

"TERRACE HILL"

The great brick house built by John L. Reifsnider, Sr., in 1873 is probably the largest, and certainly the most impressive house in the City; that it is still able to impress by size and location (it is on a small hill overlooking the City) is a testament to its architect and builder, especially when one sees how much plainer the house is today than it was originally. Basically the house today consists of two 2½ story cubes whose solidness is broken by several steeply pitched gables and by a chateau-like steep roof ("chateau" in the style of W. M. Hunt.) The house's dozens of rooms remained in the family until taken over by Western Maryland College in the 1920's. Photographs and drawings of "Terrace Hill" made before its academic career began, reveal an attempt to create a villa suburbana on the west of Westminster. Reifsnider constructed on his 4½ acre lot, an elaborate compound of greenhouses, 5 story windmill, and, of course fine stables. The lot was handsomely landscaped and had a variety of lawn ornaments: cast iron animals, and an iron and stone 3-tiered fountain.

The builder of the house, John Lawrence Reifsnider, Sr., was born in Westminster in 1836 of Germanic stock that emigrated from the Palatinate to Philadelphia around 1700. His ancestors moved, in a manner typical of a large segment of Westminster's population, westwards from Philadelphia through southern Pennsylvania arriving in Carroll County around 1800. Reifsnider made a fortune in the wholesale and retail trade, a fortune that was increased by his son John L. Reifsnider, Jr. (who inherited "Terrace Hill") as he founded and directed the Smith and Reifsnider Lumber Company, an organization that still thrives today.

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

"Terrace Hill"

AND/OR COMMON

Carroll Hall, (Part of Western Maryland College)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

(MD 32)
West Main Street, & Uniontown Road

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

___ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Carroll

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Western Maryland College

Telephone #: 848-7000

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

___ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21157

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Carroll County Office Building

Liber #: 440

Folio #: 105

STREET & NUMBER

Center Street

CITY, TOWN

Westminster

STATE

Maryland

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE		CHECK ONE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED	DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED			
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED				

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The great brick house built by John L. Reifsnider, Sr. in 1873 is probably the largest, and certainly the most impressive, house in the City; that it is still able to impress by size and location is a testament to its architect and builder, especially when one sees how much plainer the house is today than it was originally. Basically, the house today consists of two 2½-story cubes whose solidness is broken by several steeply-pitched gables. The principal (eastern) cube measures about 40' x 40' x 40'. Its eastern (entrance) facade is three bays wide above a high course fieldstone foundation. The center of this facade is defined by the remains of a porch that once covered the facade, the entrance doors, and the lower section of a large square tower. The entrance doors are half-glass, half-wood double doors with elaborately cast brass hardware. They are located beneath a two-door, arched transom which is also double. The porch is hipped roofed, and is supported by four, finely-turned, white-painted, wood columns; elaborate tracery forms a segmental arch on each of the three exposed sides. The tower has one double-hung sash window on its east facade; the window has two over two panes, white wooden sills and a brick Tudor arch. The tower was originally topped by what appears to have been (judging from old photographs) a 20' obelisk. However, the obelisk has long been destroyed. Interesting brickwork marks what is now the top of the tower, and what was originally the center: white-painted molded bricks are arranged in crosses across the front of the tower's east facade in a pattern that resembles clustered chimneys of Tudor England. The other four windows of the east facade are identical to the tower window, and there are two, one per floor, on either side of this central axis. Those on the second floor are placed under very steep white-edged gables which form circumflexes over the building (one presumes that the rooms behind these accented windows would have been principal bedrooms). The south facade was originally alive with contrast between curves and angles: the barge-boards under the many gables on this side seem today to have been almost impossibly carved. These carvings have been removed, and the facade today depends upon angles and size. It is a long two bays deep; the first bay consists of one window on each of the three floors, windows growing increasingly large as they stretch groundwards - there is a small four-light window in the attic, a larger pair of 2/2 windows on the second floor, and a 3-sided, hipped-roof, bay window on the ground floor. The bay window has one 2/2 window in each of its exposed sides, and has fine carved panelling all around below its hipped roof. These windows, like all other windows in the building, are Tudor arched and have white wooden sills. To the west, the large gable is replaced by a small one (again resembling a circumflex) over the second-story 2/2 window, which is vertically aligned above the ground 2/2 windows. A large expanse of chateau-style slate roof is exposed on this facade, a roof that is basically laid in grey rectangular slates, but is enlivened by 3 widely-spaced bands of red slate. The west facade of the main cube is half taken up by a large gable that contains the connector

