

John Marshall's Boyhood Home Turns 260

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By Thomas Marshall deButts

It's a tiny house, only 16 by 28 feet, but typical of an English-style frontier dwelling.

The Hollow, built in 1764 by Thomas Marshall (1730 -1802), was the boyhood home of Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall (1755-1835). Located on private property in Markham, it's included on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register.

The four-room weatherboard house, originally with two massive stone chimneys, is one of Fauquier County's earliest existing examples of fine frontier architecture. It's a rare example of a wood frame house that is not currently incorporated into a more recent structure.

The Hollow was built prior to Thomas Marshall's 1765 move with his family from his first Fauquier County home near Midland. No trace of the original homestead exists.

More than 10,000 descendants probably can trace their lineage back to Thomas Marshall and Mary Randolph Keith Marshall and The Hollow. Their oldest son, John, is well known to historians, and his significant contribution to the evolution of the American form of government cannot be overestimated.

Young John Marshall came to The Hollow with



Photo by Tom deButts
The Hollow

his parents and four younger siblings in 1765 before his tenth birthday. He lived there until 1773, when he moved with his family to Oak Hill in Delaplane, a larger dwelling on land his father had purchased. In 1790, after serving with his father and brothers in the American Revolution, he built a house in Richmond that is beautifully preserved and maintained.

Thomas Marshall, born in Westmoreland County, Virginia on April 2, 1730, was made a justice of Fauquier at age 29. His father, John Marshall "of the forest," was a small planter, who in 1727, acquired 200 acres of depleted land on Appomattox Creek.

Thomas Marshall inherited this property from his father but soon abandoned it for Fauquier County. By the time of the first court for Fauquier County, he was living on Licking Run (Gemantown community)



Photo The United States Mint

2005 Chief Justice John Marshall Commemorative Silver One-dollar uncirculated, obverse.

on land he had settled in about 1754. That year, he married Mary Randolph Keith, daughter of the Rev. James Keith, the first permanent minister of the Elk Run Anglican Church, also in Fauquier County. The first of their 15 children, John, was born on Licking Run, September 24, 1755.

The Fauquier County Deed Book reveals that Thomas Marshall leased a 330-acre tract encompassing The Hollow property from Thomas Ludwell Lee and Colonel Richard Henry "Lighthorse Harry" Lee in 1765. The lease was to run the lifetimes of Thomas, Mary or John, whichever was longest.

At age 35, Thomas Marshall moved his growing family to his newly constructed 1 1/2-story frame house on a beautiful rise just north of the present-day Markham. Five more children were born to Thomas

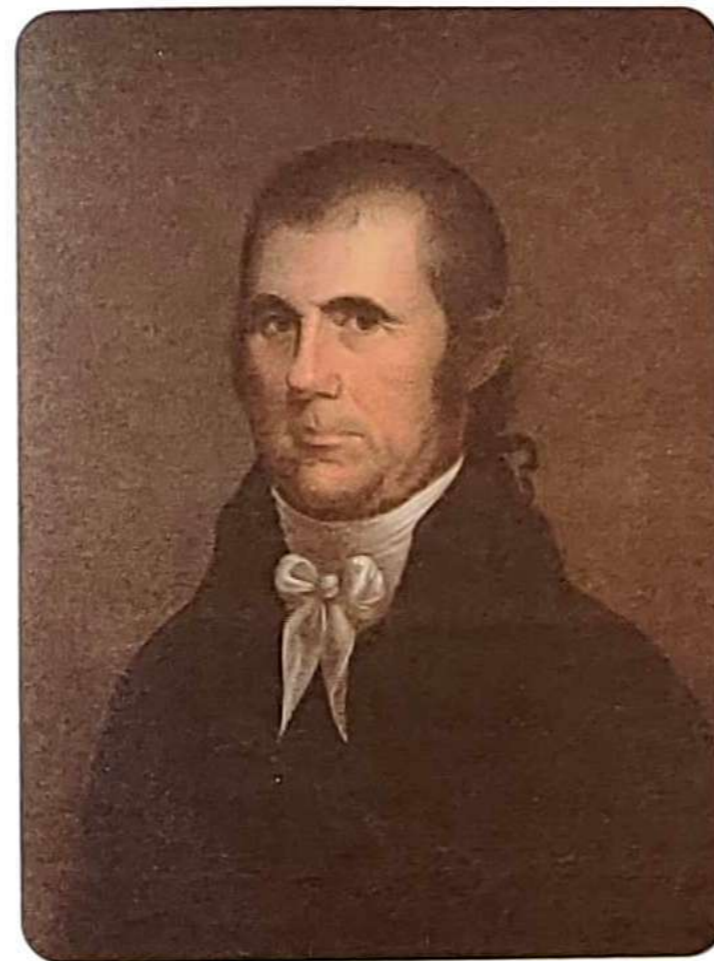


Photo courtesy National Portrait Gallery Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall

and Mary Marshall, bringing the total number of children living in the house to ten before the move to Oak Hill near Delaplane.

In 1773, Thomas Marshall purchased 1,700 acres on the Fredericksburg-Winchester road next to Little Cobbler Mountain. On his new land to the east, he built "Oak Hill."

By this time, he sat in the House of Burgesses from 1761 to 1767, when he was appointed sheriff of the county. He named a vestryman of Leeds after the creation of that parish in 1769 and again represented Fauquier in the Assembly from 1769 to 1773. He also sat as a member in 1775 and supported Patrick Henry in the convention of that year.

He had some military training in the Indian wars and served successively as ensign, lieutenant and captain of the militia. When the Culpeper Minute Men were formed and mustered on September 1, 1775, Thomas Marshall, representing Fauquier, was a major.

When his battalion was discharged after the Battle of Great Bridge, he was transferred to the 3rd Virginia Line and marched north to join General George Washington. He was made lieutenant colonel on August 13, 1776, and on Christmas night of that year took part in the battle of Trenton. Promoted to colonel on February 21, 1777, he took command of this regiment and fought with great gallantry at the battle of Brandywine, having two horses shot out from under him. A few months later, he was elected colonel of the Virginia State Regiment of Artillery.

After the war, Thomas Marshall sold 1,000

acres of Oak Hill and moved his family to Fayette County in Kentucky to pursue land warrants he and his family earned as Revolutionary War soldiers. President George Washington appointed Thomas Marshall as federal whiskey tax collector. He died in Kentucky in 1802.

John Marshall, the most influential jurist in U.S. history, in an autobiographical letter written to Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story, wrote, "[a]t the age of 12, I had transcribed Pope's Essay on Man, with some of his moral essays." By 16, Marshall reported that he "continued my studies with no other aid than my dictionary" and had "commenced reading Horace and Livy."

When Marshall returned to Fauquier County for the Marquis de Lafayette's farewell tour in 1825, he raised a toast:

"I can never forget that this county was the revered author of my being...that in this county I first breathed the vital air, that in it my infancy was cradled and my youth reared up and encouraged; that in the first dawn of manhood I marched from it... Here my affections as well as my interest still remain, and all my sons are planted among you."

Detailed information about The Hollow, and its extensive restoration, can be accessed at the website of the Friends of the Hollow, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to its preservation and restoration. [www.friendsofthehollow.org]