

Historical Beginnings of Wye

"People...since this place has been in existence have wondered 'What goes on there? What do people do there?'"

—Anne Whaley, Daughter of Wye Plantation Farm Manager, John R. "Dickie" Whaley

Steeped in history and natural beauty on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Wye Plantation, later becoming the Aspen Institute's Wye River Campus, has its origins with the founders of America. Early Maryland colonial leaders such as



Original Wye Plantation house

William Paca and the Tilghmans influenced the property. But, it was industrial magnate Arthur A. Houghton Jr.'s vision for the property that charted a course for the 1000 acres to become a gathering place where ideas and innovations evolved. His eventual donation of portions of the property to the Aspen Institute and the University of Maryland created a legacy which has significantly impacted agriculture, the environment, education, business, and government.

"It is very important for people to understand just how important the property has been intellectually to the country...as a key place to bring people from government, from businesses, from civil society, from universities to grapple with critical issues."

—Elliot Gerson, Executive Vice President of Aspen Institute for Policy and Public Programs



Interior of 1939 library

Upon purchasing the property in 1938, Arthur Houghton spent weekends and summers accompanied by family at his beloved "Wye" enjoying the natural beauty of its agricultural setting on the Wye River. He immediately became interested in raising beef cattle and began breeding from an Aberdeen Angus herd in Scotland. He hired Williamsburg restoration architects and landscape designers to further his vision for the estate. A library was built adjacent to his home which housed his personal collection of rare books and manuscripts. During the work week, he served as president of Steuben Glass, a subsidiary of Corning Glass, Inc., founded by his great-grandfather, Amory Houghton in 1851.

As a philanthropist in New York City, Arthur served on many prominent boards, supporting the arts and helping to establish the Lincoln Center. He endowed the Houghton Library for rare books and manuscripts at Harvard University and from 1940 to 1942, served as the Curator of Rare Books at the Library of Congress.

"He must have been on a rollercoaster. Running from one job to the other...the Houghton Library, the Library of Congress, and getting Wye going... any one of those a full-time job."

—Hollister Houghton, Daughter of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr.



Arthur Houghton with Steuben designers Sidney Waugh (center) and John Gates (right).



1780s Wye Plantation's terraced gardens laid out by Luke O'Dio, landscape designer of Wye Hall, owned by Declaration of Independence Signer William Paca (above) on neighboring Wye Island

1811 Wye Plantation inherited by Juliana Tilghman Paca, wife of William Paca's son, John; an over 500-acre working wheat and corn plantation supported by 40 to 70 enslaved African Americans

1933 Arthur becomes president of Steuben Glass, taking the division of Corning in a new direction



1938 Arthur purchases Paca Farm plus five adjacent parcels totaling 1100 acres and creates the Wye Angus cattle herd managed by Jim Lingle

1945 Restoration completed of historic terraced gardens and renovation of older structures



1954 University of Maryland begins cooperative research on the Wye Angus cattle herd

1962 Nuclear fallout shelter constructed underground at Wye for protection of Houghton family and employees

1963 Arthur establishes non-profit Wye Institute which acquires nearby land at Cheston-on-Wye creating Wye Woods site

1973 Arthur constructs new manor house to replace the original main house at Wye Plantation

1974 Girls are admitted to the Wye Institute camp

1978 Arthur donates the Wye Angus cattle herd to University of Maryland and hosts first annual auction to sustain the herd

1979 Wye Institute donates Wye Woods camp property to the Aspen Institute

1982 Aspen Institute partners with University of Maryland to share use of land and facilities; University establishes Wye Research & Education Center adjacent to Wye Woods



1983 Arthur donates additional land with partially-completed River House to Aspen Institute

1990 Arthur dies in Florida

1991 University of Maryland opens the Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. Laboratory at Wye Research & Education Center

2006–present Aspen Institute establishes Wye Fellows program with Queen Noor of Jordan as the inaugural speaker followed by other prominent leaders including Madeleine Albright, Julian Bond and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

1747 Col. Edward Tilghman builds original brick Wye Plantation house

1864 Slavery abolished in Maryland

1906 Arthur A. Houghton Jr., great-grandson of Amory Houghton, founder of Corning Glass, is born in New York



1939 Inspired by Williamsburg restoration, Arthur constructs library next to original main house, plus brick home for farm manager at newly designed Farm Square

1940 Arthur appointed Curator of Rare Books at the Library of Congress

1942 Arthur leaves the Library of Congress accepting a commission in the Army Air Corps

1961 First annual Independence Day Ceremony for the general public at site of 1910 memorial to William Paca

1966 Newly constructed middle school boys' integrated summer educational camp opens at Wye Woods as a "voyage of discovery for the young person"

1977 Great Britain's Princess Anne is a guest at the Houghton manor house during her visit to Queen Anne's County to commemorate statue of Queen Anne in Centreville



1981 Arthur donates Wye Plantation and manor house (later known as Houghton House) to Aspen Institute

1989 River House construction is completed and opens as a third Aspen Institute conference facility

1998 President Bill Clinton, Palestinian Chairman Yasir Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and King Hussein of Jordan meet at Aspen Institute's conference facilities resulting in the Wye Accord for Peace in the Middle East



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

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Photo credits appear in "Escape to Aspen Wye" video.

