

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. BA 877

Magi No. 0308775504

DOE yes no

Maryland Historical Trust
State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Rest-Melby House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 2103 Westchester Avenue not for publication

city, town Catonsville vicinity of Councilmanic District 1st congressional district 7th

state Maryland county Baltimore County

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Lawrence G. Martin

street & number 2103 Westchester Avenue telephone no.: 410-854-4371

city, town Baltimore state and zip code MD 21228

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Courts Building liber SM 10931

street & number 401 Bosley Avenue folio 76

city, town Towson state MD 21204

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title MHT Inventory

date May 21, 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records MHT, 100 Community Place

city, town Crownsville state MD 21032

7. Description

Survey No. BA 877

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Rest-Melby house is a structure knit together in the 1930s from two residences and a stable that were originally unattached. The house has grown from its original vernacular rural, one-story, three-bay stone starter house by the addition of a late Victorian L-shaped farm house of frame and shingle, all spliced together with traditional materials. A photo published in the *Sun Magazine* in 1968 showed the improvements when they were separate buildings. Those photos presumably were taken before Andrew E. Melby started his alteration program in 1934. The main house in those photographs was a two-story, frame and shingle, L-shaped, gable roofed farm house, while the stable was a rugged stone building with a louvered cupola. (1) The stonework was typical of the Catonsville and Oella areas where local stonemasons assembled Frederick Road granite in a neighborhood style, examples of which can still be seen in Mount Gilboa AME Church and Old Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church, or in photos of such extinct buildings as the Mount de Sales stable and old Saint Agnes Church.

The chief fascination of this house is its rambling appearance of obviously old elements forming a cluster. It is easily noticed at the corner of two roads. The stone, one-story starter house is well set back from Rockwell Avenue just as the house was shown in the old county atlases. The complexity of the layout is easier to visualize from photographs than from a verbal description. The main things to note are that the stone starter house was been itself expanded in width and also extended at the back from a basic structure that might have been appropriate to the nearby mill town: the original house was almost a stone version of a cabin, somewhat like the Martin Fugate House at My Lady's Manor, the main difference being that the Rest-Melby house was built almost a century after the example on the Manor. The one-story stable was given a frame upper story by Mr. Melby.

The construction of several family houses on small adjoining tracts of land seems to be a pre-suburban or non-suburban phenomenon; possibly the first buyers of the 5-1/2 acre lots were immigrants who hoped to raise most of their own food in a somewhat isolated area where the majority of the neighbors were concentrated in the company town housing at Oella. We tend to believe that John Guerling was the builder of the first residence on this tract in or after 1857; it is conceivable that Guerling built in a sturdy German style, or had one of the Catonsville school of stonemasons do it for him. Failing that, the John Rest who was owner starting in 1879, was in the 1880 census as a stonemason.

NOTES:

