Joan Drescher

Honors English 12

Mrs. Cooper

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The Harmon Mansion Revisited

The journey through the quaint town of Centreville and beyond to the hilly farms of Cecil County hardly prepares the visitor for Mount Harmon Mansion. The aged orange Osage trees planted on either side of a nearly two mile drive have grown into a fairytale-style canopy that seems tunnel-like and dark ("Visitor Information"). These tough, sinewy trees were probably planted as hedges on either side of the 1.8 mile drive because of their picturesque rather than beautiful appearance. The trees yield a strong wood that the Osage Indians used for bows, but they also produce woody thorns and a bumpy fruit that weeps skin-stinging milk most people find noxious (Corbett). The bumpy, shaded drive seems enchanted with its whimsically overgrown trees, deep ruts and blind turns.

When visitors enter Mount Harmon Mansion today, it is from the large, first floor kitchen which is located on the extreme south wing of the house. The floors are brick, and the walls are white-washed stucco. Curators and guides dressed in colonial gowns greet guests and begin the tour with the original kitchen which is now used as a gathering room and gift shop. According to curator Emily Hopkins, "The decor of Mount Harmon Mansion reflects the historical period from 1650-1730 colonial tobacco farming." Many architectural details reflect the Chippendale styles including beautiful fretwork on the central winding staircase ("Details of Design"). The Chippendale design is even present in the decorative widow's walk that allows a view of the whole property.

The furnishings in most of the house have been recovered from area homes or have never left the mansion since it was built in 1651. The original Harmon family was quite wealthy and used the popular Chippendale style that copied patterns found in the orient. The furniture makers were

The mansion was last restored in 1974 by Albert Kruse, an acclaimed restoration architect ("Plantation House"). The “new” 1970's lilac kitchen was equipped with a Frigidaire appliances coated in light purple and white enamel. The custom, double Viking stove and wall ovens are also lilac. The cost of the kitchen alone was over $10,000 at the time (Dupont).

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Harmon Mansion Outline

1. Introduction
   1. Attention-grabber—Déjà vu experience of driving through the mile and a half drive canopied by the Osage orange trees during the first visit.
   2. Thesis—Instead of ignoring Maryland’s past which includes slavery, Mount Harmon Plantation in Cecil County preserves the good and the bad of colonial farming.
2. History of the Property
3. Tobacco Farm
4. Summer house for the rich
5. Historic home museum
6. Interior Furnishings
   1. Chinese Chippendale Staircase
   2. Period Rooms
   3. DuPont Rooms
   4. Modern kitchen (1950s) lilac
7. Gardens and Farm Today
   1. Tobacco Fields and Press Building
   2. Slave and Servant Quarters
   3. Formal Garden and Fountain
   4. Rare Trees and Plants
   5. Hiking Paths
8. Annual Events
   1. Opening Gala in May
   2. Members Events
   3. Holiday Open House