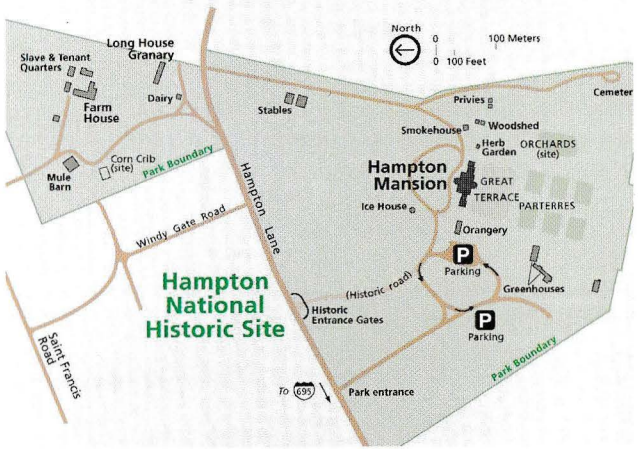
Saucer Magnolia,
Magnolia x soulangiana

Hampton's Saucer Magnolia, planted around 1832, was described in one of A.J. Downing's books. Covered with pink flowers in early April before leaves emerge, it is a hybrid of two Asian species developed at France's Royal Institute of Horticulture.



Did you know…?

A cultural landscape is a geographic area, including both natural and cultural resources, associated with an historic event, person or activity. Cultural landscapes can range from large rural tracts of land covering several thousand acres, to estates with formal gardens like Hampton, and urban parks.

Natural features, such as landforms, soils, and the plants and animals that live there, are only a part of the cultural landscape. Also included are physical materials such as buildings and roads and the many ways the land was used. Taken together, the features of a cultural landscape reflect our cultural values and traditions.

Cultural landscapes are dynamic and change over time. The landscape at Hampton has evolved since the land was purchased by the Ridgely Family in 1745. It chronicles the history of land use by one family for more than 200 years.

Cultural landscapes are important to everyone. They are our legacy. Besides providing recreational and educational opportunities, they help us understand our history, our nation and ourselves.

For more information, go to **www.nps.gov/hamp.**

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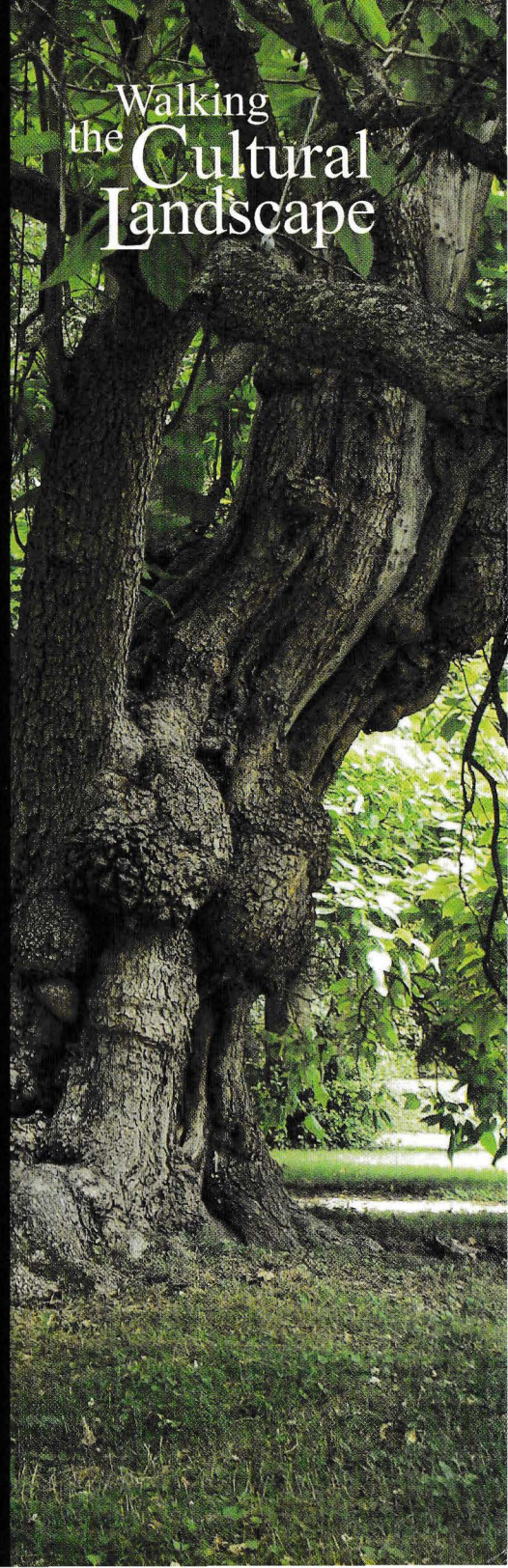


