

12406 SKYLARK LANE (HOUSE)  
(The Country Clubber)  
(The Framingham)  
Belair at Bowie, Maryland  
Bowie  
Prince George's County  
Maryland

HABS MD-1271  
*MD-1271*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### 12406 SKYLARK LANE (HOUSE) (The Country Clubber) (The Framingham)

HABS No. MD-1271

**NOTE:** Please see the following historical reports for additional information about the history of Belair at Bowie, Maryland:

Belair at Bowie, Maryland (overview)	HABS No. MD-1253
12418 Stonehaven Lane (The Cape Cod)	HABS No. MD-1254
12420 Stonehaven Lane (The Cape Cod)	HABS No. MD-1255
12408 Stonehaven Lane (The Rancher)	HABS No. MD-1257
12500 Swirl Lane (The Colonial, 4 bedroom)	HABS No. MD-1260
12100 Tulip Grove Drive (The Rancher)	HABS No. MD-1263
12400 Shadow Lane (The Colonial, 3 bedroom)	HABS No. MD-1264
Belair Bath & Tennis Club	HABS No. MD-1265
12401 Sussex Lane (The Manor House)	HABS No. MD-1267
12405 Sussex Lane (The Rancher)	HABS No. MD-1269
12413 Salem Lane (The Country Clubber)	HABS No. MD-1270

**Location:** 12406 Skylark Lane, "Belair at Bowie, Maryland," Bowie, Prince Georges County, Maryland.

**Significance:** The house at 12406 Skylark Lane is a representative example of The Country Clubber, the largest and most expensive one put into production at Belair, with the traditional façade option. While introduced as a new luxury model in 1960, a series of comparatively luxe Country Clubbers had been used in various Levitt and Sons developments since 1949. The Country Clubber was available in either the traditional or modern variation throughout the first two completed sections at Belair (Somerset and Buckingham, 1960-62). After these sections, Levitt and Sons ceased mixing Country Clubbers with the other house models and abandoned it altogether at Belair in 1965 with the completion of the all-Country Clubber Long Ridge section. While its use at Belair was curtailed, The Framingham, as the model was renamed in 1964, commonly appeared in the more expensive Levitt and Sons communities built through the 1960s.

**Historian:** James A. Jacobs, HABS

**Description:** The house at 12406 is a representative example of The Country Clubber model at Belair. Promotional literature from 1962 for the development described this model as "a luxurious house, reflecting the best of American country colonial design,

adapted for modern gracious living.”<sup>1</sup> The accompanying photograph depicts the Country Clubber with its “traditional” exterior elevation, which was the variation almost universally used in publications about the model. One-and-one-half stories at the front, The Country Clubber is, essentially, an enlarged Cape Cod visually defined by a broad sweep of roof, which extends out over the entry and a bay window and is carried on gently arched wooden beams springing between square posts. The setback of the garage wing and the cross-gabled, one-story extension on the other side of the façade provide relief for the expanse of roof. What appears to be a front porch on The Country Clubber was originally just a suggestion of a porch with posts on concrete bases set directly on the ground; the covered area at number 12406 has been partially paved near the front door. The front wall under the “porch” is still sheathed in sandstone; however, the wood and asbestos shingles once used elsewhere on the exterior have been replaced with horizontal siding.

Both the traditional and modern versions of The Country Clubber rise to a full two stories at the rear, but are designed with a pent eave between the first and second stories to make the upper portion appear as if it is a broad dormer. Because of the setback at the front, the back wall of the garage wing is flush with the rear wall of the family room, making both appear as an even larger, one-story mass. The two Country Clubber types do not vary in any significant way in size or floor plan.

**History:** The Country Clubber was the largest, most amenity-filled dwelling that went into production at Belair. Although heralded as a new luxury model among the 1961 model offerings, The Country Clubber was the latest iteration of a decade-old concept and model. In 1949, the company created an up-market version of Levittown’s Rancher for a new development, Country Club Estates, located nearby in Roslyn, New York, and Levitt and Sons included sections of similar Country Clubber models in Levittown, Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup> The company did not initially conceptualize Levittown, New Jersey, with a such a model, most likely because the project was conceptually different from what came before as the firm abandoned single-model neighborhoods for ones mingling three different types within sections. Furthermore, the two-story House C at New Jersey was about the same size as Pennsylvania’s Country Clubber. Still, after only two years of construction in the new Levittown and on the eve of the launch of Belair, Levitt and Sons reintroduced a Country Clubber to their product line.

