

CH-81  
Mt. Tirzah, site (Burrough Hall)  
Thompkinsville

1774

Mt. Tirzah began as a one-story, gambrel-roofed frame house with massive external chimneys and a detached kitchen. The east chimneys of this first stage were connected by a two-story brick chimney pent with a large arched doorway at the ground level and small closet windows above. The west chimney measured nineteen feet across at the base and had brick-tiled weatherings repeating the profile of the gambrel roof. Before 1830, that area between the kitchen and main house was filled in with a random assortment of one- and two-story frame additions. The first floor of the main block consisted of four rooms and a short rear hall, centrally positioned. A closed-string stair stood in the northwest corner of the northeast room and had doors opening into both that room and the hall. The largest of the four rooms was in the southwest part of the frieze with reeded panels and a fluted shelf above. Flanking this was a narrow cupboard built into the chimney base. A brick bearing the date 1774, pressed into its surface prior to its being baked, was found in a cellar wall. Land records and family documents substantiated this as being the original erection date of the house.

Mt. Tirzah was built by Col. Thomas Harris, III. Among the children of Thomas Harris were: Gwinn, who in 1780 was President of the Executive Council of Maryland; Dr. Morgan Harris, builder of nearby Waverley (CH-30), who married Anne Morson, daughter of the Governor of the Island of Antigua in

the West Indies; Thomas, IV, author of an important legal work known as "Harris and McHenry," and Joseph, a prominent political figure in Southern Maryland during the early 19th century. Mt. Tirzah was destroyed by fire in 1969.

7. DESCRIPTION

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CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input type="checkbox"/>	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The original portion of Mt. Tirzah is of frame construction, 34 ft. by 26 ft. with five rooms on the first floor, four on the second, and rests on a two foot thick foundation of field stone and brick. The roof design is gambrel the ridge of which runs east to west with porches extending the length of front and back. Transition in appearance Mt. Tirzah displays both Medieval and Early Georgian characteristics. You note the Medieval influence through the rear cell room with narrow boxed in stair, vertical and horizontal battens doors, crude "up", "down", and "step" hinges, wooden door pulls, wood case locks, and the profusion of exposed "rose headed" nails. Early Georgian influence is evident through the size of the rooms, the large doors and windows with 12/8 panes, the first floor mantles, the Great Room casework and flanking on board, moldings, and ceiling height. On the exterior you find impaneled chimneys, flat roofed dormers (of which there are three on each side conforming to window and door placement below), and well preserved, random width beaded siding.

Beyond the interesting interior features the house possesses two of the most majestic chimneys found in the area. The west chimney measures at the base 13 ft. 9 ins. by 3 ft. 6 ins. and provides flues for two first floor fireplaces and space for the Great Room cupboard which is built into the chimney. A aesthetically pleasing feature lies in the way the gable of the gambrel roof repeats the shape of this chimney.

On the east gable the chimney measures 18 ft. 7 ins. by 3 ft. 4 ins. at the base and rises as a solid wall to the second floor. This enclosed space between the chimneys was utilized as closets and there is evidence that a arched door 1/2 the width of the first floor pent above seems to a breezeway or curtain connecting the main house with the kitchen. In the early years of the nineteenth century this area between house and kitchen was filled in with a random assortment of 1 and 2 story additions. At this time the pent was removed and a third chimney built in its place. There are two fireplaces in this chimney and the flues were added to the stacks already standing giving both an overall width of 5 ft.

Originally the kitchen had a "A" frame roof running North to South but this was changed to a lean-to design when the additions to the house were made. A brick tiled floor is retained on the interior and the fireplace on the South wall measures 6 ft. by 4 ft. with a 3 ft. 6 in. depth. The chimney sits on a foundation of field stone and mortar which begins to taper to the stack a small 6 ins. expanse across the back wall adding extra depth to the interior opening.

The grounds of Mt. Tirzah have features that would also interest the restorer. The hill upon which the house sits is terraced by a series of walls which flare out from the rear of the house giving the effect that the house is sailing upon a sea. Through the (old) mulberry, black walnut, species of pine, and fruit trees you are offered a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside including the Potomac river some 3 miles distant. Here and there can be found remnants of ancient boxwood and around the cemetery a few 17th century garden.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

\* Pent removed from chimney

B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian <input type="checkbox"/>	16th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	18th Century <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	20th Century <input type="checkbox"/>
15th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	17th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	19th Century <input type="checkbox"/>	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1774 (Brick in Foundation)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal <input type="checkbox"/>	Education <input type="checkbox"/>	Political <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Urban Planning <input type="checkbox"/>
Prehistoric <input type="checkbox"/>	Engineering <input type="checkbox"/>	Religion/Philosophy <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Historic <input type="checkbox"/>	Industry <input type="checkbox"/>	Science <input type="checkbox"/>	architectural development
Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/>	Invention <input type="checkbox"/>	Sculpture <input type="checkbox"/>	
Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Landscape <input type="checkbox"/>	Social/Humanitarian <input type="checkbox"/>	
Commerce <input type="checkbox"/>	Architecture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Theater <input type="checkbox"/>	
Communications <input type="checkbox"/>	Literature <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	
Conservation <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Music <input type="checkbox"/>		

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

Mt. Tirzah was probably built by Col. Thomas Harris, Great Great grandson of Thomas Harris 1 who emigrated to Maryland in 1650 with his wife and one servant. From their arrival to the present the Harris family have contributed faithfully to their county and state.

The best known of the family in Charles County who contributed so unflinchingly includes Joseph Harris, son of Thomas Harris the builder. Joseph, besides being a prosperous "gentleman farmer" and large land holder also held office as Clerk for the Circuit Court of St. Mary's County for forty nine years and was held in such high esteem that on his death a county wide day of mourning was proclaimed in that county. On the other hand Gwinn Harris, brother of Joseph served his country well as a Naval Officer and Thomas Harris, Jr., another brother, served as Clerk for the Maryland Court of Appeals from 1788 to 1829 and compiled the then invaluable book of legal forms called "Harris's Modern Entries".

Benjamin Gwinn Harris, a son of Joseph's, was a member of the Maryland House of Delegates in 1835 and in 1836 also serving in the United States Congress from 1835 to 1837. In May 1864 Benjamin Gwinn Harris was tried and convicted by military court for aiding and harboring Confederate soldiers but was later pardoned by President Johnson. Another son of Joseph's was Dr. George Harris who built a delightful Georgian residence near Mt. Tirzah called "Averley". Dr. Harris married an Elson a daughter of the Governor of Virginia.

Almost all the Harris men did well in their fields of endeavor and the women seem to have a special knack for marrying into the best of Charles and St. Mary's County families. Familiar names are Roper, Key, Hungerford, Causeine, Deas, Stonestreet, and Clapham.

Many homes built by Harris descendants stand in the vicinity of Mt. Tirzah and all are fine specimens of Georgian architecture. All with the exception of Mt. Tirzah have been restored and are well taken care of.

Much of the original furniture and portraits belonging to the Harris family are preserved in the collections of the Maryland Historical Society having been presented to the Society when Mt. Tirzah was abandoned.

*demolished  
by fire  
11.6.9*

SEE INSTRUCTIONS