



# Foundation Document Overview

## Harmony Hall

Maryland



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*HARMONY HALL preserves and interprets southern Maryland cultural heritage and the associated historic, scenic, and natural resources of the site. The site also provides opportunities for outdoor recreation as part of a comprehensive system of parks, parkways, and recreational areas in and around the nation's capital that also preserves forests and contributes to the protection of source water and pollution prevention.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Harmony Hall 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.

- Harmony Hall is significant for its association with 18th century colonial settlement and its Georgian architecture, which is characteristic of early Potomac River masonry plantation houses.
- The site contains important historical remnants of the American colonial era and the early commercial use of the Potomac River, including the ruins of the Want Water house and canal.
- Robert Stein, a well-known explorer and linguist, purchased Harmony Hall in 1892 and encouraged emigration from his homeland of Silesia, Prussia, which has influenced the ethnographic make-up of the surrounding community, now known as Silesia, Maryland.
- In the early 20th century, Charles Collins purchased the property with the intention to create a romanticized southern plantation experience on the site. Collins was a segregationist and strategist for the Dixiecrat Party. His efforts to preserve and re-envision the property are a complex and often ignored component of American history that directly influenced the civil rights movement.
- Harmony Hall is the keystone property of the Broad Creek Historic District, the first historic district in Prince George's County, Maryland.



## 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 Landscapes**
- **Harmony Hall**
- **Natural Communities**
- **Archeological Resources**
- **Want Water Ruins and Want Water Canal**



Harmony Hall 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.

- **Recreational Opportunities**



## 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.

- Harmony Hall tells the story of a changing landscape that provides exceptional insight into commercial uses along the Potomac River, the role of the estate as a catalyst for growth and development in the surrounding community, and the evolution of historic preservation practice.
- The Harmony Hall property represents an opportunity to further investigate the archeology and history of human settlement along the Potomac River.
- The Harmony Hall property represents an opportunity to further investigate the cultural and societal history of enslaved workers on a Maryland tobacco plantation.
- The grounds at Harmony Hall protect a variety of natural habitats that support flora and fauna and provide opportunities for visitors to connect with nature and experience outdoor recreation near a densely developed urban area, including the historic loblolly pine trees.
- Harmony Hall was established as a corridor of forest and natural scenery as part of a comprehensive system of parks for recreation, preservation of substantial tracts of forests, and protection of source water in and around the nation's capital.



## Description

Harmony Hall came under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service in 1966, under the authority of Public Law 71-284, the Capper-Cramton Act. The current Harmony Hall property is composed of two historic land patents. Today, the 62-acre property includes the Harmony Hall manor house, an 18th-century, two-and-one-half-story, Georgian country house; the ruins of Want Water, a dwelling built in about 1736; the 1748 Want Water Canal; and a complex cultural landscape and archeological legacy.

Located at the edge of a tributary of Broad Creek to the northwest of Harmony Hall are the ruins of a house constructed in the early 18th century called Want Water. Of the original story-and-one-half building, only the two brick end walls and chimneys, and fieldstone foundation, remain. This house was adjacent to a tobacco inspection station and extant hand-dug canal that were both constructed in 1748. This was the first shipping canal in the Chesapeake region and one of the first in the 13 colonies.

In the 1760s, wealthy landowner and tobacco merchant Enoch Magruder purchased the Harmony Hall and Want Water properties, and created a single estate. Magruder constructed the still-standing Harmony Hall manor house in about 1769 to replace an earlier earthen house that had been constructed in about 1690. Magruder was a slave-owner, and more than 25 enslaved individuals toiled on the Harmony Hall plantation.

A number of early 20th century outbuildings, constructed by Dixiecrat Party founder and strategist Charles Collins, are present on the property. These outbuildings include servants' quarters, a garage, a smokehouse, a bungalow, and sheds. Collins also altered the estate's landscape, and constructed an English cowherd ditch, known as a ha-ha. Although the Harmony Hall manor is currently closed to the public, the site itself offers passive outdoor recreational experiences.

