

Fauquier Heritage Society News

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John Marshall's Boyhood Home Still At Risk

By Thomas Marshall deButts

Maybe you have seen it while driving westbound on Route 66 just before the Markham exit. It is a rather tiny house—only 16 by 28 feet. But in its day, it was rather typical of an English-style frontier dwelling.

The Hollow, built in 1764 by Thomas Marshall (1730–1802), was the boyhood home of former Chief Justice John Marshall during the formative years between ages 10 and 18. The Hollow is in great danger of being destroyed and forever lost by development and the elements. Much can be learned from the site and the dwelling so carefully constructed over 230 years ago.

The Hollow is one of Fauquier County's earliest existing examples of fine frontier architecture and the earliest existing example of a structure built by Thomas Marshall. Unlike many of the houses then built in the frontier, The Hollow is a rare example of a wood frame house that is not currently incorporated into a more recent structure.

The Hollow House was built prior to Thomas Marshall's 1765 move with his family from his first Fauquier County, Virginia home in the Germantown community near Midland. The Friends of the

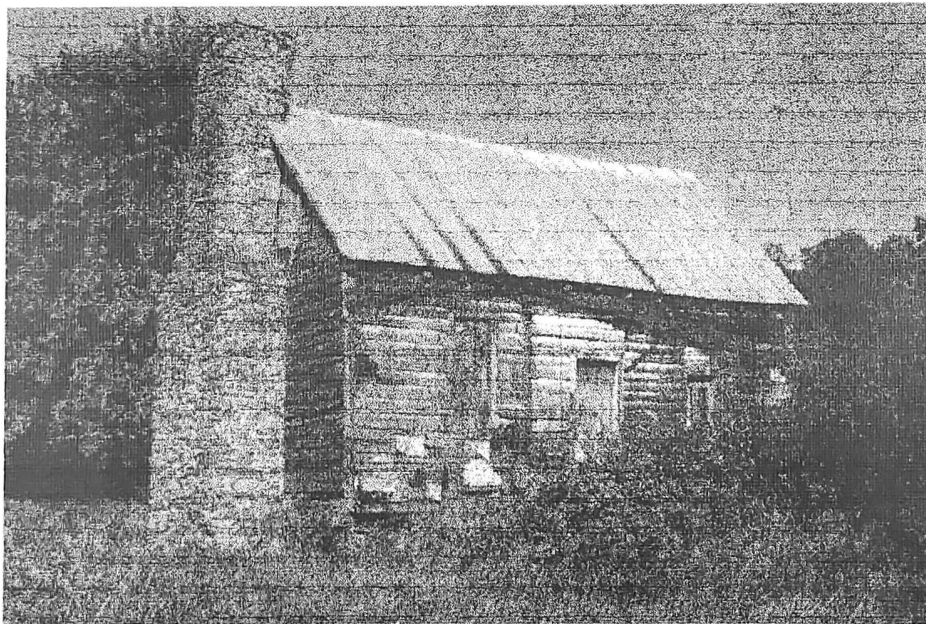
Hollow, a non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation of The Hollow, commissioned a dendrochronological (tree ring) analysis of the red and white oak timbers used to construct The Hollow. The analysis revealed that the oaks were felled after the 1763 growing season but before the 1764 season. The timbers were also growing at a slow rate of approximately 30–40 years per inch of radius, as virgin trees in old-growth forest.

There are probably more than 10,000 Marshall descendants who are able to trace their lineage back to Thomas Marshall and

contribution to the evolution of the American form of government cannot be overestimated. Young John Marshall came to The Hollow with his parents and four younger siblings in 1765 before his tenth birthday. There he lived and matured until, in 1773, he moved with his family to Oak Hill, a larger dwelling on land his father had purchased. Later, in 1790, he built a house in the Court End neighborhood of Richmond that is beautifully preserved and maintained.

Thomas Marshall

Thomas Marshall, born in Westmoreland County, Virginia, April 2, 1730, was, at age 29, made a justice of Fauquier. His father, John Marshall 'of the forest', was a small planter, who in 1727, acquired 200 acres of depleted land on Appomattox Creek originally granted to 'Jno. Washington & Thomas Pope, gents ---- & by them lost for want of seating'. Thomas Marshall inherited this property from his father but soon abandoned it for Fauquier County.



The Hollow—John Marshall's boyhood home.

Mary Randolph Keith Marshall and their modest frame house.

Thomas and Mary Keith Marshall's oldest son, John, is well known to American and Fauquier County historians, and his

By the time of the first court for Fauquier, he was living on Licking Run near Germantown, on land on which he had settled about 1754. In 1754, he married Mary Randolph Keith,

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daughter of the Rev. James Keith. The first of their 15 children, John, born on Licking Run, September 24, 1755, would later become Chief Justice of the United States.

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 lives of Thomas, Mary or John, whichever was longest.

At the age of 35, Thomas Marshall, moved his young, growing family (John, 1755; Elizabeth, 1756; Mary, 1757; Thomas, 1761; James, 1764) to his newly constructed one and a half story frame house on a beautiful rise just north of the present-day Markham, Virginia. Five more children were born to Thomas and Mary Marshall while living at The Hollow (Judith, 1766; William and Charles, 1767; Lucy, 1768; Alexander, 1770) bringing the total number of children living in the house to ten before moving to Oak Hill near Delaplane, Virginia. In addition to the Marshall family, a Scotch minister, James Thompson, came to live there temporarily in 1767, later becoming minister of Leeds Parish.

In 1773, he purchased a tract of 1,700 acres on the Fredericksburg-Winchester road next to Little Cobbler Mountain. On his new land to the East, he

built his next house, "Oak Hill."

By this time, he was the leading man of Fauquier. He sat in the House of Burgesses from 1761 to 1767, when he was appointed sheriff of the county. He was made a vestryman of Leeds on 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, Marshall, representing Fauquier, was made 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 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 the greatest 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 1000 acres of his Oak Hill estate and moved his family to Fayette County, Kentucky region, to pursue land warrants he and his family had earned as Revolutionary soldiers. Once there, he was appointed the Virginia government commissioner to settle disputed



Friends of the Hollow, Inc.

The Friends of the Hollow, Inc. is a Virginia non-stock, non-profit charitable corporation formed in 1981 with the purpose of preservation and restoration of The Hollow. At this time, funds are being solicited for the purchase of the property and the restoration of the structure. Ultimately, the Friends hope to open The Hollow to the public and sponsor archaeological excavations on the site.

Basic membership dues are \$10.00 per year and sustaining membership is \$25.00 per year. Additional donations are welcome.

Dues and contributions are fully tax deductible.

Please make checks payable to Friends of the Hollow, Inc. and mail to Friends of the Hollow, 4283 N. 38th Street, Arlington, VA 22207.

land claims and Kentucky agent for his close friend and military comrade George Washington. Washington, after being elected President, appointed Thomas Marshall federal whiskey tax collector. Thomas Marshall died in Kentucky in 1802.

The significance of The Hollow is greatly amplified by the fact that the greatest and most influential jurist in the history of the United States spent his boyhood under its roof. Indeed, in an autobiographical letter written to and at the request of Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story, John Marshall wrote "[a]t the age of twelve, I had transcribed Pope's Essay on Man, with some of his moral essays." By age sixteen, Marshall reported that he "continued my studies with no other aid than my Dictionary" and had "commenced reading Horace and Livy."

We encourage anyone interested in preserving this structure to contribute to our efforts by becoming a Friend of the Hollow at the basic or sustaining membership level (fully tax-deductible) or by making a contribution to the Friends of the Hollow, Inc.