

*Agency Official 106 Effect Report*

*Rehabilitation of Chatham Walkway Surrounding Diana Statue  
Stafford County, Virginia*

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park  
120 Chatham Lane  
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22405**

## **Purpose**

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park was authorized by an act of Congress on February 14, 1927 (44 Stat. 1091). The purpose of the park, as stated in the act, is “to commemorate the Civil War battles of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania Court House, Wilderness, and Chancellorsville, including Salem Church ... to survey, locate, and preserve the lines of the opposing armies in said battles, to open, construct, and repair such roads, highways, paths, and other approaches as may be necessary to make the historical points accessible to the public and to students of said battles ... and together also with such additional land as the Secretary of War may deem necessary for monuments, markers, tablets, roads, highways, paths, approaches, and to carry out the general purposes of this Act.” By Executive Order 6166 in 1933 the park was transferred to the Department of the Interior to be administered by the National Park Service.

In 1975, FRSP took possession of Chatham and opened the site to the public the following year. Since then, Chatham has remained open as a visitor contact site and has also operated as the park administrative headquarters.

## **Need**

In the most recent update to the National Register documentation for Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP (FRSP), the Chatham Designed Landscape and Chatham Walled Garden are recognized as sites contributing to the park’s eligibility. The garden statues, such as Ceres, Flora and Pan are listed as historic associated features.

The formal Chatham Walled Garden was established in the early 1920s by owners Daniel and Helen Devore. The statuary was added between 1921 and 1927, based upon recommendations by the garden’s primary architect Ellen Biddle Shipman. Frances Benjamin Johnston’s 1927 photos of Chatham provide solid documentation for many of the statues. While many pieces of the original statuary survive on the grounds of Chatham, others have disappeared. In the mid-1970s, the John Lee Pratt Estate auctioned off many pieces of the garden furniture, ornaments and statues. One large and prominent statue was removed from the grounds decades earlier, when the Pratts donated the statue “A Companion of Diana” to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) in Richmond, Va.

The origin of the Diana Statue is uncertain, but it was installed with the other garden statuary during the 1920s, under the Devores’ ownership. Unlike most of the other pieces, which were made of limestone, the Diana figure is made of terracotta and was originally painted white. The date of the statue is also uncertain, but is believed to be a copy of Rene Fremin’s (1672-1744) “A Companion of Diana” by M. Fernandez French. It is possible that the statue was created in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as the date 1717 appears on the base of the statue. The Diana statue originally stood upon a stone plinth at the eastern entrance to the garden wall. In 1959, John Lee Pratt donated the Diana statue to the VMFA. Following the removal of Diana, a limestone Ceres statue was

relocated from elsewhere on the property and installed upon the empty plinth. The original location of Ceres is unknown, however it is speculated that it occupied the now-empty stone plinth at the northwestern end of the upper terrace on the west side of the main house. No historic photos of this plinth have been located to indicate what statue was originally located there, however the Ceres statue's original location at this plinth makes sense, as it would complement the Flora statue located across the upper terrace on an identical plinth at the southwestern end of the main house.

In mid-2017, the VMFA decided to deaccession the Diana statue and offered it to the NPS at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP. The park has decided to return the statue to its original location at the entrance to the Chatham garden. This decision and the involved work was reviewed under Section 106 of the NHPA and in consultation with the SHPO was determined to have "no adverse effect" upon the National Register qualities of the Chatham landscape.

Following the conservation work conducted on the Diana statue, concerns were raised about protecting it once it is restored to the Chatham landscape. The terracotta statue is more fragile than the other stone garden statuary. The Diana statue also has quite a few protruding parts, such as her arms and antlers on the small deer that is part of the statue. Concern that these protruding parts might be subject to damage, intentional or otherwise, has resulted in the park's decision to modify the area around the statue in an effort to better protect it.

## **Property Description**

A. Major Physical Components – Chatham sits on 85.01 acres in Stafford County, Va. The tract is a mixture of open fields and wood lots, bisected by a few ravines that feed rainwater runoff to the Rappahannock River. East of the house is a maintained walled garden. Most of the open fields are under cultivation. The house itself is open to the public seven days a week.