Whether adhering to a claimed “master plan” for the development of the third Levittown or representing a return to an earlier market and development strategy, in March 1960, Levitt and Sons made public the “largest in a series of Country Clubber designs built...at

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<sup>1</sup> Levitt and Sons, Inc., “Belair at Bowie, Maryland,” 1962, for information about included features and amenities. In author’s collection.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara M. Kelly, *Expanding the American Dream: Building and Rebuilding Levittown* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 79, for “Country Club Estates,” and “New Towns: Levittown Will Grow from Master Blocks, Have Green Belts,” *Architectural Forum* 95 (Nov. 1951): 138, for Pennsylvania.

various locations since the war.”<sup>3</sup> As with its predecessors in Levittown, Pennsylvania, the new model—touted as “set[ting] new standards for size, completeness, comfort and luxury”—would be constructed in a separate section.<sup>4</sup> It is not known whether Levitt and Sons had plans for another luxury model at this time; however, at the end of August, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that “a new Country Clubber priced at \$20,990 went on display last week at Levittown, N. J.”<sup>5</sup> The Cape Cod form of this second, less expensive Country Clubber more clearly related to its 1950s predecessors bearing the same name. The wording of the article suggests that the two models might have still been generally known as the “\$25,000 Country Clubber” and the “\$20,990 Country Clubber;” yet, difficulties in successfully marketing two distinct models using one name was surely already evident to Levitt and Sons and in the process of being remedied. One month later, on the eve of the opening of Belair, the more expensive of the two had become the “Manor model,” or, The Manor House while the modified Cape Cod remained The Country Clubber.<sup>6</sup>

Levitt and Sons had discarded the mildly contemporary elevations used at Levittown, Pennsylvania, for something more traditional when planning their New Jersey venture, not just because of changing fashion, but because the company believed that such imagery would draw a more affluent clientele.<sup>7</sup> For the 1961 line, staff architects adhered to a palette of neo-traditional street elevations with only one exception: a “modern” option among the four Country Clubber facade variations. That this option was available only for one of their luxury models suggests that while Levitt and Sons may have believed, generally, that traditional architectural references would appeal to more comfortably-off buyers, it still felt that “modern” design could stimulate sales among the more affluent of this segment of the market. Ultimately, the option did not prove popular enough at Belair for its continuance beyond completion of the first two sections, perhaps a reflection of the architectural conservatism that remained dominant in the national capital region throughout the postwar period.

Behind all of the façade variations, the spacious Country Clubber uniformly incorporated many of the latest planning trends for domestic space and was fully equipped with a full range of appliances and mechanical systems. Although technically a Cape Cod, unlike most postwar examples of the form, this one sprawled across its lot and—rising to a full

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<sup>3</sup> “Levittown Unveils Country Club Model Priced at \$25,000,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* 13 Mar. 1960, sec. W: 19.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> “Levitt Opens \$20,990 Model Country Clubber,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* 28 Aug. 1960, sec. W: 17.

<sup>6</sup> “Levitt Ready to Unveil His Belair,” *The Washington Post* 1 Oct. 1960, sec. B: 1, for “Manor model.”

<sup>7</sup> Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (1967) (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 11.

two stories at the rear (although designed with a pent eave to appear as if it were a broad dormer)—enclosed 2,170 square feet of living space (fig. 1). A February 1962 feature in *American Home* observed that The Country Clubber “has everything a builder’s house should have, and even many desirable features that some custom houses do not have.”<sup>8</sup> The house provided a large entry foyer, living room with a fireplace, formal dining room, two bedrooms, two full bathrooms, a kitchen and adjacent family room, separate laundry room, and two-car garage on the first floor, and two bedrooms, a full bath, and two large storage rooms on the second. The laundry area contained a washing machine and matching clothes dryer; the U-shaped kitchen came equipped with a surface range, a separate, built-in oven unit, a refrigerator, a dish washer, an in-sink garbage disposer; and, most notably, the house featured “year-round” central air conditioning—a luxury at the time expected only in the most expensive of new houses.<sup>9</sup>