Walking the Cultural Landscape

Hampton National Historic Site:

Introducing the Cultural Landscape

Many visitors have already discovered the elegant Ridgely family home and furnishings at Hampton National Historic Site. Those who take the time to explore, however, will soon discover that many facets of our nation's culture and history are beautifully illustrated in the landscape at Hampton as well.

Contemporaries once exclaimed that the vast Hampton Estate extended "as far as you can see." Though the 24,000-acre plantation is gone, the 63-acre park you see here today remains a significant cultural landscape. These historic grounds, with the mansion as its centerpiece, served as administrative head-quarters for the operation of a unique agricultural, industrial, and commercial empire for two hundred years. The size of the family's holdings, combined with the arrangement of the mansion on the hilltop and the layout of the Home Farm, projected the family's power in economic, political, and social terms to all passersby.

One portion of Hampton's cultural landscape that continually captures the imagination of visitors is the Falling Garden, first laid out in the late 1790s. During colonial and early federal times, the homes of many Chesapeake gentry sat on a rise of ground terraced with pleasure gardens. In Hampton's case, a Great Terrace was built on the South Lawn of the Ridgely mansion, followed by five descending terraces connected by grass ramps. Though once planted with boxwood in ornate, highly manicured, matching geometric designs called parterres, the gardens now feature a variety of plantings.

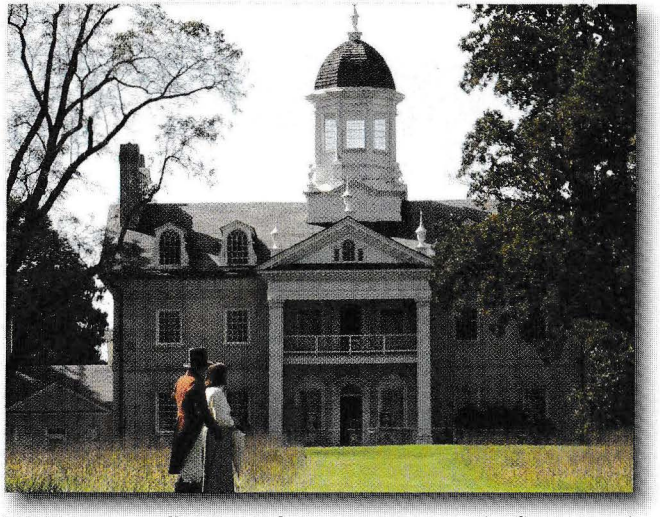
Hampton offers visitors the rare opportunity to experience a landscape that has evolved over time from its 18th century origins. Many of its trees date from the time of the mansion's construction and were planted as features of the original designed landscape. Just as today's gardeners follow popular trends with plants and design principles, so had the Ridgelys in their cultivation of the site. Each generation added their own sensibilities and tastes to the landscape of Hampton, resulting in a landscape that accurately chronicles two hundred years of gardening history.

This walking tour of Hampton National Historic Site invites visitors to experience the glories of the South Lawn and Falling Garden, and of prized trees spread throughout the estate. It also highlights other important areas of the cultural landscape, including the pastoral North Lawn, the Family Cemetery, and the scenic Home Farm, where the estate's overseer, slaves, indentured servants and tenant farmers once lived and worked.

Visitors can explore how the landscape is organized and experience first hand how the central axial view from the mansion created picturesque effects, while simultaneously imposing visual and virtual control over the Home Farm.

Together, all these elements create a beautiful and informative stroll — both through the Hampton Estate, and through American history.

The Mansion and North Lawn
Home and Horticulture



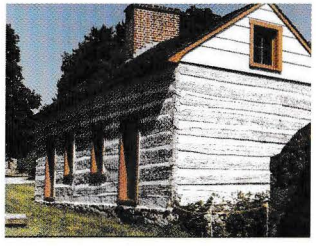
You are standing on the North Lawn of the Hampton Mansion, the centerpiece of a 63-acre park, and remnant of what was once a spectacular 24,000 acre estate.

