Mt. Pleasant Farmhouse
at the Howard County Conservancy

Original painting by Alice Webb - 2011
The mission of the Howard County Conservancy is to educate children and adults about our natural world, preserve the land and its legacy for future generations and model responsible stewardship of our environment.

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Welcome to the home of the Brown(e) family.

A dedicated group of volunteers, members of the Howard County Conservancy History Committee, have worked tirelessly to create a pictorial tour of this very unique home. There has been no documentation found regarding the early construction of the house. The committee hopes you find the information about the farmhouse interesting and informative as you view the areas that were enjoyed by the Brown family since the late 1700s. Each addition to the house shows building materials and designs relevant to a particular time period. The house is a journey through time that has culminated with this book showing pictures from log walls to modern conveniences.

Many thanks to the Conservancy History Committee who created this book.

Jean Bicknell, Joye Carneal, Tabbie Figue, Carol Filipczak, Chris Garbatt, John Gowans, Jill Leiberg, Louise McLaughlin (Photographer and Book Designer), Woody Merkle, Blaine Milner, Judy Morgan, Fran Reardon, Romayne Smith and Debbie West.
Timeline of the Farmhouse

It is believed that the farmhouse, as it stands today, was constructed or renovated over at least six time periods. With the exception of the most recent renovations in 2012-13, all of the dates are the committee’s best estimates based on available information. (See References)

Circa 1775 A one-room log cabin was built. There is much debate about this date. We know that Thomas Browne was commissioned by the Governors of Anne Arundel County in 1692 to serve as a Ranger. He was given the land grant for Ranter’s Ridge (now Mt. Pleasant) in 1703. He undoubtedly constructed some type of temporary shelter or “settler’s hut” on the property. However, notes describing recollections by Ruth Brown indicate that the one-room log cabin, which is now part of the farmhouse, was not built until in the mid 1770s.

The first floor of the log cabin was used as a dining room after the 1865 addition was built. It is now used as the living room for the caretaker.

Early 1800s A second floor was added to the log cabin as a bedroom. A rear wing was added to the house to serve as a kitchen.

Circa 1865 The front of the current house was added, creating a hallway connecting the new front addition to the rear log cabin. This addition included a formal parlor and two upstairs bedrooms. These areas are now used as office and meeting spaces. The rear of the house is now living quarters for the caretaker.

Early 1900s A small utility/laundry room with a second-story storage area was added to the west side of the 1865 addition. The first floor of this addition is now used as a kitchenette.

Circa 1950 The rear wing of the house was removed and rebuilt. This is now the kitchen and north side upstairs bedroom of the house. Running water and indoor plumbing were added.

2012-13 The kitchenette area and the kitchen and bathrooms of the house were remodeled. A geothermal heating and cooling system was installed, as well as a new electrical panel to handle upgraded electrical service. New storm doors and storm windows were installed. The insulation was upgraded. These improvements created a more energy efficient historic house.
The star indicates the location of Ranter’s Ridge near the Howard/Baltimore County line. This land was granted to the Brown family in 1703, and held for eight generations, until it became part of the Howard County Conservancy in 1992.
The Land

In 1692, Thomas Browne was commissioned by the colonial government as a Patuxent Ranger to patrol the Northern area between the Patuxent and Patapsco Rivers and to observe the activities of the Native Americans. He received Ranters's Ridge in 1703 as a land grant. This farm, which later became known as Mt. Pleasant, remained in the Brown family until the deaths of Ruth and Frances Brown in the early 1990s.

Gardens, farmfields, streams, and approximately 50 hardwood trees frame the historic house.

Multiple outbuildings surround the house including: the carriage house, blacksmith shop, bank barn, wagon shed, corn crib, smokehouse, chicken coop, guinea fowl coop, the ice house foundation, and the outhouse.
The one-story log cabin was built circa 1775. The logs are located in the lower mid-section of the farmhouse. Presently, it serves as the living room.
Evidence of the Log Cabin

West wall exterior view, lower level mid-section

Hand-hewn logs
Log Cabin

East wall windows, lower level mid-section, currently the living room
Evidence of a Fireplace in the Log Cabin

Pieced-in boards indicating the existence of an early hearth in the log cabin
Log Cabin

Door in west wall, lower level mid-section
Log Cabin once used as a Dining Room

East wall, lower mid-section

Dinner in 1959
Second Floor

Early 1800s
Building Techniques

A portion of the plaster was removed revealing logs in the second floor bedroom wall.

Chinking was used between the logs.

