

Thomas Stone

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



National Historic Site
Maryland



IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

Thomas Stone started building his home Haberdeventure in the 1770s as a place to raise his family. A modest family man then, Stone showed promise as a lawyer and local political figure. But soon Stone stepped onto a far larger stage. In 1776 Thomas Stone signed the Declaration of Independence—and wrote himself into history. Stone spent the rest of his life in public service. Haberdeventure, “dwelling place of the winds,” stayed in the Stone family until the 1930s. Part of the National Park System, it commemorates this signer of the Declaration of Independence and honors his life.

Thomas Stone was born at Poynton Manor, near Port Tobacco, in Charles County, Maryland, in 1743. Little is known of his youth, but his education, as befit affluent young men of his day, emphasized Greek and Latin languages and philosophy. This early training later influenced his study of law. By 1765 Stone was practicing law as a circuit rider between Port Tobacco, Frederick, and Annapolis.

Stone was known to weigh all options in making decisions—a trait he carried into politics. At age 31 he was chosen as a member of the Charles County Committee of Correspondence, charged with keeping in touch with the other colonies, as tensions with Great Britain



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, GIFT OF MRS. FRANK J. CLEMENT

mounted. The next year the Maryland Convention chose him for the Second Continental Congress. When it met on May 10, 1775, the colonies were effectively at war. By 1776 Maryland stood for independence from Great Britain.

Had colonists not won the Revolutionary War, Thomas Stone could have been hunted down and hanged as a traitor to the British crown. And Stone, deliberative by nature, did not take lightly his change of heart: from loyal subject to American revolutionary. Independence, much less nationhood, was a fragile hope in 1776. What Stone signed was “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.” The *u* in *united* was not capitalized. Nationhood—a United States of America—still lay in the future. Believing in peace, Stone had nevertheless come to see the colonies’ escalating conflict with the British as the issue of freedom. But there was no script to follow. This was purely improvisation.

“... we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” As you look at Haberdeventure today, try to imagine Thomas Stone and his wife Margaret agonizing over putting everything they owned on the line—their home, the plantation, the slaves, and even Thomas’s neck—against such a fragile hope of freedom for America.

... my heart wishes for peace ... But war, anything is preferable to a surrender of our rights. — Thomas Stone, April 24, 1776

Thomas Stone’s writing desk symbolizes his role as a signer of the Declaration of Independence and one of the drafters of the Articles of Confederation, which

governed the colonies from 1776 to 1789, when the Constitution was adopted. His work as a lawyer had prepared him to serve on the committees of correspon-

dence that kept the colonies informed of political developments leading up to the revolution. Stone barely lived to see the new nation emerge, dying in 1787, age 44.

ALL PHOTOS NPS/MARK MUSE EXCEPT AS NOTED



Visiting the Stone Plantation

Haberdeventure supported 25 to 35 people, including slaves and Thomas Stone's extended family. He enlarged the original 442-acre plantation to 1,077 acres. Wings are connected to the central block of the house by structures called hyphens, in an unusual arc resulting in a five-part colonial house. Fire destroyed the center block in 1977, and the home has been restored to its earliest known configuration, as seen in a 1902 photograph. The house was opened to the public in 1997.



Used as a christening bowl by the Thomas Stone family, this large Chinese export porcelain bowl was in the Stones' home in Annapolis, Md., where the family lived when Thomas died in 1787. Stone's signet ring is shown below.

