

The Hollow Secured: Boyhood Home of Chief Justice John Marshall Officially Donated to Friends of the Hollow

After more than four decades of dedication, Friends of the Hollow has reached a historic milestone: the formal donation of seven acres of land, including The Hollow itself, securing the boyhood home of Chief Justice John Marshall for future generations. This landmark gift ensures that the 1764 home, where Marshall spent his formative years, will be permanently protected and restored as a national treasure.

The donation was made possible through the generosity of Learning Tree Farms – David and Mary Collins, longtime advocates for the preservation of The Hollow. Their commitment to historic conservation has guaranteed that this important site will be safeguarded for years to come.

A Legacy of Preservation and Discovery

When Friends of the Hollow was founded in 1981, its mission was based on family history: that The Hollow was John Marshall's boyhood home. The nonprofit was created to bring awareness to what was believed to be Marshall's childhood residence—and to prove its historical significance.

Decades of research followed. A breakthrough came when dendrochronological analysis dated the home's timbers to the 1763 growing season, confirming that it stood during Marshall's youth. Further archaeological evidence, including construction techniques and findings by Williamsburg archaeologists, provided additional support. This rigorous scholarship led to The Hollow's listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, transforming family history into documented historical fact—an extraordinary achievement in American preservation.

"The journey to secure and restore The Hollow has been long, but each step has brought us closer to safeguarding this remarkable piece of American history," said Jim Stribling, Board Member of Friends of the Hollow and Chairperson of the John Marshall Center's Descendants Committee at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture. *"The stabilization efforts in 2006 were a turning point, preventing the structure's deterioration and laying the foundation for the full restoration we can now pursue."*

The Hollow: A National Treasure

Built in 1764 by Thomas Marshall, The Hollow is one of the oldest surviving structures in Fauquier County, Virginia. From ages 9 to 17, John Marshall lived here, a period that helped shape the intellect and character of the man who would become the most influential Chief Justice in American history.

Since its inception, Friends of the Hollow has worked to protect and preserve the home. Early efforts focused on raising awareness and advocating for its protection, culminating in its official historic recognition.

A turning point came in the early 2000s, when Dr. David C. Collins purchased the land and provided critical funding to stabilize the structure. Recognizing its immense historical value, he partnered with Friends of the Hollow to launch architectural and archaeological investigations, which informed efforts to structurally restore the home to its 18th-century appearance. These efforts saved the structure, which had been at serious risk of collapse.

Now, with Learning Tree Farms' donation of The Hollow tract to Friends of the Hollow, the nonprofit can take the next steps toward full restoration and public access. Immediate plans include critical repairs, architectural stabilization, repainting, and structural reinforcements.

"I am honored that our vision of making The Hollow a place where children and adults can learn about John Marshall's formative years and his lasting impact on American governance has arrived," said Mary Collins, owner of Learning Tree Farms in nearby Delaplane. *"We purchased and restored The Hollow many years ago with the intention of ensuring its place in public education and historical interpretation."*

Looking Ahead: A Landmark Restored

With the land donation complete, Friends of the Hollow is preparing for its next chapter: fundraising to complete restoration efforts and expand public education about John Marshall's early years. The long-term vision includes preserving the home, developing educational programming, and increasing public access to this important site.

"This is a monumental step forward for Marshall's boyhood home," said Thomas Marshall deButts, sixth-generation descendant of the Chief Justice and President of Friends of the Hollow. *"Our organization was founded in 1981 to preserve and interpret The Hollow, and we are deeply grateful to the Collins family for their stewardship over the past 25 years. Now, this 252-year-old house enters its next chapter, and we look*

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forward to further conserving the property and raising funds to complete David Collins' vision."

As The Hollow moves into this exciting new phase, Friends of the Hollow invites the public to support its restoration efforts, ensuring that this landmark continues to share the story of one of America's greatest judicial minds. What began as family history has become a confirmed historical treasure, standing as a testament to the power of perseverance, scholarship, and community dedication in preserving America's history.