Two centuries back, contemporaries claimed that Hampton Estate — an area roughly half the size of modern day Baltimore — extended "as far as you can see." This sprawling plantation, conspicuous in its Upper South location, was an early agricultural, industrial, and commercial empire developed by the Ridgely family. Between 1745 and 1948, seven generations of Ridgelys owned this land and headed a social hierarchy that, at its zenith, utilized up to 350 slaves in addition to indentured servants and free workers.

Designated as a National Historic Site on June 22, 1948, Hampton was the first — and to date, the only — national park to be based on architectural significance. But clearly there was, and still is, much more to this site than the magnificent mansion at its core.

The Hampton saga began in 1745, with Colonel Charles Ridgely's purchase of 1,500 acres in the wilderness north of Baltimore. The first master of Hampton was his son, Captain Charles Ridgely. With wealth acquired from business acumen, Charles constructed his "house in the forrest" in late Georgian architectural style.

After seven years of construction, the mansion was completed in 1790, aptly reflecting the enormous wealth



The Mansion and North Lawn Continued

and status of its owners.

Landscape gardening was always a central Ridgely family interest. The mansion and its surroundings were specifically designed as the physical, topographic, and administrative center of this vast property. The house was set on a ridge, and oriented to take advantage of the views. Though the gently sloping North Lawn and tall, scattered shade trees appear natural and unplanned, that area was designed in the naturalistic or pastoral style, begun in late eighteenth century English landscape parks and popularized stateside by noted landscape gardener, Andrew Jackson Downing. The select groupings of tree species here include black walnut, maple, tulip poplar, sycamore, beech, spruce, and oak.

The masters who owned the plantation, and the slaves and indentured servants who toiled to make it economically viable, are reflected in the axial symmetry of the site's two most prominent structures. Down the hill, at the far end of the fields and meadows from the elegantly extravagant mansion, is the simple overseer's house, surrounded by functional farm outbuildings and slave quarters.

The South Lawn
Bowling Greens and Falling Gardens

As you look about the South Lawn, you can see that the formal pleasure gardens dominating the south side of the mansion starkly contrast the naturalistic English-styled North Lawn.

Adjacent to the mansion is the 250x150 foot Great Terrace, or "bowling green." Its serpentine walk, similar to those at Monticello and Mount Vernon, encourages visitors to slow down, meander, and catch glimpses of stunning vistas. Below that green is Hampton's famed Falling Garden, connected by descending grass ramps — a style particular to the Chesapeake region — as well the remains of a household orchard.

The second master of Hampton, Maryland Governor Charles Carnan Ridgely (1760-1829), expanded and improved the land both for its profitable agricultural production and for the sheer beauty of the landscape. Still, the family member most credited for the enduring horticultural glory of the South Lawn was the accomplished Eliza Eichelberger Ridgely (1803-1867), third mistress of the mansion. Eliza was an avid horticulturalist whose many improvements included importing a Cedar of Lebanon seedling that is now a mammoth tree, and altering the manicured, geometric boxwood design of the parterres, replacing many with Victorian carpet bedding. Eliza also imported Italian marble urns to line the serpentine walk path — a detail repeated in the architecture of the mansion.

The Ridgelys had an enduring interest in horticulture, as evidenced here in the gnarled Southern Catalpa, Empress Tree, Saucer Magnolia, and Weeping Japanese Pagoda.

The Home Farm:
Farm and Function

Standing on the front porch of the Farmhouse, look up toward the mansion. The balance of power between the Ridgelys and their workforce — the prominence of master over overseer, and overseer over slave and servant — is reflected in the dramatic vistas here. One Ridgely descendant noted it resembled "a settlement, beyond and above which rose the massive structure...like the castle of some feudal lord."

Over the decades, the Ridgely estate varied from 5,000 to as many as 24,000 acres. Because of the size, it was subdivided into smaller farms, each with its own staff, structures, and specific purpose. The Home Farm, designed like a picturesque village in a style called *ferme ornee* (ornamental farm), was the only one visible from the mansion. It was in the best interest of the antebellum Ridgelys to ensure their workers looked and felt reasonably well-kept. Escape from slavery was only 26 miles away — the length of a marathon run — in the free state of Pennsylvania.

