

TUDOR FARM:

Hidden Jewel of Anne Arundel County

by Cheryl Adam

THE HISTORY OF TUDOR FARM

Tudor Farm was identified as a property of significant historic interest by the Anne Arundel County Dept. of Environmental and Cultural Resources. The property has been featured in newspaper articles and at least two books (*Houses of the Cavaliers* and *Historic Homes of Anne Arundel County*). It was once considered the most graceful home (in terms of architecture blending with landscaping) in southern Anne Arundel County.

The property's early history is connected to one of the most important figures of early Maryland history: William Coale, the great Quaker minister and orator. Coale, born in Virginia in 1633, was the Quaker who successfully argued to the Maryland General Assembly that Friends should not have to bear arms even in time of war. While in Virginia, he was an activist, speaking out for the Quaker doctrine. For his efforts, he was arrested and imprisoned "in a stinking prison" at Jamestown for many months, along with his fellow Quaker George Wilson. Wilson died in his chains, "the flesh having rotted from his bones. Coale's health never fully recovered. Coale died in 1678.

Coale moved to Maryland around 1654 and settled in West River (now Galesville). His first estate was called "Great Bonnerton." He later gained a second estate, "Portland Manor," two miles from what is now Tudor Farm. Portland Manor is now marked only by the small road that bears its name off Route 2. 2.

William had three wives (each died young). Confusingly, he had two sons named William, one by Hester and one by Hannah. Hannah had two sons, John and William. Hester's son William inherited Portland Manor, while Hannah's William inherited another estate near Edgewater called Hickory Hills. The tract upon which what is now called Tudor Farm sits is part of a larger tract originally owned by Lord Baltimore, who then granted it to one Robert Frankline. From Frankline it passed to Walter Carr, who sold it to Edward Talbott, a contemporary of Wm. Coale I and a Quaker, who established a very large holding called Sudley Farm. Sudley Rd runs roughly parallel to the eastern property line). The core of the Tudor tract was known as Beaver Dams.

In 1688, William Coale the Younger (Hannah's son) bought 227 acres of the Talbott tract. By 1707, this land, jointly owned by William and his brother John had expanded to 254 acres according the 1707 survey. It was noted on this survey map that Wm owned one tract of the lot (114.75 acres) while John owned two tracts (12.5 and 127.5 acres). The 114.75-acre tract was later called Coale's Hills.

William, who lived at Hickory Hills, had 10 children, including a William and a Samuel. At least some of his share of the Beaver Dams property later went to Samuel, as a road running through the property was still noted on area maps as Samuel Coale's Rd. as recently as the mid-20th century - although it also shows up on some maps as "Step Lane" or "Estep Lane," after the family who bought the farm in the early 1900s. The original 1722 cottage (which undoubtedly replaced an earlier log and earthwork structure) was probably built either by John or John's son. It was suggested in the 1976 history of Tudor that an earlier cruder log structure stood near where the cottage is or that the cottage was originally a log structure, later improved. Some corroboration for this comes from the state archaeologist Al who discovered some cobblestones in the side yard that date to the late 1600s.

The Coales, descendants of John and William, still had the property by 1774. As the family had the tradition of naming one (at least one!) son after the father, the subsequent John Coale noted in 1774 and 1778 transactions and on the 1776 and 1778 census as being in the area (St. James Parish) is either the son or grandson of John Coale-by-Hannah. The tract held by John was called Coale's Hills, while a smaller tract was retained by Samuel Coale until 1813. In 1774, John began to sell off

pieces of the property. In 1791, he sold off the core piece that is now Tudor Farm to Edward Hall, descendent of the first Episcopal Rector of the area. The Hall family owned the tract called Bachelor's Choice (now Bachelor's Choice Lane which is on the northern boundary of Tudor) from 1698. They still own the property adjacent to Tudor Farm to the south.