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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 checked="" 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

1873

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

John L. Reifsnider, Sr.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"Terrace Hill", built, as the cornerstone says, by John L. Reifsnider in 1873, stands as one of the few absolute landmarks in the City of Westminster. Westminster's main architectural feature, and probably its main strength, is in its unity fabric, house blends into house, and block blends into block almost effortlessly, and almost invisibly. From its beginnings in the middle of the 18th century, the City has always been fairly conservative, if its buildings are any reflection of their builders' personalities. What Henry Glassie has labeled the "Pennsylvania Farm House" took root not only in surrounding Carroll County, but also up the length and breadth of Main Street in Westminster. Generally speaking, whatever variety exists in the City's buildings, exists in how individuals took a basic form and adapted it to their needs. This was true through the end of the 18th century and through all of the 19th century. It was true, that is, except for a few bold individuals who had the courage, and sophistication (that money can give) to look beyond this basic form and to take note of what was happening elsewhere in the country. A great many families achieved a certain amount of economic success in the mid-19th century; the Smith, Reese-Fletcher, and Wantz families all progressed substantially beyond a subsistence level, and built houses which reflect this. However, their houses were still in the City's basic building style. The Reifsnider family, on the other hand, threw off this tradition and established new standards, based on personal taste, nationwide fashions, and (it must be admitted) excellence of craftsmanship. The houses built by two brothers, Charles at 230 East Main Street, and John here at "Terrace Hill", mark this phenomenon.

John Lawrence Reifsnider, Sr., was born October 19, 1836, in Westminster. His family's history is typical of that of a large segment of Westminster's population: one ancestor, Sebastian Reifsnider, was born in the Palatinate in 1696, and later immigrated to the United States, dying in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in 1755. His descendants moved to Westminster through Pennsylvania (some lived in Reading) until another Reifsnider, also named Sebastian, was found living in Taneytown in 1800. Jesse Reifsnider, John's father, moved to Westminster in the mid 1820's according to an article in the Westminster Democratic Advocate. (But other accounts say that John L. Reifsnider was born in Westminster in 1836.)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Consisting of two lots of ground at the west end of Westminster at the intersection of Uniontown Road and the "Old Plank Road" now Route 31, containing in aggregate 4 acres, one rood, and 15 square perches of land.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	COUNTY
STATE	COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Christopher Weeks, Consultant

April, 1977

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Westminster Historical Sites Survey

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

c/o City Hall - Public Works Department

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Westminster

Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

between the cubes; to its north is a circumflexed 2/2 second-story window, and a small 15' x 15' x 15' cube. This cube has one 4/4 window on each of its north and west facades, the latter facade also containing a Tudor-arched door below a shed-roofed awning. The top of the cube is banded by a (surprisingly) simple railing which protects the balcony located there, and approached by a door located angularly between the main cube and the connector. The north facade of the main cube is identical to the south facade except that west of the bay window are two 2/2 windows, not one. Interesting shed-roofed dormer windows light the attic on the north and west facades just beyond the circumflexed second-story windows. The smaller cube, located to the west, has identical north and south facades; each has two 2/2 regularly-spaced windows on its two stories. (However, the north facade has a 2/2 window lighting the attic which is formed by the very steeply-pitched, slate-covered gable roof of this cube.)

The two cubes are connected by a one bay wide hyphen which maintains the steep-roofed pattern of the house. There is one 2/2 window on the second floor of each of the north and south facades (the only flat-arched windows in the building); the south facade opposite the cube of the north facade has a large, square, oriel window, containing a pair of double 1/1 windows which together form the requisite Tudor arch at their tops. There are three, two-light basement windows on the south facade, west of the large bulkhead cellar entrance located just west of the main cube's bay window.

Originally, a third, and smaller yet, cube was present, and was used for cold storage: vegetables, potatoes, and ice. This cube had much less intricately-carved bargeboards (but it is hard to think of a house that would have had more intricately-carved woodwork than the Reifsnider House). It appears, judging from old photographs, to have been largely windowless, but to have had the usual very steep roof. The now nonexistent section was connected to the rest of the house by a still-existing, one, 2/2 window, deep, hipped-roofed connector. The west wall, all in 5 course common bond brick, of this connector displays, in the brickwork, changes that must have occurred when this third section was removed.

