



Children of tenant farmers, ca. 1895.



Eliza Ridgely III and Nancy Brown Davis, her caregiver, ca. 1863.



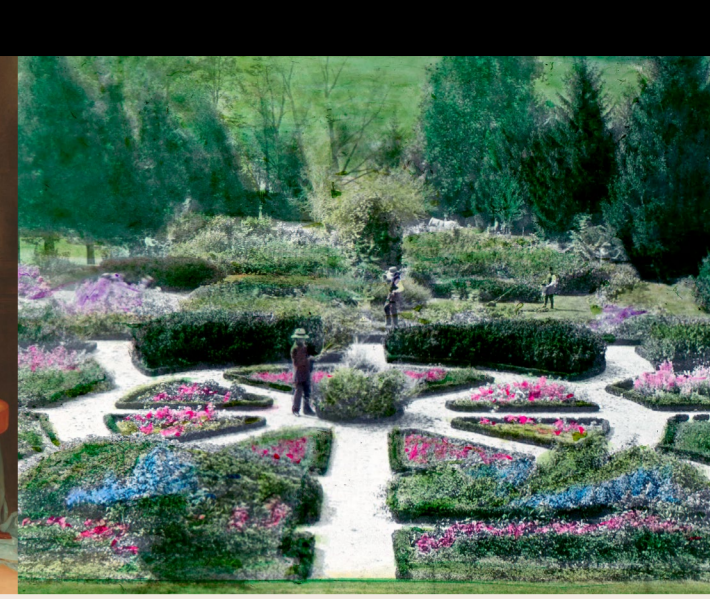
Hampton mansion, 1838, by Robert Carey Long Jr.



Workers near corn crib, ca. 1895.



Lady with a Harp: Eliza Ridgely, by C.G. Stapko, 1950, after Thomas Sully, 1818.



Parterre with gardeners, 1878.

Hampton National Historic Site preserves the center of a once-vast Maryland plantation. A microcosm of the nation, it reflects two centuries of American social, historical, and economic development.

Until 1864, when Maryland abolished slavery, Hampton's economy and social structure rested on a foundation of forced

By the early 1800s Gov. Charles Carnan Ridgely had expanded Hampton to nearly 25,000 acres (right). By 1829 almost 350 enslaved people worked in its operations.



labor. This is reflected in details of the lives of its free and enslaved people and in the skillfully laid stonework of farm buildings, polished surfaces of furnishings, and landscaped grounds.

Hampton's story is the narrative of this place and its people. Visitors can explore the estate, owned by seven generations of the Ridgely family, as it evolved within a nation struggling to define its own concept of freedom.



Farm buildings, ca. 1910.

## Making of Hampton

From the mid-1700s through the mid-1800s, a succession of enslaved, indentured, and free workers made Hampton prosperous. Beginning in 1745, they cleared land and cultivated tobacco on portions of a 1,500-acre tract purchased by Baltimore merchant Col. Charles Ridgely.

The property supplied **Northampton Ironworks (right)** with the natural resources for making iron starting in 1761. Workers refined, forged, and cast ore to make pig iron, **domestic objects (fireback, right)**, and munitions for the Continental Army in the American Revolutionary War.

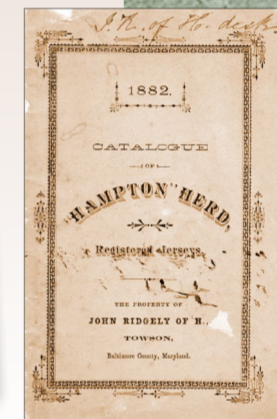
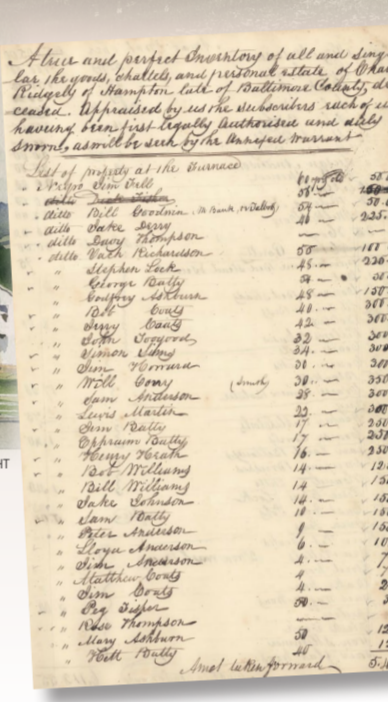
The ironworks closed in the early 1830s. Agriculture, based on enslaved labor until 1864, became the main enterprise on the plantation until the 1940s.