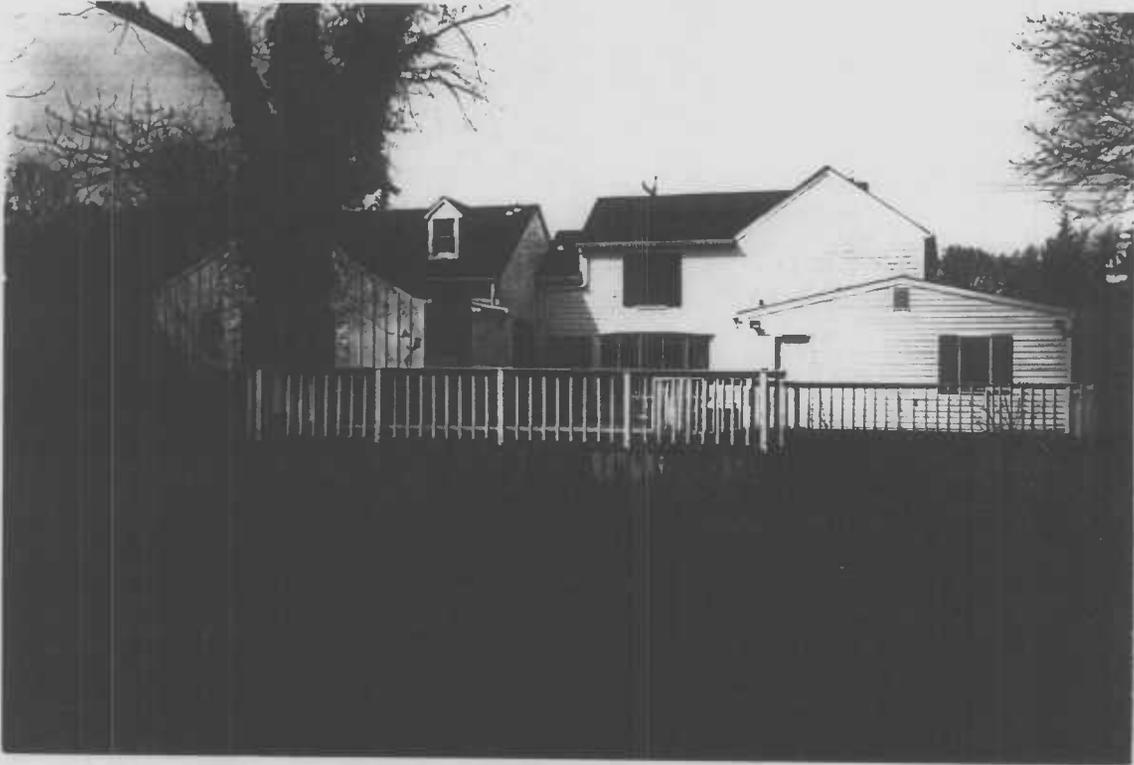
1. "It Once Rented for \$4 A Week," *Sunday Sun Magazine*, January 28, 1968.

Maryland Historical Trust/
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

BA 877
MHT Inventory No.

name of property: Rest-Melby House

Section number 7 Page 2



m a r g i n

m a r g i n

8. Significance

Survey No. BA 877

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates About 1857 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or
Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The plain, rambling, country house at Westchester Avenue and Rockwell Avenue was clearly shown in the 1876 and 1877 Hopkins atlases but its owner was not named. In 1877, Rockwell Avenue was in place, a nameless, straight road coming off Old Frederick Road and running west. East of the present Rest-Melby house were two structures also shown without their owners' names in the 1877 atlas. Those houses were on lots that looked as if like they had been carved out of Colonel William Devere's Windsor Farm. The two houses were on suburban-sized parcels. Their southern property lines ran at a unique slant and can still be found on the tax maps (in year 2001). The original 5-1/2 acre lot that included the present-day Martin house was created in 1857 when Frederick Hahn sold it to John Guerling for a mere \$292. (1) In 1866, John Guerling sold to John Denhard for \$1500. (2) Then Denhard sold in 1871 to John Fuller, who turned the property over to Peter Baer, Mr. Baer paying \$1400 for the same 5-1/2 acres. (3) Peter Baer sold in 1877 to Gerhard Butke, but the price had plummeted to \$625. (4) Certainly, the buyers of this lot wanted it for residential purposes and John Guerling was conceivably the first owner-occupant.

In 1879, Butke and his wife Anna sold the property to John Rest for \$625; the Butkes were listed in the deed as residents of Howard County, while Rest was a resident of Baltimore County. (5) 1879 deed to the Rest House lot reveals that it bordered Cornelius Rest's house on the east; when we look for Cornelius Rest as a buyer of land in the deed index, it turns out that he bought 5-1/2 acres from Frederick Hahn on April 8, 1859 and paid \$292 for it. The Cornelius Rest lot included use of a private road from Hahn's property to the Old Frederick Road. Thus, Rockwell Avenue started out as Hahn's private road, and Hahn probably did not depend on Westchester Avenue (6) Most likely, the house was built between 1857 and 1875.