Old photographs reveal other losses to the building, beyond the woodwork in the gables: there seem to have been, at one time at least, a half dozen corbel-capped chimneys punctuating the skyline over the house; all but two in the main cube are gone (and these two caps are much simpler than their ancestors). Other changes include the removal of two-thirds of the east facades front porch.

Photographs and drawings of "Terrace Hill" made during the first 75 years of its existence, reveal an attempt to create a villa suburbana to the west of Westminster. Reifsnider constructed, on his 4½ acre lot, an elaborate compound of greenhouses, a 5-story windmill (from the top of which, according to his granddaughter, Miss Ann S. Reifsnider, one could see most of the county) and, of course, fine stables. The lot was handsomely landscaped, had a variety of cast iron lawn ornaments around the house and on the terraces that led downwards from this estate to the simpler houses of Westminster. Miss Reifsnider especially remembers that the lawn's cast iron deer and other animals would usually disappear on Halloween night, having been removed by boys from the nearby prep school. There is a photograph of another of the features of "Terrace Hill" a three-tiered stone and iron fountain. The grounds are now bare of ornaments. When the house was adapted to suit the administrative needs of Western Maryland College, the interior was similarly simplified. In plan, the front cube was,

#7-57

and is, basically, a central-hall, double-parlor building, with halls running to the rear in a circuitous manner to connect the rear rooms. A magnificent pair of gilt and crystal chandeliers still exists in the double parlor on the north side of the main cube: one of these per room. Also remaining, are the broad late-Victorian bannister and handsome brass hardware around the entrance door. (The hardware is very similar to that to be found at the Smith-Fisher-Fletcher House, no. 254 East Main Street, and at the house built by Reifsnider's brother, Charles, at 230 East Main Street.)

#8
 Jesse Reifsnider was a merchant, and John entered his father's business as a bookkeeper at the age of 14 in 1850. The Democratic Advocate's obituary of John notes that he "entered the store of his father and by close attention, rapidly acquired a knowledge of the business". Four years later, the firm was called "Reifsnider and Sons". Reifsnider continued the wholesale and retail business of his father, dealing with firms in Baltimore and Tennessee (according to the obituary published in the American Sentinel). In 1873, he entered the wholesale tobacco trade, and dealt with firms in Richmond. He was president of the Westminster Gas Light Company from its beginning in March, 1876, until his death on July 17, 1905. Despite these many directorships (he was also a trustee of Western Maryland College), apparently ill health forced him to retire at the age of 41 in 1878, 5 years after Terrace Hill had been built. He bought the land, consisting of 4 acres, three rods, and 32 square perches on November 6, 1865, from George Stouch for \$800. This was a part of a tract called "Bond's Meadow Enlarged", and is fully described in deed recorded among the Land Records in Carroll County in Book 32, Page 360.

Upon his death, his son, John L. Reifsnider Jr., inherited the land (Will 9/497). This Reifsnider apparently, also, inherited his father's business acumen, working first for the S. W. Venable Tobacco Company of Richmond, and later organizing the still-successful Smith and Reifsnider Lumberyard (see form for no. 26 West Main Street). This Mr. Reifsnider had a variety of affiliations that could well symbolize the alliances which a successful, early-20-century businessman would create: he was a member of St. Paul's Reformed Church, of the Door - to - Virtue Lodge no. 46, the Westminster Rotary Club, the Westminster Forest and Stream Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the Westminster Riding Club, Charity Lodge no. 58, Knights of Pythias; he was the Director of the First National Bank, a member of the Board of Managers of the Westminster Cemetery Company, a Vice President of the Carroll County Mutual Fire Insurance Company, a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, a member of the Middle-Atlantic Lumbermen's Association, of the Pennsylvania Retail Coal Merchant's Association, of the Baltimore-Carroll Coal Association, and of the Blue Ridge Lumberman's Association. He died on August 1, 1943 at the age of 70, at his home.