A piece of horsehair plaster from the farmhouse. Look closely to see the horsehair.
Second Floor Bedroom

Window wall facing east

Wide boards and square nails in the flooring

Mid-19th century round heat grate located in bedroom floor
The cellar area, located at the back of the house (north side) under the kitchen, has a dirt floor in the northeast corner and a concrete floor in the remainder of the space. Today it houses the furnace and water heater. These areas are accessed by an exterior entrance.
Civil War Era

Circa 1865
Connector Hallway - East Side Entrance Level

Exterior door on the east side of the farmhouse

Doorway on the left leads into the lower level log cabin

View from the lower level log cabin area into the connector hallway
Connector Hallway - Lower Level

Lower level facing west

The doorway to the front foyer of the 1865 addition

Mid-19th century door latch located on the storage room door
Connector Hallway - Mid Level

Landing with window facing the west side of the property
Connector Hallway - Upper Level

Upper level facing east

The doorway to the bedroom area above the log cabin

Bathroom created in the 1950s

Looking down to the doorway leading to the porch on the east side of the house
The small doorway is the only access to the attic space located above the log cabin area. It opens into the bathroom located in the connector hallway.
Attic over Log Cabin Area

Attic above bedroom area before 2012 insulation installation

Floor boards in the attic
Front Foyer of the House

Circa 1865
Parlor

First floor front of the house, now used for exhibit and meeting space
Fireplace in Parlor

The mantel and surround are made of slate. The slate was painted to resemble marble. This was a popular technique in the 1800s.
Brown Family Bedroom

Upstairs, southeast corner, now used as a Conservancy office
Brown Family Bedroom

Upstairs, southwest corner, now used as a Conservancy office

Fireplace in upstairs bedroom

Heat rose from lower floors to give warmth to the 2nd level
Addition
Kitchenette

Originally used as a utility/laundry room

Early 1900s
Storage Room above Kitchenette
Improvements

Circa 1950
Remodeled Kitchen Today

Photo of kitchen after the 2012 remodel

Stairs to second-floor bedroom over kitchen
Bathroom off Kitchen Today

Running water and indoor plumbing installed in the 1950s,

Remodeled in 2012
This fireplace backs up to the living room fireplace, and is believed to have been remodeled in the 1950’s, replacing the previous structure.
Bedroom over Kitchen

Second-floor bedroom over the kitchen

Circa 1950
Last Generations

Sam Brown

Ruth Brown

Frances Brown

Frank and Sarah Louise Davis Brown
Dinner in the Log Cabin

Dinner at the Brown home before an Ellicott City Elementary School PTA meeting fall 1959. Guinea hen raised by the family was served for dinner.

Seated left to right: Sam Brown, Ada Smallwood (3rd grade teacher, obscured by Sam), Ruth Brown (6th grade teacher), Dorothy Noll (4th grade teacher), Sarah Louise Brown (mother of Ruth, Frances and Sam), Elizabeth Van Huss (5th grade teacher), and Mary Jane Thorney (vocal music teacher) This photo was taken by Frances Brown.
The Brown Family Furniture

Sideboard is currently in the Howard County Historical Society Museum.
Sarah Louise Brown’s Piano

Sarah Louise’s parents, William and Sallie Gorsuch Davis, purchased the rosewood piano from the Wm. Knabe & Company. Shown here is the original receipt for $435 for the piano and stool dated July 11, 1865. It was later given to Sarah Louise as a wedding gift and is now owned by relatives.
The Brown Family Furniture

Sarah Louise Brown's Empire sofa

Restored Mirror

Hallway table

These furnishings are now in the possession of extended family members.
Sarah Louise Brown’s Bed and Trunk

Now in the possession of relatives
Recognitions

HISTORIC HOUSE
MT. PLEASANT
ORIGINALLY PART OF RANTER’S RIDGE
HOWARD COUNTY BICENTENNIAL COMMISSION

MT. PLEASANT
1692 - 1992

Home of the Browns of Howard County, descendants of original settler Thomas Browne (the Patuxent Ranger) who was commissioned in 1692 to survey this area of then Anne Arundel County. Marked on October 16, 1994 by Terra Mariae Chapter, Maryland State Society, National Society, Colonial Dames XVII Century.
A view of the farmhouse with the cherished tulip poplar tree
Information used in this booklet was obtained from:


Reminiscences of Mr. George Riddle, whose family were tenant farmers at Mt. Pleasant during the early 1900s.

Reminiscences of Misses Ruth and Frances Brown.

**Archaeology in Howard County and Beyond,** M. Lee Preston, Jr. (2011). See pages 269-93.

Maryland Historical Trust Inventory of Historic Property Application form, prepared by Jennifer Goold in April of 2005.

Notes from History Committee files of relatives and acquaintances of Frances, Ruth and Sam Brown.

Alice Webb, the artist, granted permission to photograph her original watercolor used on the first cover.

Ruth and Frances Brown standing in front of the bicentennial tulip poplar tree in 1976.