B. Historical Significance – The house was constructed by William Fitzhugh, a prominent plantation owner in 18<sup>th</sup> century Virginia. Among his guests at Chatham were George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. During the Civil War, the Union army occupied Chatham beginning in the spring of 1862. President Abraham Lincoln visited his generals at Chatham during that period. In December 1862, Union generals again made Chatham headquarters and both during and after the Battle of Fredericksburg the house and grounds became a hospital for wounded soldiers. Both Clara Barton and the poet Walt Whitman cared for the wounded at Chatham. In the post-Civil War years, the house went through a number of owners, many of whom made changes and additions to the buildings and property. The 1920s walled garden represents the work of Ellen Biddle Shipman, an early twentieth-century New York landscape architect.

C. Archaeological Significance – Numerous archaeological investigations have occurred on the grounds of Chatham. Most have focused on testing for the installation of interpretive signs. In 1977, archaeological investigations occurred around the foundation of the main house in

preparation of NPS work to provide adequate drainage for the building's foundation. In 1979, an overall archaeological survey of the Chatham property was undertaken. Chatham is a significant archaeological site.

D. Historic Landscape Significance – The draft National Register documentation states:

*“The Chatham Designed Landscape and the Chatham Walled Garden are significant under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture as examples of the early twentieth-century work of landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman.”*

A Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) was recently completed for Chatham. It recognizes the alignments of the Garden Paths as contributing, but not the materials. In the 1990s, the NPS replaced the flagstone garden paths with sawcut slate walks. This was done to accommodate universal access.

The Chatham Cultural Landscape Report notes: “Within the Formal Garden area, the Chatham landscape will be rehabilitated to reflect its character following implementation of Ellen Shipman's design. This garden will reflect Ellen Shipman's signature style, with the walled enclosure surrounding carefully articulated flower borders reinforced by axial circulation and punctuated with statuary and structural plantings . . . .”

E. Architectural Significance - The main structures at Chatham were constructed between 1768 and 1771 and served as a domestic site for over 200 years. The Garden Paths are listed on the park's List of Classified Structures – LCIS #82045

## **Proposed Action**

To develop a pedestrian walk around the Diana statue that promotes distance between park visitors and the statue, the park proposes to make some minor redesigns of the path and plantings around the statue. To accomplish this, the park proposes to:

- Remove and relay the sawcut slate walkway. The current configuration is an elliptical path on both sides of the statue. This brings the visitor into close proximity to the statue. By reconfiguring the path to a circle around the statue, the visitor will be more than an arm's length from the statue when on the path. The new path will be 11 feet in diameter.
- The park will install boxwoods around the statue plinth. As these grow and are maintained, they will present yet another deterrent to climbing on the plinth and will keep the visitor at a safer distance.
- The park will install stanchions with rope that will be placed on the perimeter of the 11-foot diameter grass area around the statue. These ropes will be removed once the grass has taken root.

## **Effect Analysis**

It is park's opinion that the preferred alternative will have "no adverse effect" on the historic properties of Chatham.

## **Park Consultation**

The proposal is being circulated to the park's Section-106 advisors for landscape architecture and historic architecture.

The proposal is going through a 30-day public comment and review period. During this time, the project was placed on the NPS public website. The park has contacted representatives of interested local organizations, such as the University of Mary Washington's Department of Historic Preservation, Stafford County, the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, the Friends of Chatham, and the Pamunkey Indian Tribe.

The project will go through a 30-day comment and review period with the Virginia SHPO.

## **Attached Supporting Documentation**

- A. Park Map
- B. Photos

## **Conclusion**

At important historic sites, the proposed undertaking would foster fulfillment of the park's General Management Plan directives to protect cultural resources. This project will have "no adverse effect" upon historic resources.

## **Report Prepared By**

Eric J. Mink  
Section-106 Coordinator/Cultural Resources Management Specialist  
(540) 693-3200