Three of his five children, Ann, Janet, and Eltinge, bought "Terrace Hill" from the Safe Deposit and Trust Company in Baltimore, John L. Reifsnider, Jr.'s, trustee, on January 6, 1950 (deed 203/526), and then sold the house to its present owner, Western Maryland College. Problems of modern upkeep probably require the college to keep "Terrace Hill" in a simpler style than it originally knew. Nevertheless, this site, on a small hill overlooking the entire City, and the still-clear, excellent workmanship that went into creating the house's five course common bond brick bulk, still make the place notable. If it is, in fact, no longer a villa suburbana, it is still a striking building. If the comings and goings of students and staff have replaced the goat and donkey carts that carried John L. Reifsnider, Sr.'s children and grandchildren (see the marvelously evocative photograph taken at Terrace Hill c. 1885), today, approaching the building on foot, climbing up the stone steps from West Main Street, still gives one pause. It is fitting that Western Maryland College, for which various Reifsniders have been trustees, now owns "Terrace Hill", and it is pleasant that they have so well-maintained this monument to 19th century American capitalism.

Buy the Genuine and Original

"LUCY HINTON"

TOBACCO,

MANUFACTURED BY

THOS. C. WILLIAMS & Co., Richmond, Va.

For sale by

JOHN L. REIFSNIDER,

WESTMINSTER, MD.



CARR-451

4-13-77

Reifsnider Homestead Adapts to College Use

By PATTI BAIR
Times Staff Writer

Terrace Hill, now part of the Western Maryland College "Hill," was once the homestead of the John L. Reifsnider family, prominent in Westminster commerce in the late 1800's and into the 1900's.

John L. Reifsnider Sr. had built the many-gabled home in 1873, embellishing the homestead with a five-story windmill, elaborate compound of greenhouses and fine stables. In addition, there were various cast iron lawn ornaments, which invariably disappeared on Halloween night at the hands of boys from the nearby prep school, and a three-tiered stone fountain.

Goat and donkey carts carried Reifsnider's children and grandchildren about the four-and-a-half acre estate.

Today, Terrace Hill is devoid of windmill, stables, lawn decorations and the rest, but continues to be an eye-catching building as "Carroll Hall" of Western Maryland College.

Chris Weeks, the city's architectural historian, deemed the sale of Terrace Hill to Western Maryland College especially appropriate since Reifsnider, and several of his relatives, took leading roles in the college's early development.

The family history, or roots as is popular to say today, of John L. Reifsnider Sr. was typical of much of Westminster's population, Weeks noted.

One ancestor, Sebastian Reifsnider, was born in the Pilgrimage in 1696, and later immigrated to the United States, dying in Montgomery County, Pa., in 1775.

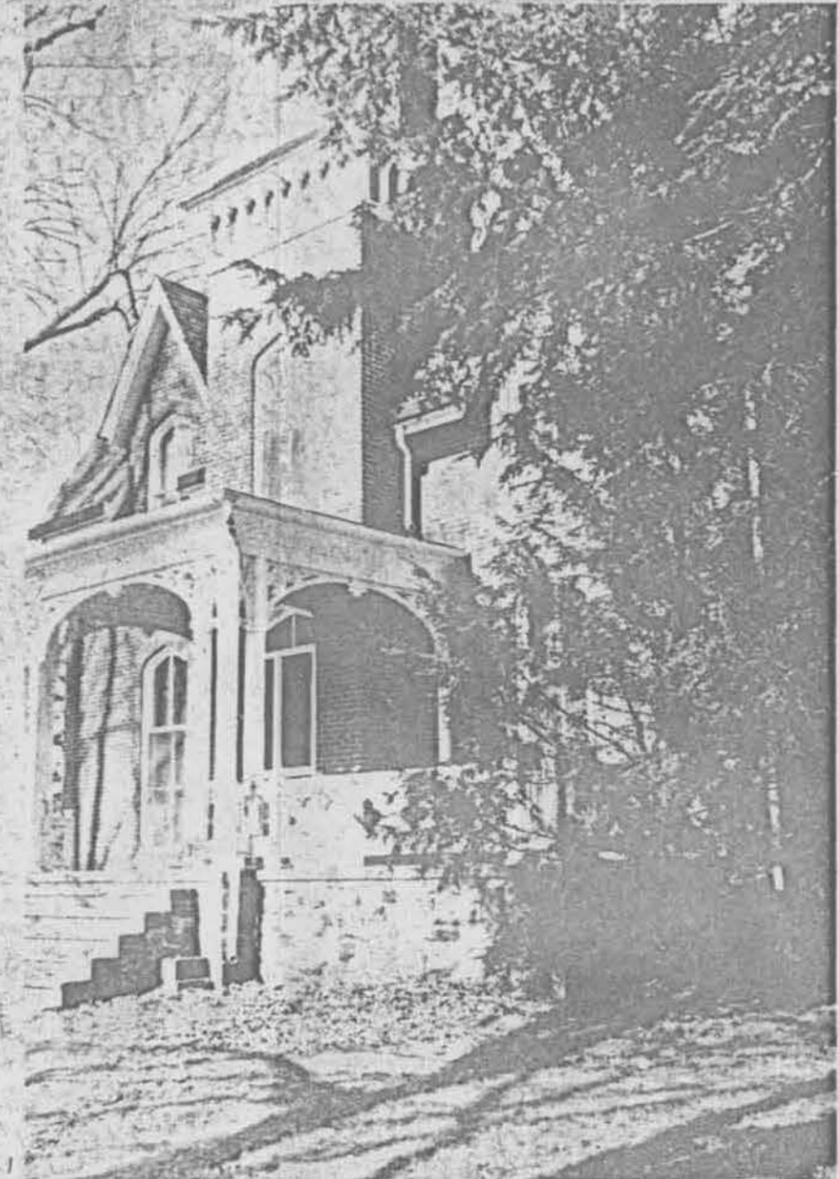
Sebastian's descendants moved to Westminster via Pennsylvania, until another Reifsnider, also named Sebastian, was reported living on Taneytown in 1800.

