



Hurstholme, 12 Trott Road



Hurstholme in 2013.

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This is part of a series of architectural articles by the Bermuda National Trust that will highlight some of Bermuda's endangered historic buildings.

Nestled among tall office buildings on a little-known Hamilton street is Hurstholme. The land on which the house was built belonged to Elizabeth Pitt in 1789. Pitt owned a large tract of land in Pembroke adjoining the western boundary of the yet-to-be incorporated Town of Hamilton. In her will she left one acre to her granddaughter, Susanna George, who in turn left it to her niece, another Susanna, the wife of James Tuzo. The original house appears to have been built before Susanna George's death in 1827. Sometime between 1835 and 1847 Tuzo added the imposing Georgian section decorated with corner pilasters and a fanlight and quoining around the front door. The rafter feet are hidden by stone moulding.



The house was inherited by Tuzo's daughters, one of whom, Sarah Esther, had married Alphonso John Hurst of Antigua. By the time Sarah died in 1894 the house had become known as Hurstholme. It still enjoyed spacious grounds and Sarah's daughter Minnie often loaned the property for various entertainments and children's fairs, mostly to benefit the new Cottage Hospital as well as the Ministering Children's League.



The original part of the house is the section with the uncovered rafter feet and chimney at the back.

An article in the January 1965 issue of *Bermuda Life and Times* by Lora Paschal Greet describes the house as having a wide verandah with a tennis court, tea house, lawns and gardens. When Minnie Hurst died in 1911 the house went to her very successful brother Francis William Jones Hurst who worked in New York in the shipping business. His wife Caroline Jaffray came from a wealthy New York family of dry goods merchants. One of their daughters, Florence, would marry banker J Borden Harriman. Although a rich socialite Florence was a suffragist, social reformer and organiser of campaigns against child labour and harsh working conditions for women. While Florence visited Bermuda on occasion, she often rented out Hurstholme "for the season",



primarily to American visitors who flocked to Bermuda during the winter months. In 1924 the house became the short-lived Winter School accommodating children of wintering tourists.

The beginning of the end of the once sprawling property also occurred in 1924 when the Public Roads Department took land from Hurstholme's southern entrance for the construction of a new public road between Church Street in Hamilton and Rosemount Avenue in Pembroke (now Church Street West and Richmond Road) during which 28 cedar trees had to be taken down. In 1951 the city boundary was moved to Bermudiana Road and Hurstholme along with its southern neighbour Par-la-Ville became part of the City of Hamilton.

After its sale in 1939 to Bermuda General Theatres Ltd, Hurstholme had varied uses. In 1940 when rented by the Maple Leaf Club it was described as a "broken ruin" that needed to be "patched and mended, lime-washed and painted". For the next few years it was used as a recreational facility for Canadian soldiers and sailors. In 1947 the grounds became an open-air theatre called The Playgrounds causing displeasure to Mrs Greet who lived nearby.



Hurstholme with its verandah and lovely grounds was the home of the Maple Leaf Club in the 1940s.
(Llewellyn/Paschal collection, Bermuda Archives)



Hurstholme was again sold in 1965 and this time the property was subdivided. Hurstholme became the warehouse for the new owner Midsea Ltd while in 1968 it was being used by the Bermuda Society of Ballroom Dancing for dance lessons. In the 1990s the building was elegantly restored by Jonathan Crawley of Aneco Reinsurance Underwriting Ltd. At the time of this article the building is unoccupied but is being advertised for rent. Hopefully a new tenant will come forward. An empty building is always in jeopardy of vandalism and decay.



Today Hurstholme is empty and looking for a new tenant who will appreciate its uniqueness.

Sources: *Bermuda's Architectural Heritage Series Hamilton Town and City; The Royal Gazette* 10 Jul, 12 Sep 1924 *Public Lands Act 1905 (No. 29)* Section 3; RG 14 June 1940; 11 June 1941; 14 Jan, 21 Jul 1942; 25 Jan, 12 May, 9 Jun, 18 June, 6 Oct 1947; 24 Aug 1964; 3 Mar 1965; 13 Mar 1968.