

The Harris Family



One building that is familiar to most Londoners is Eldon House. This impressive Georgian Style home was completed in 1834 for John and Amelia Harris who, after they moved in, immediately became the first family of what was then called London-in-the-bush. John Harris, a Tory and a Royal Navy man, was for nearly 30 years the chief tax collector of the London district. His post gave the Harris family financial security and social status, and so Eldon House thrived.

Social status was important for the Harrises because John and Amelia produced 10 children, seven of them girls. Life at Eldon House in the 1830s and 40s must have resembled a Jane Austen novel as scores of eligible young army officers from the local British garrison - most of them bored out of their minds with life in a provincial backwater - flocked to the many balls and parties that were thrown by Mrs. Harris, who naturally was looking for husband material for her daughters. It worked - all of the Harris girls married, four of them to soldiers.

The Harris family remained prominent in London society well into the next century. The Harrises were extremely generous too; in 1960 three of John and Amelia's descendants donated the Eldon House estate to the City of London for use as a museum and a public park.