by 48 feet with a separate stone kitchen, one story, 18 by 30. There was also a log house 14 by 16 and “old frame house” 14 by 14. Helen Geist in 1991 supplied two Geist family ledger pages marked “Cost of Repairing Front Part of House” in August and September 1917. Jacob L. Stocksdale was the contractor, Oliver Blossom, the plasterer. The bill included oak and pine for a stairway, opened from an enclosed stair. Two window frames were added and a fireplace grate. The prominent one-bay classical entrance portico was built after 1948 by Mr. & Mrs. Charles W. Williams in an attempt to duplicate an original porch that had left ghost impressions of its form when an inappropriate full-width rural porch was removed (Elder, 1958; Wollon, 1976).

## RED LION INN

Red Lion Inn is interesting because it was one of the few colonial hostels to be sketched, in this case by Benjamin Henry Latrobe in 1813. The route to Philadelphia in the 1770s passed over a now bypassed stretch of highway called Red Lion Road. Roderick Cheyne advertised in the Annapolis paper that he was operating a new stone inn just north of Mr. Lawson’s Nottingham Iron Works on the Post Road (*Maryland Gazette*, January 6, 1757). Scharf’s county history described the inn as “the largest and best appointed in Maryland. It was a large building, constructed of stone and brick. In the center, under the second story, a spacious archway broke the wall, allowing passage of wagons to the stables beyond.” Scharf noted that the inn was “once kept by the celebrated Moll Roe (Scharf, 1881, p. 924).” George Washington’s diary shows that he stopped several times when the inn was called Skerett’s and later Webster’s, sometimes having meals, other times putting up overnight. Captain Clement Skerett called the place “Stone House Tavern, formerly Ligitts” in a stray-horse advertisement in the *Maryland Journal* of November 1, 1785. The building sketched by Latrobe on September 28, 1813, is shown near an estuary labelled “Bird River.” The inn was four bays wide, three dormers across, and had a full-width front porch and inside end-chimneys. A signboard showed a rampant lion. The inn lacked the great archway described by Scharf, leaving the researcher to wonder if Scharf’s data was fantasy, or had some fire wiped the first building of 1760 from the scene. The inn was bypassed by the privately operated turnpike chartered in 1813, leaving it merely a farmhouse. Its last owner was Peter Fenby, a farmer rather than an inn keeper. His administration account in 1862 shows payments from an insurance company compensating his estate for the loss of the house by fire (*Latrobe’s View of America*, 1985, p. 304).

*Red Lion Inn*



## SAMUEL OWINGS HOUSE, OR, ULM

Several mysteries surround the home of Samuel Owings II (1733- 1803). It was a large brick house called “Ulm,” an acronym meaning “Upper, Lower, and Middle” for the three merchant mills that provided Owings’ major income. The third mill was not constructed until about 1793, thus the name would have been meaningless until then. Date of construction has been estimated at 1767, based on the time of Owings’ marriage to Deborah Lynch. Twelve children would have made space imperative for the family. No mention of an Owings Mill has been found earlier than an advertisement in the *Maryland Journal* of February 27, 1781. Presumably, the lower mill, the one located directly in front of the mansion, would have come first, but Dennis Griffith’s 1795 map of Maryland and Delaware showed only the one directly on Reisterstown Turnpike, the Middle Mill as it was later called. At first glance, the house looked Georgian, but with its six- bay width, it lacked a balanced design and the three western bays (left) had a lower roof ridge and were really an appendage half the depth of the main block. Forman pointed out the modillion cornice (one decorated with a row of small brackets) and a “wall of Troy bed-mold,” that is, a row of projecting bricks under the cornice itself. The house stood on a tract called Timbered Level. The 1798 tax list of Soldiers Delight Hundred showed three mills in existence and the two-story dwelling on Timbered Level owned and occupied by Samuel Owings was 40 by 40 feet with an addition of brick 20 by 20, plus a brick kitchen 30 by 26. The first known photograph appeared in the 1898 book *The Garrison Church*. Later studies and photographs were done in the 1930s by H. Chandlee Forman, Frances Benjamin Johnston, and the Historic American Buildings Survey.



*Ulm House*

Samuel Owings II was both a miller and farmer, but also served as a full colonel in the county militia during the Revolution and acted as vestryman at St. Thomas’ Church. The lower mill and the brick mansion were acquired by William Painter in 1844 and the property remained in his family until 1944. The Painters were manufacturing ice cream at least as far back as the Civil War period. The house stood vacant from 1966 to 1973 during the development of Painter’s Mill Industrial Park; it was then superbly restored by a partnership of Dr. David I. Miller and Francis E. Kennedy, converted to a restaurant. Architect was Calvin Kolb Kobasa, A. I. A. The restaurant operators have used a number of names, starting with “Samuel Owings—1767,” “Maud’s,” “Le Petit Gourmet,” and finally “Country Fare Inn.” The only significant difference between the 1898 photograph and its 1980s appearance was the loss of the dormers due to a roof fire during the Painter family tenure — they were missing in Forman’s pre-1934 photograph. A small, white, one-room plantation office that stood just west of the main house had also disappeared. The lower mill, last used as a cattle barn, perished in the mid-1950s (Clemens and Clemens, 1974, pp. 13-14. Forman, 1934, p. 111)

Ulm was one of the first Baltimore County houses to attract the attention of Easton architectural writer H. Chandler Forman, who may have over-estimated the date (pushing it back before 1734) but made the following points:

ULM, over two hundred years old, was a self-contained plantation with a brick mansion, two Colonial stables of excellent design, a tenant house with great stone chimney rising to the second floor level where it changes to brick, a spring house with the ancient slats crossing each other to form a screen at the windows, and other outbuildings. The ULM mansion has a modillion cornice with a Wall-of-Troy bed mould; a double chimney with vertical trap door between; a great stone fireplace in the Kitchen and a main Hallway with a secondary stair Hall behind.

Forman provided other analysis in a photo caption:

The entrance at ULM is by an English-style gateway set in a brick wall with rounded brick top, now covered with ivy. Although unsymmetrical, the facade has a break on the front like that at “Kingston Hall” in Somerset County. The outbuildings of “Ulm” are extensive, there being two colonial barns of excellent proportions, a tenant house with a great stone chimney, a milk house, and a spring house with slats across the windows.

Ulm’s small west wing was a plantation office. The various structures were apparently in a cluster and there was a fairly narrow space between the mill and the dwelling for Painter’s Mill Road before the laying out of the industrial park. According to Rowland Fox, a native of Owings Mills, the mill site was north of the present Painters Mill Road (as relocated) and more or less face to face with the mansion.

Care was taken in the restoration and rebuilding to preserve the beautiful brick walls, both exterior and interior, which were still in excellent condition in 1973. Dividing walls between the rooms were left exposed in several places, especially the unusually high arched doorways. The original beams and pegged wood construction was also visible in two places. The huge fireplace in Samuel Owings’ kitchen, reworked into the brick- floored dining room, was also original, needing only minor repair work after two centuries. In 1996, the house was demolished to build an office tower.

*Ulm House*