The Farmhouse — also called the Overseer's House or the Lower House — was the economic center that supported the mansion. Dating from the early eighteenth century, it was probably part of the property the Ridgelys purchased in 1745. From the front porch you can see the hog barn/granary, mule barn, and dairy building. The dairy, constructed by 1800, was built above a subterranean spring which emerged from a gothic stone arch and flowed inside the building, providing natural cooling for the milk. The structure functioned continually through the early twentieth century, providing dairy products first for the estate, and later for sale to the public.

Move now to the rear of house to view the last of the many slave quarters that were once on site, as well as an ash house and a log structure.

The two slave quarters, built of stone and dating from about 1845-1850, probably replaced the original wooden ones. Slaves were the primary workforce at Hampton for almost 100 years, and numbered some 350 at their height. Enslaved people at Hampton worked in industrial jobs at the Ridgely's Northampton Iron Furnace, in agricultural labor on the Ridgely estate, and as domestic servants in the mansion, gardens, or horse stables.

The Family Cemetery
Garden of Memory

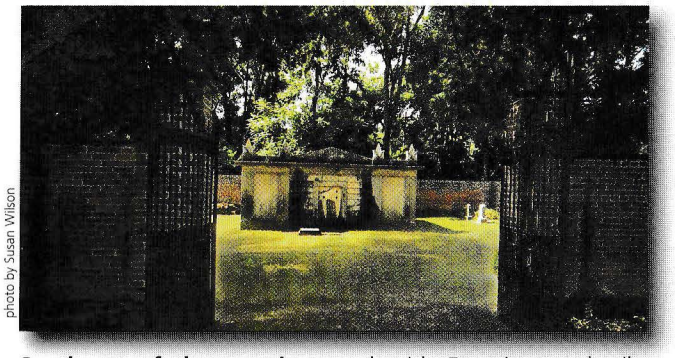


photo by Susan Wilson

Southeast of the mansion, walk down the gravel lane that winds through a small woodland filled with mixed deciduous trees, holly, and spruce. At the end of the road you'll find an island of greenery with a gingko tree at its center. Family legend states this was where Ridgely family pets were buried — dogs, cats, and perhaps even a beloved snake.

The Ridgely graves are just beyond the ornate iron gates that guard the walled, red brick family burying ground. Probably built around 1815, the cemetery was mandated in the will of Captain Charles Ridgely, the first master of Hampton. The central feature here is a gray, marble-block mausoleum where some 36 Ridgelys are buried. Like the entrance, this vault is neo-Classical with Egyptianate details, popular cemetery motifs in the decades following the American and French Revolutions. Later residents are interred in separate in-ground graves, featuring Classical, Egyptian, and Gothic Revival designs, as well as simpler modern styles. As in many Victorian-era cemeteries, a sculpture of a lamb graces a child's grave.

Ridgely slaves were reportedly buried in a site "beyond the family cemetery," though their exact location is unknown. In colonial and early federal America, those on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder — whether urban or rural, black or white — were often buried without caskets in unmarked or group graves. Burial in perpetuity and grave markers were the domain of wealthier classes and designated heroes.

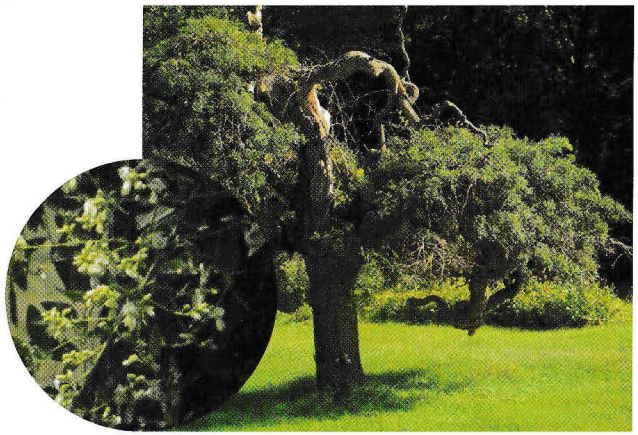
The Prized Flora of Hampton National Historic Site

Cedar of Lebanon,
Cedrus libani

Planted around 1840 in an area originally designed as an open bowling green, Hampton's Cedar of Lebanon is now one of the largest in Maryland. Its unusually expansive growth blocks the southern vista and garden views from the mansion.