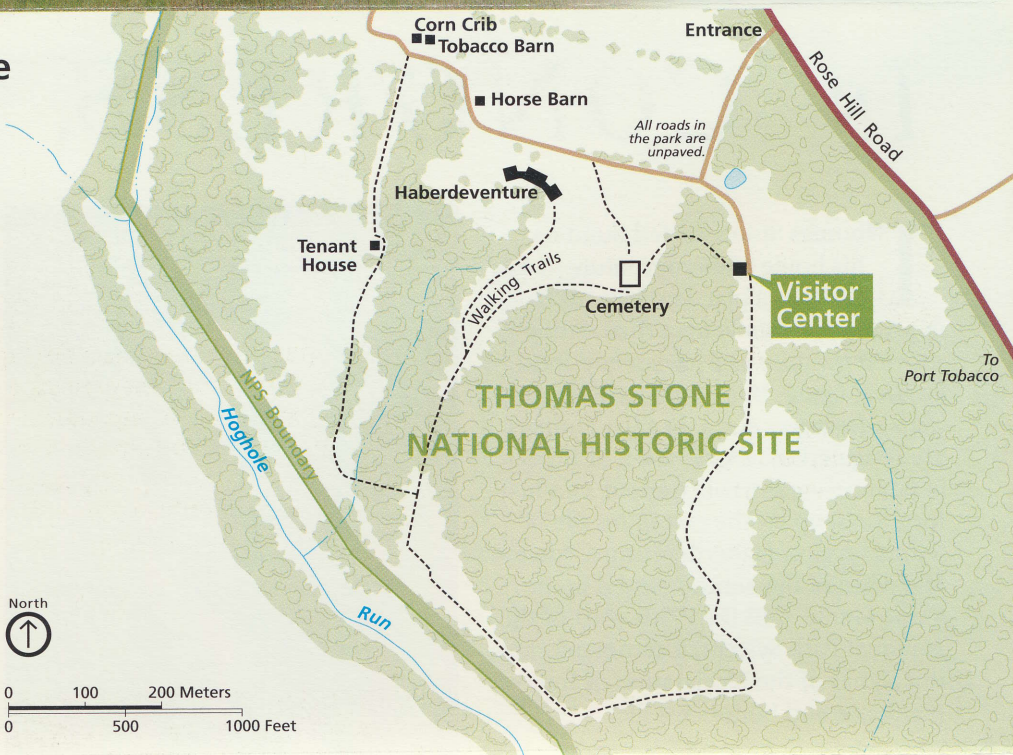


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18th-Century Plantation Life

Thomas Stone bought Haberdeventure as a country home more than for agricultural purposes. Cultivated since the 1680s, the depleted soil could not produce tobacco, the cash crop then. Stone grew grains and livestock and had gardens and orchards, mostly for the plantation residents, not for market. That was typical in the 1700s.

Livestock included chickens, cattle, oxen, sheep, and hogs. Flax and cotton were grown for making cloth. Old photos show apple, peach, cherry, pear, and plum trees, but we don't know when they were planted. (Outdoor photos were not common until the late 1800s.) Thomas Stone moved his wife and family to Annapolis in 1783, leaving a brother to manage the plantation. After Stone died in 1787 it passed down through five generations of Stones until it was sold in 1936.



About Your Visit

The site, at 6655 Rose Hill Road, four miles west of La Plata, Md., is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily in summer and Wednesday to Sunday from Labor Day to Memorial Day. It is closed Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. Admission is free. The visitor center offers information, exhibits, and a book store. It and the house are wheelchair-accessible. Park at the visitor center. (There is accessible parking at the

house, too.) The cemetery is reached by a foot path across the field. Guided tours of the house are offered from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more

about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities visit www.nps.gov.

Information

Thomas Stone
National Historic Site
6655 Rose Hill Road
Port Tobacco, MD 20677
301-392-1776 www.nps.gov/thst



MARYLAND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

In 1928 the Stone family sold the original parlor paneling to the Baltimore Museum of Art.



Barns and outbuildings, dating from the 1840s, reflect the changing needs and uses of five generations of Stones.



Foot paths and old farm roads provide opportunities for walking and exploration.

The Past Is Still Present Here

The Stone family cemetery dates to 1787, final resting place of several generations of Haberdent residents, including Thomas and Margaret Stone. Outside its fence four stones mark the boundary

of an extended cemetery, the final resting place of Stone family slaves. Watch for them as you explore the house and grounds. Several outbuildings, none from

Thomas Stone's time, are witness to the continuing agricultural use of the property through five generations of Stone family ownership from 1770 to 1936.

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