Anne Arundel County. Quakers had a major upheaval in the 1770s, as the issue of slavery became very heated. Some planters abandoned their slave-owning lifestyle and left the area very early - a mass migration was noted in the Maryland archives as happening around 1735. Others held on, then began to try to scale down their tobacco operations to eliminate the need for slaves. In 1777, the Maryland Society of Friends decreed that all Quakers must choose: Give up your slaves or give up your religion. Quite admirably, nearly all the prominent Anne Arundel County. Quakers opted to give up their slaves. Many members of the Coale family, in waves, ended up in Harford County. A few Coales, including Samuel (who sold his holding in 1813) became Episcopalians.

There appears to have been a bitter struggle between Quakers and Episcopalians. Heavy mandatory tobacco "tithes" were levied against all residents, including non-Episcopalians. Landowners could not have any say in any local government or decisions unless they took an Oath of Loyalty - a demand required in large part because Quakers refused by belief to swear oaths. Although Southern Anne Arundel County was founded and dominated for nearly a century by Quakers, the Episcopalian leaders succeeded in helping to drive them out. Worse, their history was virtually eradicated from local Parish histories compiled by the church.

This "eradication" effort seems evident in Tudor Farm. When Edward Hall took the farm over, he transformed the home into a mirror image of his home on Bachelor's Choice. It was Edward or his son Henry (who inherited the property in 1813) who named it after the English King that founded the Episcopal Church (Church of England).

By all accounts, Henry Augustus Hall was somewhat grandiose - in one Maryland history we find him describing himself as "Henry Hall of Tudor," in the style of English nobility. In addition, he began what apparently became a family tradition throughout the 19th century of failing to include the Liber and Folio numbers on deeds. This may be an effort to cover the tracks of the family's actual

history of holdings. In an interview in the late 1980s, Wm. Hall III, the family historian who obtained the history via earlier passed-down tradition, claimed that Tudor was built in 1722 by the Halls, who had been the dominant big landowners of the area in the 17th century on upward. But in fact the big land-owing Halls of the 17th century and first half of the 18th century were John Hall and descendants - a Quaker family that at one point owned over 2,500 acres of Herring Creek Hundred (the early name of South County). In a Quaker history found at the Maryland State Archives, a very sharp distinction was made between the two Hall families, as the Quakers had little use for Rev. Henry Hall or his predecessors.

There is a very funny anecdote about the original Rev. Henry Hall. It seems that upon arriving in Herring Creek to take over his duties as Rector of St. James in 1698, Hall and a confederate sneaked over to a Quaker meeting in West River and hid in the back eavesdropping. He interrupted the service by jumping up and loudly repeating the Nicene Creed (a performance designed to insult the Quakers, who passionately rejected the creed and all other oaths). The Quakers tried to ignore him. However, Hall sneaked to the next meeting and crouched outside the window, eavesdropping. He was caught by Quaker elder Thomas Story, who demanded that Hall and his confederates "Come forth from out of their holes and appear openly like men." When Hall showed himself and was challenged by a Quaker man, Story reports that Hall "only fumed and fretted and threatened the man to trounce him....Several justices of the peace [Episcopals who happened to be visiting the meeting as was commonly done at that time], being ashamed of their priest, slipped out of the meeting as unobservable as might be."

The Henry Hall line did become major landowners in the area in the 1800s and into the mid-1900s. For a time they even owned the tract of land upon which London Towne now sits.

Henry Hall had 10 children, including Francina ("Fannie") Cheston Hall. Francina remained single until about age 27 - "ancient" by the period's standards! Then she married Robert Lemmon, only to have him die barely two years later. Henry Hall died in 1859 and left Tudor - the tract at that time covering about 200 acres - to his son Estep Hall. Estep sold the farm (along with resident slaves) to Fannie who was apparently going to try to make a go of it alone. Estep must have taken after the original Rev. Henry in personality - he not only made his sister take on a hefty mortgage (\$6,000 - a

LOT for the period), he sliced Tudor down to the original roughly 114 acres, probably to save himself the cost of a new survey (the Halls apparently rarely if ever did surveys, in addition to not filing deed folios and libers). Poor Fannie, within two years, with the Civil War playing out and slavery gone, she was forced to sell Tudor to her older brother Edward and his wife. From 1906 - 1931, Tudor was basically passed back and forth among various Esteps (a branch of the Hall clan) and Halls. In 1931, Harriet Estep Bowie and her husband conveyed their interest in the farm to Mary L. and Harriet Estep, two sisters who owned the property until they sold it in 1943 to Pearl and Edward Seal.

