

MOUNT HARMON: TOBACCO ERA & COLONIAL TRADE ON SITE EXHIBITS & RESOURCES

Chesapeake ~ Gateway to the World

THRIVING PLANTATION


Tobacco was the cash crop that built early America. During the 1700s, Mount Harmon was a prosperous tobacco plantation due to its rich agricultural land and proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, which offered access to world trade.

Free, indentured and enslaved field workers toiled for long hours planting, weeding and harvesting tobacco. By the 1800s, grants (such as weed and cure) became the prime crop after tobacco depleted that tobacco severely depleted the soil.



COLONIAL TRADE


In 1677, Mount Harmon's waterfront was designated an official port. Tobacco from nearby plantations was shipped abroad. In the 1700s, James Fort and James Fort used the wharf to load their schooners, the above and below and the one, first with tobacco bound for Europe, and later with goods to be sold in Philadelphia. These ships returned with necessities and fine furnishings for the manor house.



SHIPPING TOBACCO

The price house (below) is an example of 18th-century agricultural technology. The small building contains a "press" or press, a device the colonists used to compress tobacco from two highlands into one to measure shipment.

The trading floor just beyond the price house, where colonists toiled highlands (bunches of tobacco stems) to the wharf for processing and shipment to England.



18th century PLANTATION CULTURE & COLONIAL TRADE

PLANTATION LIFE

Mount Harmon flourished in the 1700s as a tobacco plantation and grew into a bustling town. Tobacco was the cash crop that built early America. During the 1700s, Mount Harmon was a prosperous tobacco plantation due to its rich agricultural land and proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, which offered access to world trade.

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COLONIAL TRADE

Mount Harmon was part of the triangular trade system between the Americas, Europe, and the West Indies that helped to build the British Empire. In the 1700s, James Fort and James Fort used the wharf to load their schooners, the above and below and the one, first with tobacco bound for Europe, and later with goods to be sold in Philadelphia. These ships returned with necessities and fine furnishings for the manor house.




CATHOLICS IN MARYLAND

Shortly after Mount Harmon was purchased by the Lord Baltimore, Catholics were not permitted to settle in the colony. After the Mount family bought the land, they lived a peaceful Catholic life in the 1700s. The church also reportedly served as a school to educate the children of wealthy Catholics.



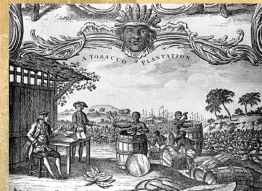
Tobacco and Mount Harmon

Before you stands a crop of tobacco planted to reflect the historic tobacco trade that flourished at Mount Harmon in the colonial era. Mount Harmon was a bustling 1,200-acre tobacco plantation in the mid 1700s. Tobacco was an important cash crop that helped build early America. Plantations like Mount Harmon relied on tobacco but also produced wheat, beef, leather and wool and had their own blacksmith to create and repair tools.



SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FARMING

It took one man to cultivate 2-3 acres of tobacco. At first indentured servants and other European immigrants did the hard work but by the late 1600s slaves were imported from the Caribbean and Africa. Slave labor was used on Mount Harmon until the Civil War although Mount Harmon owners, Mary Louisa George and Ann Eliza George Fisher, freed their own slaves in 1808.



TWENTIETH CENTURY FARMING

Over time, tobacco was found to deplete the soil. As the soil grew poor and tobacco became less profitable, planters at Mount Harmon and other Cecil County farms switched over to wheat production. Tobacco was not a major crop at Mount Harmon after about 1780. Mount Harmon continued to be a productive agricultural farm into the 20th century producing wheat, coffee, sheep and other cash crops like peaches and asparagus.