In 1877, Westchester Avenue was shown as a trace road disappearing into F. Hahn's estate called "Mt. Gilboa Soapstone Orchard" on the Hopkins atlas map. Hahn's estate was shown as 66 acres. Hahn charged Guerling the same \$292.50 price he had charged Cornelius Rest for the adjoining parcel. Possibly, the extension of

Maryland Historical Trust/
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

BA 877
MHT Inventory No.

name of property: Rest Melby House

Section number 8 Page 2

Westchester Avenue left this ground on the opposite side of the road from Hahn's main holdings. The overall residential tract had been acquired by Hahn in 1848 from John Canby and wife (7) The 1850 map of the county and city by J. C. Sidney and P. J. Browne shows a Horn [sic] house in this vicinity, possibly a clerical error for "Hahn." The map failed to show Horn's first name. Of course, the Rest family houses had not yet been built.

The index to the census records of 1860 and 1870 do not show either John Guerling or Peter Baer, but the 1880 census of Election District 1 shows that Justinea Rest was head of household at age 63. Her son John was 26, a stonemason by trade, and was born in Prussia, as was his mother. A brother, Louis A. Rest was listed as 22 years old, a farmer, his place of birth illegible. The nearest neighbor was Julia Hahn, age 56, also a native of Prussia. (8)

The 1898 Bromley atlas shows present Rockwell Avenue as Hahn Lane. Westchester Avenue was still a dotted line indicating a dirt road or access road to an estate (Plate 6). The present Rest-Melby House was then owned by John Rest, while the house to the east belonged to Louis Rest. The 1915 Bromley atlas showed that Westchester Avenue had been paved or upgraded and moved slightly eastward to follow the western boundary of the John Rest Lot. The lot to the east was again shown as that of Louis Rest. By 1915, the Hahn Lane had been renamed Rockwell Avenue (Plate 8).

At any rate, neither the Hahn tract nor the Rest parcel had ever belonged to the Union Manufacturing Company, which developed the mill town of Oella, starting in 1808. The land grant name here was "Mount Gilboa," a biblical place name that suggested itself as a name for the church that was built at the corner of Westchester and Oella Avenues in 1859-1860.

Catonsville and Oella are unique in that no tax lists survive covering the years 1823, 1833, and 1841, years when much development of these rural spaces was underway.

John A. Rest died October 17, 1929, "at his home in Oella." His classified obituary noted that his wife was Mary A. Rest. This is presumably the same John Rest who appeared without middle initial in the 1880 census. Rest's funeral took place from Saint Paul's Catholic Church in Ellicott City. Mrs. Rest was given the house for her natural life under John A. Rest's will. (9) A large number of family heirs engaged in a lawsuit in which C. Ferdinand Sybert was appointed trustee to sell the property. The case was entitled Emanuel L. and Esther M. Rest vs. Louis P. Rest. Sybert sold the place to Andrew E. and Dorothy Melby at auction on July 9, 1934 on July 9, 1934, for \$2500. (10) Sybert advertised the place in the *Jeffersonian* on August 17, 1934, and mentioned an 8-room dwelling and vineyard. (11) The Melbys got title by deed to the property on July 9, 1936.

Maryland Historical Trust/
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

BA 877
MHT Inventory No.

name of property: Rest-Melby House

Section number 8 Page 3

Two newspaper feature stories describe how Andrew Melby and Dorothy Curtis Melby started in 1934 with a small house and some nearby outbuildings and linked the separate elements into a rambling residence, with the cupola-topped stable turning into a garage and hobby shop. Mr. Melby was the department head of Industrial Arts at Baltimore City College, while Mrs. Melby was a marriage counselor at the Children's Aid and Family Services. The couple opened their home on a Christmas tour written up in the Catonsville paper in 1965. The Melbys had items of Americana and decorations and lamps from trips to Europe, including a deacon's bench that traced back to John Ford of Ford's Theatre in Baltimore, and farther back to the White House in Grover Cleveland's time. A wrought iron candelabrum made in Lillehammer, Norway, was installed in 1964. The living room fireplace was the work of Mr. Melby himself. (12)

