

History of Ravenscliff and Roundhill

The Ravenscliff mansion and surrounding property has a splendid history, well in keeping with other prestigious Main Line estates. William T. Wright, a railroad entrepreneur, acquired the land in the 1880's as the site for his exquisitely furnished baronial country English mansion. This extraordinary mansion is still occupied atop Ravenscliff's rolling hill, as a reminder of the gracious Victorian life which has all but vanished today. The 126 acres making up the site included a working farm, pastures and orchards. At the foot of the hill was a farmhouse dating from the 1780s. Across Darby-Paoli Road to the south in the area now called "Roundhill" were the pastures and orchards.

In 1934, the senior Mr. Wright presented Ravenscliff as a wedding gift to his son, William Coxe Wright, upon his marriage to Charlotte Dorrance, heiress to the Campbell Soup fortune. In 1956, following William's death, Mrs. Charlotte Dorrance Wright took the bold and marvelous step of creating the "Duck Ponds". She had installed a series of dams to form the ponds on Julip Run, creating the lovely vista we enjoy today. Upon her death in the late 1970's, the Ravenscliff property (including the Roundhill area) was sold to the developers of the Ravenscliff-Roundhill residential communities

The developers, in reaching agreement with Radnor Township as to the nature of the site, established the concept of retaining the area around the Duck Ponds as common open space for the enjoyment and use by the owners of property in Ravenscliff and Roundhill. A total of 104 residential lots were laid out, three around the mansion, 58 in Ravenscliff, 32 in Roundhill, four off St. Davids Road, two off Church Road, three off S. Valley Forge Road and two off Darby-Paoli Road over a bridge crossing Julip Run. Two of the latter lots contain portions of the original farmhouses, one at 25 S. Valley Forge Road, built about 1782; and one at 425 Darby-Paoli Road built about 1783. Each of the 104 home lot owners has a 104th undivided interest in the common open spaces.