NPS / RICHARD SCHLECHT

**Northampton Ironworks (above, artist's depiction)** provided the income that transformed Hampton into one of the largest plantations in Maryland by 1829. This success was achieved largely through the

labor of enslaved people. Many are listed by name on the **1829 estate inventory of Gov. Charles Carnan Ridgely (right).**



Hampton's diverse agricultural operations, including grain crops, orchards, and livestock, allowed it to prosper for decades. A prize-winning Jersey dairy cattle herd, carefully recorded in this **booklet (left)**, made it possible to manage the switch from enslaved to paid and tenant labor. When **grain farming (above)** became less profitable in the early 1900s, dairy operations were essential.

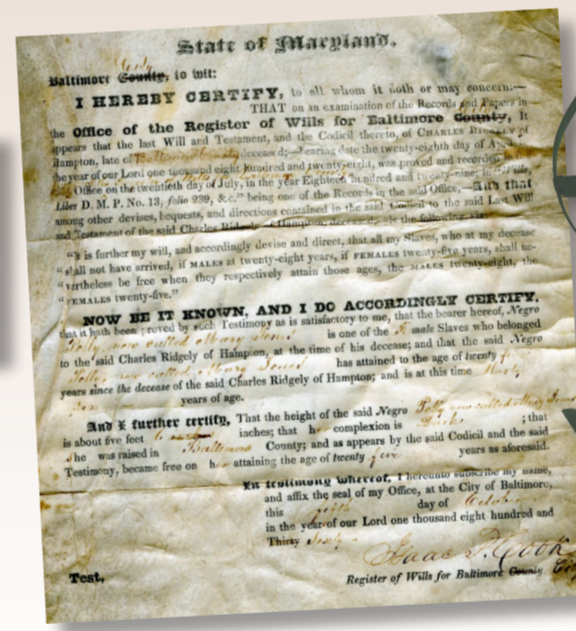
## Slavery and the Quest for Freedom

Hampton reflects the hypocrisy of the nation's founding ideology, that a nation founded on the principles of equality and freedom also embraced slavery. Before Maryland declared emancipation in 1864, about 80 people enslaved here at Hampton sought freedom through escape. Others were manumitted (freed) by their enslavers, who set the terms.

Gov. Charles Carnan Ridgely's 1829 will manumitted or gave delayed manumission to some of the nearly 350 people he enslaved. This action split many families apart. It freed Polly Batty, an enslaved woman at the ironworks, but her five-year-old daughter, Nancy Brown, remained enslaved for 20 more years. Upon receiving her freedom, Nancy continued working at Hampton as a paid caregiver (**above left**).

Despite the confines of enslavement, many individuals moved to seize control over their own lives. Rebecca Posey sought her freedom from Hampton and succeeded (**newspaper notice, Baltimore Sun, August 26, 1852, above**). Mary Jones petitioned for her **certificate of freedom** in 1860 (**right**).

Eleven bells like this one (**right**) hang in a servants' entrance between the family's living quarters and the kitchen. The bells directed the lives of Hampton's house servants, summoning them to work.



**Head coachman Nathan Harris (above)** was known as a "famous driver of four horses." After emancipation, his skill empowered him to choose a life

away from Hampton. Harris established a successful stable near Baltimore.

## National Significance

By the mid-1900s Hampton farm was no longer financially viable. When National Gallery of Art director David Finley visited to consider buying a painting in the mansion, he realized Hampton's significance. Charitable foundations, preservation organizations, and the federal government worked in cooperation to make it a national historic site. Its 1948 designation was a high point in the developing historic preservation movement in the United States. It led to the founding of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Today the stories, landscape, buildings, and artifacts left by the diverse people of Hampton offer a window into our nation's history. Many of the key buildings and features are labeled on the map (**other side**).



Because of its cultural and natural resources, Hampton National Historic Site is considered a "national treasure." The National Park Service, Avalon



Foundation, and Society for the Preservation of Maryland Antiquities formed a partnership to preserve and operate Hampton.

**Lady with a Harp: Eliza Ridgely**, painted by Thomas Sully in 1818, leaves Hampton for the National Gallery of Art (**above**). A copy now hangs in the mansion.



A two-year restoration of the mansion (**drawing room, 1949, above**) follows the departure of John Jr. and Jane Ridgely (**left**), with butler Thomas Holmes (**Baltimore Sun Magazine, August 1948**).

## Hampton Timeline



Capt. Charles Ridgely by John Hesselius, ca. 1765.

**1745** Col. Charles Ridgely buys 1,500 acres in northern Baltimore County to farm tobacco.

**1761** Col. Ridgely and his sons, John and Capt. Charles Ridgely (**left**), found Northampton Ironworks.

**1776–83** During the American Revolutionary War, Northampton Ironworks supplies the Continental Army with munitions.

**1783–90** Enslaved, free, and indentured people build the mansion for the Ridgely family.

**1829** Gov. Charles Carnan Ridgely's will grants freedom or delayed freedom to many enslaved people at Hampton. The estate is divided among his 10 heirs, beginning an economic decline.

**1841** Having reestablished the practice of enslavement by 1830, John Ridgely buys three



Milk crock, ca. 1880.

more families in 1841—the last large purchase of enslaved people at Hampton.

