



Foundation Document Overview

George Washington Birthplace National Monument

Virginia



Contact Information

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Purpose



Situated on lands settled by the Washington family, GEORGE WASHINGTON BIRTHPLACE NATIONAL MONUMENT preserves and interprets the birthplace of the first president of the United States, the generations of the Washington family and contemporaries who lived in the vicinity, and the 18th century plantation life and society into which he was born.



Significance

Significance statements express why George Washington Birthplace National Monument resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The park contains the birthplace of George Washington and the lands and archeological resources of the Washington family.
- Established to honor the 200th birthday of the first president of the United States, George Washington Birthplace National Monument represents one of the earliest national and federal efforts to memorialize Washington.
- The birthplace is an excellent example of the rich land and water resources that attracted American Indians and later attracted 17th-century Europeans to the Northern Neck of Virginia. Here, the Washingtons and their contemporaries made the most of these resources to establish family plantations and a society that would become influential in the founding of the nation.
- The lack of development over time has resulted in a quality and breadth of archeological resources throughout the park that contain critical information about the lives of all who inhabited this land. Many of the people at Popes Creek, including the Washington family, are underrepresented in the documentary record; thus, the archeological record has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Cultural Landscape**
- **Historic Structures**
- **Museum Collection**
- **Archeological Resources from the Washington Era**
- **Rural Landscape Context**
- **Viewsheds**
- **Natural Sounds and Night Sky**

George Washington Birthplace National Monument contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Archeological Resources and Collections Related to the Pre-Washington Era**
- **Passive Recreation**
- **Natural Resources**



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- George Washington's birth at Popes Creek and his formative years as the third son of a middling family among Virginia's colonial gentry could hardly predict the emergence of our nation's most iconic leader. Washington's personal journey from the young boy in Northern Neck plantation society to "founding father" provides a window into the circumstances, choices, striving, and deliberate self-formation through which charismatic leaders are made.
- At Popes Creek, George Washington and his family occupied a place at the intersection of many worlds abundant with possibilities. The Washingtons shaped an American identity through the surrounding landscape and through encounters and relationships with diverse peoples including Europeans, American Indians, and enslaved people of African descent who were all struggling to define their place in the Atlantic World.
- The creation of George Washington Birthplace National Monument emerged from more than a century of efforts to memorialize the first president of the United States by his family, local and state advocates, women activists, and an emerging federal preservation community. Collectively, these overlapping and, at times, competing ideals, memories, and aspirations were written on the commemorative landscape in continuously unfolding stories.



Description

George Washington Birthplace National Monument is in the heart of the Northern Neck of Virginia and stands as a tribute to America's founding father, George Washington. Although only here a short time, the culture into which Washington was born helped shape the man he would become and influenced the destiny of the United States of America.

Established to honor the 200th birthday of the first president of the United States, the birthplace represents one of the earliest national and federal efforts to memorialize Washington and remains a physical record of both the lands and waters the Washingtons called home. Many visitors come to the birthplace expecting to find the house in which George Washington was born. Although the park has several Colonial Revival structures that were built in the 1930s, the house in which Washington was born may have been destroyed by fire in the 1770s. The essence of George Washington's story at the site, however, does not reside in wood and brick; rather it is in the land and colonial Tidewater culture, which forever shaped Washington's life.

Although Washington, DC, is only 60 miles north along the Potomac River, the birthplace has retained its rural character and the surrounding area remains essentially undeveloped. Visitors to the birthplace can still experience the sights and sounds that would have been familiar to the Washington family.