The Country Clubber was not only well-equipped, its numerous, spacious rooms were arranged in a way that reflected many of the latest planning concepts that middle-class buyers more and more expected in new houses. As with the all of the models at Belair, The Country Clubber provided for casual dining, in this case through the inclusion of a family room open to, but screened from the kitchen work area by a breakfast bar. The house also included such desirable features as a front door that did not open directly into the living room, a clearly-defined “formal” dining room, and multiple bathrooms. In some ways, The Country Clubber’s plan and circulation routes did not reflect emerging ideas about living as much as those used for the The Rancher and The Colonial. The prominence of the “formal” living and dining rooms in The Country Clubber, and the somewhat isolated location of the kitchen and adjacent family room, points to the type of lifestyle that Levitt and Sons’s believed their upper-end buyers would pursue in the house. The model’s four bedrooms, two on each floor, were reasonably well removed from activity in the rest of the house and notably served by three full bathrooms, one of which was an en suite in the first-floor master bedroom.

The Country Clubber initially caught the attention of the popular and trade press, being heralded as a “Good Idea House” by *House & Home* in 1960, and “Best for the Money” by *American Home* in 1961 on the basis of “good design, efficiency, workmanship, and materials.”<sup>10</sup> Despite this publicity, sales of the Country Clubber lagged behind the other models in the first sections of Belair. Levitt and Sons seems to have pushed too far the desire for variety in the streetscape and in creating the broadest consumer base possible before finding that people purchasing a \$23,000 house did not necessarily want to live next to one costing \$15,000.

With the completion of the first two sections of Belair, the company returned to one of their earlier development approaches—exclusive sections composed of the most

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<sup>8</sup> “Here’s Good Suburban Living at Low Cost,” *American Home* 65 (Feb. 1962): 25.

<sup>9</sup> Levitt and Sons, Inc., “Belair at Bowie, Maryland,” 1962.

<sup>10</sup> “Good Ideas in Multi-level Planning,” *House & Home* 18 (Nov. 1960): 110-111; “Levitt Home Wins Magazine Award,” *The Washington Post* 9 Dec. 1961, sec. B: 14.

expensive models—temporarily discarded when planning the first sections of Levittown, New Jersey. When the new models were introduced in the autumn 1960, the company announced that The Country Clubber and The Manor House would be available in Levittown in their own, isolated new section called Windsor Park.<sup>11</sup> Unlike Belair, there appears to have been no attempt to mix them with the other models. The elimination of Country Clubbers from the mix of models at Belair did not yet result in their complete disappearance in the development. In 1963, Levitt and Sons opened sales and construction for the new Long Ridge section, composed entirely of Country Clubbers in a location secluded from the rest of the subdivision. In June 1964, Long Ridge was described in *The Washington Star Sunday Magazine* as being “reserved for the exclusive set” and located “in a special area,” while also noting, somewhat ironically, that the section was “the only place where two homes of the same type will be found next to each other.”<sup>12</sup> The obvious exclusivity generated such a “tremendous response” in sales that they increased the section’s final size from forty-five to sixty houses.<sup>13</sup> Long Ridge was the last section in Belair having Country Clubbers, renamed The Framingham in 1964, that were available with the original four bedrooms or as an expanded version having a fifth bedroom created from one of the second-floor storage rooms.<sup>14</sup> Although its use was limited within Belair, The Framingham became a Levitt favorite and was often used in new developments throughout the 1960s.

**Works Consulted:**

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<sup>11</sup> “Levitt Plans Delivery of \$20,900-\$25,000 Models in February,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* 4 Dec. 1960, sec. W: 15. While sales appear to have been brisk in comparatively luxe Windsor Park, Levitt and Sons reconceived and further refined the development of this section, remarketing it as Country Club Ridge beginning in 1965. The section was laid-out around the golf course of the Willingboro Country Club and along Rancocas Creek. Among the four spacious models initially offered there was The Framingham, a five-bedroom version of the Country Clubber. The streets of Windsor Park were fully integrated into the new development, but they retained their “W” names rather than taking on new “C” names as in the rest of Country Club Ridge.

<sup>12</sup> Hugh Wells, “Bowie-Belair: Booming Satellite City,” *The Washington Star Sunday Magazine* 14 Jun. 1964: 5. Although rare, there are actually other instances in Belair where two of the same model are located side-by-side.