The Seal family remained owners of Tudor until the present. The Seals are an old Washington family (14 continuous generations). A maternal grandfather of Edward Seal, John Douglas, was the original designer of the Smithsonian Institution gardens in the 1790s. The Seal's are distantly related to both Robert E. Lee and George Washington. Seal Electric Co., founded by Edward and later run by Pearl and her son Frank, did the wiring for the Washington Monument and the D.C. metro system as well as some wiring for Congressional Building and the West Wing of the White House.

NATURAL WONDER

Tudor Farm is unlike most properties in Anne Arundel County for two reasons: first, it is completely surrounded by mature trees, screened from neighbors and the road and thus remarkably private yet a short drive to both Annapolis or DC. Second, it is not dominated by open, cutover fields. The corn/soy fields (30 acres in all, thereby winning its low-tax designation of rural-agricultural) are interspersed around the property, bordered, in old English tradition, by "hedgerows." The large tracts of property abutting Tudor expand the contiguous woodlands (much of it in conservation or in the process of going into conservation) to several hundred acres.

The rural character of Lothian is vigorously defended by its active civic association and local government, which have sworn to fight the ugly sprawl of development that has ruined so many other areas.

TREES AND PLANTINGS

Tudor Farm is unique throughout Anne Arundel County for its diverse selection of specimen trees. In fact, it has been suggested on more than one occasion that the property become a state arboretum. The following species are found on the property:

White ash, red oak, white oak, willow oak, pin oak, Spanish chestnuts, tulip poplar sweet gum, silver maple, mulberry, persimmon, dogwood, sycamore, cottonwood, magnolia, beech, black walnut, cherry, apple, pear, peach, Japanese maple, hackberry, golden rain tree, silk tree, princess tree, Norway spruce, horse chestnut, black locust, red cedar, white pine, ginkgo.

Other notable plantings include: large boxwoods, a large peony garden, huge hydrangea bed, wisteria, three types of daffodils, crepe myrtle, two vigorously bearing Concord grape arbors, forsythia.

BIRD PARADISE

So far, a total of about 44 bird species have been conclusively identified as living on the property, regular visitors or seasonal visitors:

mockingbird, redwing blackbird, ruby-throated hummingbird, catbird, indigo bunting, cow bird, yellow-billed cuckoo, rusty blackbird, rufous-sided towhee, American goldfinch, barn swallow, night hawk, bittern (in spring), down woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, mourning dove, peregrine falcon (one sighting), bald eagle, red-tailed hawk, osprey (regular flyovers), Cooper's hawk, barn owl, screech owl, barred owl, wild turkey, purple finch, Carolina wren, chipping sparrow, wood thrush, crow, turkey vulture, black vulture, magnolia warbler, pine warbler, cardinal, blue jay, king bird, olive warbler, scarlet tanager, tufted titmouse, Carolina chickadee, nuthatch, blue gray gnatcatcher

OTHER WILDLIFE

Large deer herd - extremely large and healthy animals; red fox, gray fox, rabbit, opossum, gray squirrel, raccoon, newt, salamander, green lizard, black snake, garden snake, box turtle, bullfrogs (in the pond) two species of bat (light gray and dark brown), the world's biggest ground hog (!). Butterfly species abound, as do dragonflies.

LIVING HISTORY

Southern Anne Arundel County and Lothian in particular abounds with families who have been in the area for 200-300 years. Halls, Fords, Chaney's, Birkheads, Morelands, and many others mentioned in the 1707 survey map are still in the area, some on the original holdings.

The small town of Deale, a waterman community on the shores of the Chesapeake, has retained the quiet pace and charm of an earlier time - no big box stores, no sprawl. There is a cozy feeling to the town that seems straight from the mid-1900s rather than the early 21st century!

This information is deemed reliable, but not guaranteed