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Historic London Town and Gardens Reveals a “Lost” Colonial Port Town
Museum features 18th c. Tavern, Reconstructed Village, and Interactive Exhibit

EDGEWATER, MD – Historic London Town and Gardens is a 23-acre museum and public garden on the banks of the South River, minutes from Annapolis and the Chesapeake Bay. Today, visitors can discover colonial history and heritage through its historic 1760 tavern turned almshouse, reconstructed colonial buildings, and a large interactive exhibit featuring artifacts unearthed onsite. London Town also offers an array of public programs, including living history weekends, summer concerts, and a winter evening event series called Illuminated London Town. Visitors can also enjoy more than 10 acres of woodland and ornamental gardens, featuring beautiful collections of camellias, magnolias, peonies, and other exotic and native plants. Equally spectacular is the view of the South River, which encircles the property.

London Town tells the story of the colonial port town of London, which was founded in 1683. It became an important trading spot for tobacco and other goods. At least four slave ships are known to have docked and sold enslaved people at London. Located along the King’s Highway, London Town was part of a major travel route between Charleston, SC and Boston, MA. The town flourished for about a hundred years, before succumbing to changes in travel routes, fluctuations in the tobacco market, and the chaos of the American Revolution. By the early 19th century, most of the town had turned into plantations and became increasingly rural.

“London Town tells a different story than many other historic sites,” says executive director Rod Cofield. “Instead of focusing on the elite, London Town shares the experience of the working class, the indentured servant, and the enslaved person. It’s a tale of taverns, tenements, and trade. We hope that visitors discover a different side of American history here.”

Parts of London Town remained saved from modern day development thanks to William Brown, who built an upscale tavern and boarding house around 1760. Located on the bluffs of the South River, the Georgian-style structure features all-header brick bondwork on all four elevations, a unique architectural feature not seen elsewhere in the Chesapeake region. At its height, Brown lived and worked in the tavern with his family, indentured servants, and enslaved people. However, he never fully finished the building’s interior. Nonetheless, the tavern played a central role in local colonial life, serving as a place where news, gossip, business dealings, and entertainment came together over food and drink.



In 1783, George Washington stopped for dinner in London Town after resigning his commission as General of the Continental Army.

After London Town's importance decreased, Brown lost his building to creditors. In the 1820s, it became the almshouse for people who are poor and mentally ill in Anne Arundel County, preserving the land from other construction efforts and beginning a new chapter of history, becoming home to dozens of people at any given time. The House remained an almshouse until 1965 with the passage of the Welfare Act. Anne Arundel County opened the land to the public in the early 1970s. The William Brown House achieved National Historic Landmark status in 1970. Since then, extensive archaeology and historical research has been done on London Town, rediscovering and sharing this nearly forgotten port.

Today, Historic London Town and Gardens is operated by the London Town Foundation, a 501c3 nonprofit, in partnership with Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks, who own the land and buildings. In addition to preserving and sharing the William Brown House, the Foundation has reconstructed two other buildings on their archaeological footprint, including the Lord Mayor's Tenement and Carpenter Shop. A modern visitor center features the *Discover London Town* interactive exhibit, which showcases artifacts discovered onsite and in the area. This includes the Mermaid Plate, a c.1720 delftware plate unearthed from the remnants of a cellar from another tavern onsite. Featuring an untraditional mermaid, the Mermaid Plate has become the logo for London Town.

Over 25,500 people visit London Town annually, including more than 5,500 students, teachers, and chaperones for its hands on educational programming. Over 10,000 visit the site for its history and horticulture or for one its many public programs. More than 10,000 celebrate milestones, such as weddings, onsite with its ornamental gardens and views of the river.

The Foundation recently approved a new operations and capital improvement plan with more exciting work slated, such as plans for an expanded waterfront area, where tall ships could dock.

More about London Town can be found at www.historiclondontown.org with high-resolution photos available to download at www.historiclondontown.org/media or by contacting Lauren Silberman, deputy director, at 410-222-1919 x205 or lauren@historiclondontown.org.

Historic London Town and Gardens is a 23-acre non-profit museum and public garden featuring history, archaeology, and horticulture. Explore the historic area, which includes the circa 1760 William Brown House, a National Historic Landmark, and reconstructed colonial buildings. Wander the ten-acre woodland garden of native plants and exotic species arranged along a one-mile trail before enjoying the seasonal ornamental gardens overlooking the South River. Our modern Visitor Center and Pavilion support weddings, business meetings, and family events, as well as school and group tours. More about London Town at www.historiclondontown.org.