<sup>13</sup> “Cape Cod, Rancher Popular at Belair,” *The Washington Post* 14 Sep. 1963, sec. D: 16.

<sup>14</sup> “Levitt Enlarges an Award-Winner,” *The Washington Post* 12 Sep. 1964, sec. D: 14.

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Magazine 14 Jun. 1964: 4-6+.

**Project Information:**

The project was sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the National Park Service. Support was provided by Stephen E. Patrick, Director of Museums, City of Bowie. The documentation of Belair at Bowie, Maryland, was undertaken by HABS, Richard O'Connor, Acting Chief, Heritage Documentation Programs; under the direction of Catherine C. Lavoie, Acting Chief, HABS. The project leader was HABS historian James A. Jacobs. The documentation was produced in 2006-08, written history by HABS historian James A. Jacobs and large-format photography by HABS photographer James Rosenthal.

**APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIONS**

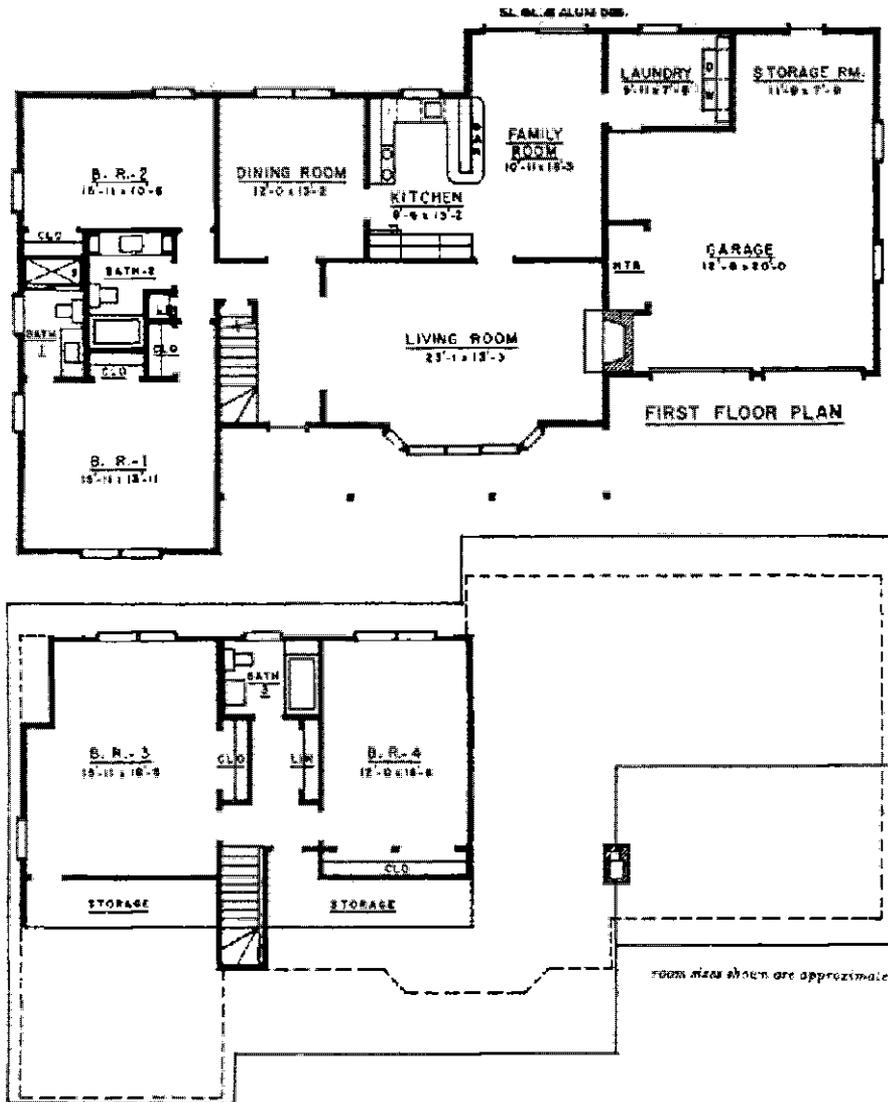


Fig. 1. The Country Clubber model, floor plans, 1964. Author's collection.