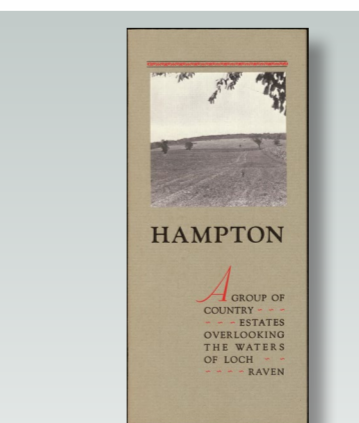
**1861** As the Civil War begins, 61 people are enslaved at Hampton.

**1864** Slavery is abolished in Maryland, legally allowing newly freed people to stay or leave Hampton.

**1872** Dairy farming becomes the primary focus of operations at Hampton.

**1906** Facing economic realities, the Ridgelys give up their Baltimore townhouse to live at Hampton full-time.

**1929** Before the Great Depression starts, the

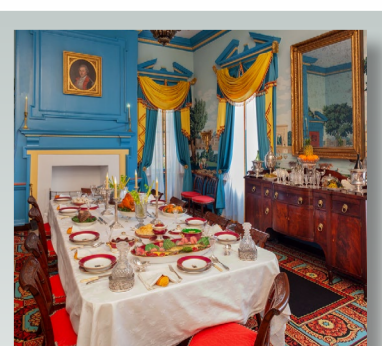


Hampton Development Company brochure, ca. 1929.

Ridgelys form the Hampton Development Company to sell acreage from the estate.

**1944** The director of the National Gallery of Art visits Hampton, realizes its national significance, and becomes the primary advocate for its preservation.

**1948** After negotiations with the Ridgelys, National Park Service, and private partners and organizations, Congress designates Hampton National Historic Site.



Dining room, mansion (restored to its appearance in 1820).

**1950** After two years of restoration, Hampton National Historic Site opens to the public.

# Home Farm

The home farm occupies a portion of the 1,500-acre parcel that Col. Charles Ridgely purchased in 1745. Most people who lived and worked here were enslaved or indentured. At first they farmed tobacco, a cash crop for export, and grew produce for themselves and the livestock. The colonel's son, Capt. Charles Ridgely, lived in the farmhouse while he managed the ironworks and supervised the construction of the mansion.



**Overseer's House and Enslaved Quarters**  
The overseer lived in the gambrel-roofed farmhouse (built 1745, later additions) starting in the 1790s. Enslaved farm laborers, and later tenant farmers, lived in the two stone buildings (built ca. 1854) behind the overseer's house.



**Dairy**  
Built ca. 1790 over a spring. Dairymaids like Lucy Williams, an enslaved woman, processed and stored milk and butter here. The dairy earned a good income throughout the 1800s and early 1900s.



**Mansion**  
Built 1783-90. At first the mansion served as the Ridgelys' summer retreat. The family and visitors lived in the tall central block, which was flanked by service wings.



**Orangery**  
This modern orangery replaced the original Greek Revival structure, which burned in 1926. The orangery housed citrus fruit trees in the winter, providing fruit throughout the year.



**Ridgely Family Cemetery**  
The cemetery and family vault hold dozens of graves from multiple generations. Members of the Ridgely family, formerly enslaved servant Nancy Brown Davis, and housekeeper Selena Devlin are buried here.



**Falling Gardens**  
Behind the mansion, a massive earth-moving project created ramps descending to parterres (patterned flower beds). In the late 1800s these beds required over 8,000 plants grouped in geometric and carpetlike designs.



**Cedar of Lebanon**  
The Hampton landscape includes many non-native plants and trees acquired by the family. Eliza Ridgely may have brought this cedar home from a trip to the Mediterranean in the 1830s.

OVERSEER'S HOUSE AND ENSLAVED QUARTERS—© ROBERT CREAMER JR.  
ALL OTHER PHOTOS—NPS / MAXIMILIAN FRANZ PHOTOGRAPHY  
MAP—NPS WITH GUTHRIE ALEXANDER



## Plan Your Visit

Hampton's grounds are open year-round from dawn to dusk. Restrooms are located near each of the three parking lots.

Visit the park website for the most up-to-date information about activities, events, tours, and hours of operation. The mansion is open by guided tour only. For safety and security, mansion tours have a limited capacity.

Hampton National Historic Site is north of Baltimore, near Towson, Maryland. From I-695 take exit 27-B North (Dulaney Valley Road), make an immediate right onto Hampton Lane, and follow the signs. From downtown Baltimore take I-83 (Jones Falls Expressway) to I-695 East, toward Towson, to exit 27-B.

**Accessibility** We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check the park website.

**More Information**  
Hampton National Historic Site  
535 Hampton Lane  
Towson, MD 21286  
410-823-1309  
www.nps.gov/hamp  
Follow us on social media. The official NPS App will help guide your visit.

Hampton National Historic Site is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more, visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

**National Park Foundation**  
Join the park community.  
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