

# Country Zest + Style Spring 2025

## John Marshall's Boyhood Home in Markham is Secured

By Thomas Marshall deButts

After more than four decades of perseverance, Friends of The Hollow has reached a historic milestone: the formal donation of seven acres of land, including The Hollow house, securing the boyhood home of Chief Justice John Marshall for future generations.

This landmark gift ensures that the 1765 home, where Marshall spent his formative years, will be permanently protected and restored as a national treasure.

The donation was made possible through the generosity of Learning Tree Farms, founded by the late David Collins and his wife, Mary Collins, longtime advocates for the preservation of The Hollow. Their commitment to historic conservation has guaranteed that this important site will be safeguarded for years to come.

"I'm honored that our vision of making The Hollow a place where children and adults can learn about John Marshall's formative years and his lasting impact on American governance has arrived," said Mary Collins, owner of Learning Tree Farms in nearby Delaplane. "We purchased and restored The Hollow many years ago with the intention of ensuring its place in public education and historical interpretation."

When nonprofit Friends of The Hollow was founded in 1981, its mission was based on family history: that The Hollow was John Marshall's boyhood home. The nonprofit was created to bring awareness to what was believed to be Marshall's childhood residence—



Courtesy of Land Trust of Virginia  
An aerial view of The Hollow,  
John Marshall's boyhood home.

and to prove its historical significance.

Decades of research followed. A breakthrough came when multiple dendrochronological analyses dated the home's timbers to a 1763 growing season cut, confirming that it stood during Marshall's youth. Further archaeological evidence, including construction techniques and findings by Williamsburg archaeologists, provided additional support. This rigorous scholarship led to The Hollow's listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Built in 1764-1765 by Thomas Marshall, The Hollow is one of the oldest surviving structures in Fauquier County. From ages 9 to 17, John Marshall lived there, a period that helped shape the intellect and character of the man who would become the most influential and consequential Chief Justice in American history.

Since its inception, Friends of The Hollow has worked to protect and preserve the house. Early

efforts focused on raising awareness and advocating for its protection, culminating in its official historic recognition.

A turning point came in the early 2000s, when Dr. David C. Collins purchased the land and provided critical funding to stabilize the structure. Recognizing its immense historical value, he partnered with Friends of The Hollow to launch architectural and archaeological investigations, which informed efforts to structurally restore the home to its 18th-century appearance. These efforts saved the structure, which had been at serious risk of collapse.

Now, with Learning Tree Farms' donation of The Hollow, the nonprofit will take the next steps toward full restoration and public access. Immediate plans include critical repairs, architectural stabilization, repainting, and structural reinforcements.

With the acquisition complete, Friends of The Hollow is preparing for its next chapter: fundraising to complete restoration efforts and expand public education about John Marshall's early years. The long-term vision includes preserving the home, developing educational programming, and increasing public access to this important site.

As The Hollow moves into this exciting new phase, Friends of The Hollow invites the public to support its restoration efforts, ensuring that this landmark continues to share the story of one of America's greatest judicial minds.

*Details: For further information, visit [www.friendsofthehollow.org](http://www.friendsofthehollow.org).*