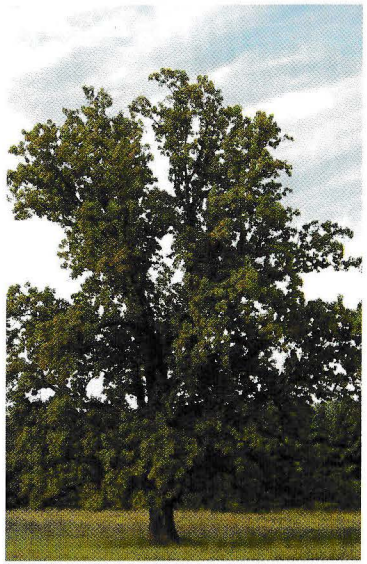
Japanese Pagoda Tree,
Styphonolobium japonica 'Pendula'

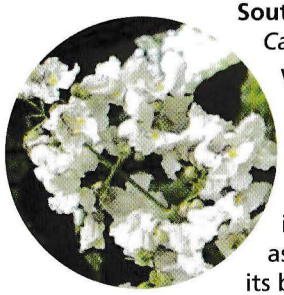
The Japanese Pagoda, also called the Chinese Scholar Tree, is native to China and Korea, and commonly planted around Buddhist temples. Hampton has two of the weeping form, one of which is the largest in the State of Maryland.



Tulip Poplar,
Liriodendron tulipifera

Easily recognized by its simple, tulip-shaped leaves, Tulip Poplar comprise some of Hampton's largest and most notable trees. Its flowers are an important source of nectar for honey, and the wood is used to make furniture and other products.



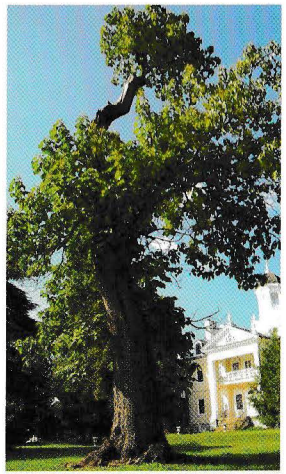


Southern Catalpa,
Catalpa bignonioides

When Hampton became a National Historic Site in 1948, many of the estate's trees were core dated, placing the catalpas on the Great Terrace in 1774. The tree is also known as Indian Bean because of its bean-like fruit.

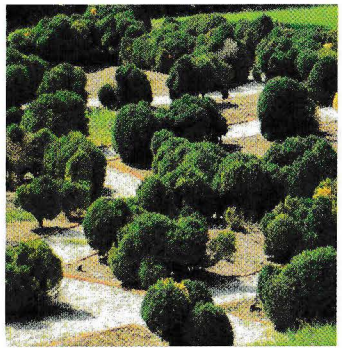
Empress Tree,
Paulownia tomentosa

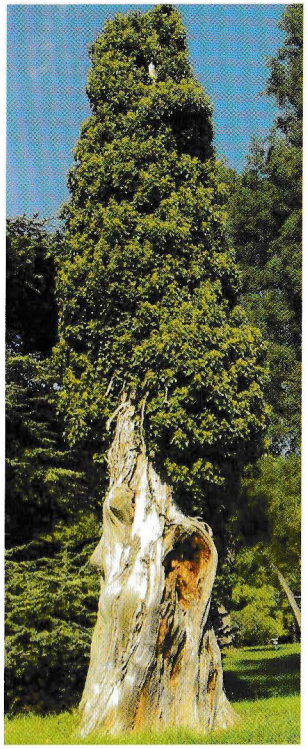
Also called the Princess Tree, and planted about the same time as the adjacent Cedar of Lebanon, this tree is noted for its large leaves and lavender foxglove-like spring flowers. The wood is prized for manufacturing specialty items in Asia.



American Boxwood, *Buxus sempervirens,* and
English Boxwood, *B. sempervirens 'Suffructicosa'*

Long cultivated in gardens and steeped in legend, these two types of boxwood have been grown at Hampton for more than two centuries. Native to Southern Europe and Northern Africa. The wood is extremely hard and used for carving.





Red Cedar,
Juniperus virginiana

The row of red cedar lining the Great Terrace adds an architectural element to the garden, and dates from the time the gardens were first laid out. The fragrant wood is used for chests, closet linings and ornamentation.

Black Walnut,
Juglans nigra

The Ridgelys planted walnuts throughout the estate, both for their delicious nuts and beautiful wood. A tree native to the area, black walnut was carved to create the handrail on the mansion staircase leading to the second floor.