

**ADDENDUM TO:**

BALTIMORE HOUSE (Riverdale)  
(Calvert Mansion)  
(de Stier, Baron, House)  
4811 Riverdale Road  
Riverdale  
Prince George's County  
Maryland

HABS NO. MD-655

HABS  
MD  
17-RIV,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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ADDEDUM TO: BALTIMORE HOUSE  
(Riversdale, Calvert Mansion, Baron de Stier House)

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Location: 4811 Riverdale Road, Riverdale, Prince George's County, Maryland

Significance: Originally built in 1801, Riversdale was planned by Henri Joseph the Baron de Stier and his son-in-law George Calvert, a descendant of the Lords Baltimore. It was built to resemble de Stier's Belgium home. Architecturally, it is important for its role as one of the best late Georgian, five part houses in Maryland.

Description: Riversdale is a large scale late Georgian mansion with a Federal interior. The front and rear facade of the central block is divided into three nearly equal sections, the center is recessed to relieve the otherwise massive surfaces. A Doric portico gives access to the central door with its flanking windows. Three windows above the door complete the recessed plane. The surfaces to the right and left of the portico contain two windows on each story slightly wider than the central windows. The first floor windows are nine-over-nine light sash; the second story windows are six-over-nine light sash. The south portico has three floor-length arched windows with flanking pilasters. During the twentieth century, the entire brick house, including its water table and beltcourse was stuccoed over. A hipped roof with a 'kick' at the eaves covers the main block. Its cornice has large mutule-like modillion blocks. Flanking the late nineteenth century cupola are two small chimneys, the east chimney being purely decorative. On the extreme east and west sides of the main block are deep narrow chimney stacks which service the fireplaces in the hyphen as well as those in the main block.

The first floor plan is composed of three nearly equal rooms on the south and three smaller rectangular rooms on the north, the north rooms containing stair hall, entrance hall, and a service area with a secondary stair.

The entrance hall opens into a square drawing room which overlooks the former terraces. On each side are rooms of nearly equal size with less elaborate decoration than the drawing room. The central drawing room has three shallow arched panels on each wall. The semi-circular arches are flanked by Ionic pilasters with Adamesque garlands applied within the recessed panels of the pilasters. The arches of the south wall have triple hung windows reaching to the floor. Double mahogany doors occupy the central arches on the other three sides of the room. The plaster cornice is composed of a fascia with grapevine motif, and courses of acanthus leaves, carved modillions and egg-and-dart molding. The central ceiling medallion repeats the same detail found in the cornice. The plaster decoration of the two flanking rooms is less elaborate, but

the cornice and medallion repeats the same detail found in the cornice. The plaster decoration of the two flanking rooms is less elaborate, but the cornice and medallion detail is correlated as in the drawing room. The two latter rooms possess marble mantels around the fireplaces.

The second floor is divided into five chambers with three small dressing rooms. The south central bed chamber has an unusual feature in its east wall, an alcove extending from floor to ceiling. All of the second-story rooms have simple architectural treatment and lack the elaborate plaster decoration of the first story. Plain plaster cornices exist in each of the rooms as well as simple door and window trim and marble mantels.

The date of the construction of the wings has been estimated as ca. 1830s, and judging from the profile of the door trim and plaster cornice, as well as an inventory of 1838, there seems little doubt as to the attribution. Both wings contain one huge room each, in addition to a kitchen on the east and hall on the west. Their ceilings reach 18-1/2' in height but are the product of the twentieth century remodeling of two-story wings. Connected to the east wing by a covered passage stands the nineteenth century kitchen.

History: Riversdale was built in 1801 by Henri Joseph the Baron de Stier to resemble his Belgian home, Chateau du Mick. Only the central portion was built by de Stier, the hyphens and wings being added ca. 1830 by his son-in law, George Calvert. The federal interior is of such high quality as to support the local tradition that attributes the design to William Thornton, architect of the Capitol. However, the available information on Thornton does not confirm this.

In 1794 de Stier immigrated to the United States from Belgium which the French army had occupied. He lived in Anne Arundel County and in the Brice House in Annapolis immediately before building Riversdale. In 1799 de Stier's daughter married George Calvert, a descendant of the Lords Baltimore. Four years later de Stier decided to return to Europe leaving his Prince George's County residence with his daughter and son-in-law.

The Calvert's son, Charles Benedict Calvert succeeded his father as master of Riversdale. He devoted his life to agriculture through his supervision of this 2000 acre farm and through county, state, and national agricultural societies. His efforts through the United States Agricultural Society were responsible for the creation of the Department of Agriculture (1853). Calvert also donated the land for, and helped to found the Maryland Agricultural College (University of Maryland).

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Henry Clay often visited Calvert at Riversdale staying in the northeast bedroom. Tradition maintains that he wrote a draft for the compromise of 1850 while in that room.

The house remained in the Calvert family through the 1880's. It had a series of owners until 1949 when the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission purchased the property for its Prince George's County Headquarters. Through the ongoing restoration efforts, the house is being returned to its former splendor.

Sources: Borne, Michael and Nancy Miller. "National Register Nomination: Riversdale," 1972. History Division, National Park Service.

Historian: Terra Klugh, HABS Historian, 1995.

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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C St. NW  
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