Jesse Reifsnider, John's father, moved to Westminster in the mid-1830's, where John was born on October 19, 1836.

Jesse Reifsnider was a merchant, and his son entered the business as a bookkeeper at the age of 14, according to Weeks. Four years later, the firm became "Reifsnider and Sons."

"Reifsnider continued the wholesale and retail business of his father, dealing with firms in Baltimore and Tennessee," Weeks relates. "In 1873, he entered the wholesale tobacco trade, and dealt with firms in Richmond.

"He was president of the Westminster



The front entrance of Terrace Hill

Gas Light Company, from its beginning in March 1876 until his death on July 17, 1905," Weeks said.

He was also a trustee at Western Maryland College, as were various other Reifsniders.

Reifsnider's son, John Jr., worked for the Venable Tobacco Company of Richmond, and later organized the still thriving Smith and Reifsnider lum-

beryard, according to Weeks.

John Jr. was involved in many civic and professional organizations, becoming well known as a successful 20th century businessman before his death, at age 70 in 1943.

He had three children, Ann, Janet and Eltinge, who were responsible for selling Terrace Hill to Western Maryland College, in the 60's, Weeks said.



Terrace Hill, with facade, photographed in about 1880



Terrace Hill today, with facade gone



CARR 456

"Remain Hill" E Jacala

6. Main Street

3/77 Weeks

63%



75 F110 MERA

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O DUOTONE

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

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03⁰⁷/₁₀

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North facade

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"Ternau Hill" Westminto

N. facade

3/21 Creek

77%



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P. 2476

C11

South Fork

"Terrace Hill" today

CAAM 451

"Terrace Hill" S. Jacobs

3/77 Check



CAPA 451

"Terrace Hill" Westview
view therefrom - looking east
3/77 C. Weck

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92 8/10

(E-16)

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Tanner Hill
E. front
3/7, 1/2

55.



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100%

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III

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CI

original
"Terrace Hill" // South facade

CARR 451

"Terrace Hill" Washington

S. facade c. 1880

C. Wick 2/77

photo - C.C. Hibbel 2/77



CV

CV 451



CARR 451

"Terrace Hill" late 19th c.

S. facade c. 1885

3/77 Church

Arch - A.S. McFadden



CARK 451

- Ternau Hill - N. Jacala
from W. Md. College

c. 1880

C. Veach 3/77

Photo - A. S. Reitsma



114

Mr. Reitsma is to the left in the bear; his son, John, Jr., is in the pony cart.

CARR TEL
"Ironie 1938" Westminster
J.L. Reitsma, Sr, family c. 1885
photo C.C. Historical Society
2/77 Church



CARR-451

Col. in

"Terra IRU" W. R.

gala frontis c. 1885

3/77 C. V. C.

Dr. J. A. Kilsnick