

The My Lady's Manor Races 1909-2009

By Margaret Worrall

(Excerpt)

Racing horses over the My Lady's Manor countryside is hardly something that suddenly popped up 100 years ago. From the earliest times of Colonial settlement in the newly discovered mid-Atlantic territory, the land and the horse formed much of not only the livelihood, but also the social life of the adventurous newcomers.

The first of My Lady's Manor grantees made the arduous Atlantic voyage at the invitation of Thomas Brerewood the Elder, who arrived to claim his Maryland legacy in 1732. Brerewood held 10,000 acres, known variously as "My Lady's Manor" and "Lord Baltimore's Guift", which was a portion of the large Grant of Maryland, made to the Calverts by King Charles I of England in the early 1600s. The land was then patented in 1713 from Charles Calvert, third Lord Baltimore, second Lord Proprietary of the Province of Maryland, to Margaret, Lady Baltimore, Baroness of Baltimore.

"In time," stated an article by Mary B.M. Mitchell in the *Federation News*, April 1937, "My Lady's Manor became settled by the old well-known Maryland families of Howards, Emorys, Pearces, Cockeys, Hutchins, Holmes, Sparks, Bacons, Bosleys, Curtis and Slades."

These families indeed first arrived by ship and established Joppa as the center for court days, tobacco markets, horse racing, and public hangings. Later, as they acquired more land north along the Little Gunpowder, St. James Episcopal Church was built in the 1750s on land given by the Slades, with the buildings constructed with contributions from the residents. The church remains the center of the My Lady's Manor community today.

Local historians Robert Nelson Turner and Elmore Hutchins summed up this special world as follows, "It is hard to conceive that there could be in America many more spots like My Lady's Manor. Until the 1920s, when the first of the old family homes and estates were sold to outsiders, it was a province unto itself, more feudal by far than 20th century England. It was a sportsman's paradise. Within its bounds flourished fox hunting, racing, gunning and cockfighting.....In a slightly different, slightly less communal fashion, the sports continue to flourish."

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Ladew Topiary Gardens
3535 Jarrettsville Pike, Monkton, Maryland 21111
(410) 557-9570