The *Sunday Sun Magazine* featured the house in 1968, with a photo spread by A. Aubrey Bodine. This article showed the "before" condition when the hobby shop was still a vernacular stone stable with a louvered cupola. This article spoke of the long project of restoration and adaptive reuse, "Thirty-two years ago the bought a run-down farm house and they have spent the intervening years transforming it into a home of charm and warmth." (13) This article credited Andrew Melby with putting in two fireplaces and a floor of random width board:

Is the farmhouse finally the way the Melbys want it?" "Not Quite," says Mrs. Melby. "There are always more projects. We have French doors leading to the garden, and no steps yet, and then . . .But It's been a wonderful experience."

Mrs. Melby died at age 83 in Catonsville on August 31, 1986. She had been able to attend the 60th reunion of her class at Denison College in Granville, Ohio. (14) Mr. Melby died on August 8, 1988, at age 83 after moving to Broadmead. (15)

NOTE: The nearby Rest Avenue is apparently connected with the same family. An obituary of John W. Rest, age 71, appeared in the *Sun*, December 26, 1959. His address was 621 Rest Avenue and his funeral was to take place from Saint Paul's R. C. Church, Ellicott City. The fact that Rest Avenue passes the Union Manufacturing Company's cemetery has always aroused curiosity but a connection with a branch of the Rest family seems more likely.

NOTES:

1. Baltimore County Deeds, GHC 21:96.
2. Baltimore County Deeds, JHL 48:506.

**Maryland Historical Trust/
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

BA 877
MHT Inventory No.

name of property: Rest-Melby House

Section number 8 Page 4

3. Baltimore County Deeds, EHA 69:198.
4. Baltimore County Deeds, JB 102:249.
5. Baltimore County Deeds, JB 110:386.
6. Baltimore County Deeds, GHC 25:374)
7. Baltimore City Deeds, AWB 403:219, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
8. U. S. Census, Maryland, 1880, District 1, Baltimore County, p. D-56.
9. Baltimore *Sun*, October 18, 1929, classified obituary
10. Baltimore County Deeds, CWB JR., 977:177. Also Baltimore County Wills, Liber 28:51. Judicial Records, CWB JR. 417:165, Rest vs. Rest, filed January 24, 1934.
11. *Jeffersonian*, August 17, 1934.
12. "The Christmas House of Mr. And Mrs. Andrew Melby, Rockwell and Westchester Avenues," Catonsville *Herald-Argus*, December 29, 1965.
13. "It Once Rented for \$4 A Week," *Sun Magazine*, January 28, 1968.
14. "Dorothy Curtis Melby," undated clipping from *Catonvsille Times*. Also, classified obituary, Baltimore *Sun*, on or after August 12, 1986.
15. "Andrew E. Melby," obituary, Baltimore *Sun*, after August 8, 1988. Also, classified obituary, Baltimore *Sun*, after August 8, 1988.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. BA 877

"It Once Rented for \$4 A Week," Sun Magazine, January 28, 1968.

"The Christmas House of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Melby, Rockwell and Westchester Avenues," Catonsville Herald-Argus, December 29, 1965.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.9 acres

Quadrangle name Ellicott City, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Zone	Easting	Northing	

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Zone	Easting	Northing	

C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

Rectangular parcel at SE corner of Westchester and Rockwell Avenues. See Tax Map 100, Grid 4, Parcel P590. Plat Book 56:37, Lot 3A.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	None	code	county	code
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state	None	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title John McGrain, County Historian

organization Office of Planning

date May 21, 2001

street & number 401 Bosley Avenue

telephone 410-887-3495

city or town Towson MD

state MD 21204