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aspeninstitute.org/videos/escape-to-aspen-wye-a-gathering-of-ideas-and-innovation

Little Known Facts about Wye...

A neighbor to Wye Plantation was William Paca, one of Maryland's signers of the Declaration of Independence, a three-term Governor of Maryland and a Federal judge.

Arthur Houghton's personal book collection included Jonathan Swift's diaries, the Brownings' love letters, "The Gutenberg Bible," Lewis Carroll's original manuscripts, and Shakespeare's first folios.

The belief that the monument to William Paca at Wye also marks his gravesite is questioned by Paca scholars who have no knowledge of his actual burial location.

The former Whitby's Store in the nearby village of Carmichael was one of the area's first "convenience stores." Residents could fuel their vehicles, purchase household items, and pick up their mail along with their groceries.

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Arthur Houghton's Vision for Wye

In the mid 1950s, Arthur turned to environmental research for the betterment of the food supply working with the University of Maryland (UMD) Agricultural Experiment Station (MAES). Establishing the foundation, Wye Institute, in 1963, Arthur expanded his philanthropic interests to stimulate educational, cultural and economic opportunities in the region. He built contemporary facilities at Wye Woods to launch a summer educational camp for middle school boys designed to promote civil understanding and in Arthur's words, "stir the imagination of extraordinarily promising young persons"¹ from Maryland's Eastern Shore. The camp was integrated and eventually included girls—open to all students regardless of race, religion or ethnic origin.

By the late 1970s, Arthur's philanthropy included his donation of the Angus cattle herd to UMD to continue the research he had started. Cattlemen from around the world were beating a path to Wye to purchase breeding stock. The Wye Angus Sale, an auction held on the first Saturday in April each year, began in 1978. Proceeds from the annual cattle auction and the sale of bull semen continue to fund UMD's agricultural research.



¹Shank, Donald J. (n.d.), *The Wye Institute Summer Educational Camp: An Experiment in Educational Development*, Wye Institute, Centreville, MD.

Image of campers (above center) raising the flag in 1966.

"What really satisfied him the most was vision—seeing a need, gathering the right people together who might share that vision, and proceeding...it's reflected in the glass and in many areas of his life."

—Thomas Spann, Former Director of Information, Wye Plantation

Following Arthur Houghton's death in 1990, the UMD-MAES opened the Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. Laboratory. Today, the Wye Research and Education Center's research and extension programs utilize nearly 800 acres of land on the shores of the Wye River focused on preserving the health of the Chesapeake Bay and sustaining agriculture productivity, product diversity and maintaining Maryland's valued quality of life.

"The 1000-acre peninsula surrounded by the Wye River is environmentally significant providing three miles of undisturbed shoreline, several pristine ponds and vast areas of marsh that create isolated coves and beaches along the riverfront. This landscape creates critical habitat—a refuge for biologically sensitive resources that support many species of fragile flora and fauna and diverse wildlife."

—Jeffrey H. Horstman, Executive Director, ShoreRivers

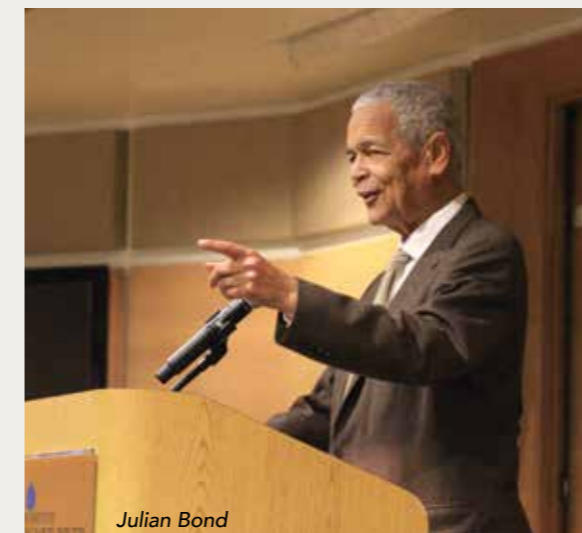
Arthur was able to share Wye with the world in 1979 when Wye Institute donated

Wye Woods to the Aspen Institute, whose mission aligned with his own passion for providing a place that could inspire and educate future leaders. Within three years the manor house, now known as Houghton House, and a newly-constructed contemporary structure, River House, were also donated and the Aspen Wye River Campus gradually evolved into a conference center with expansive meeting areas and 86 lodging rooms. Glimpses into the property's earlier grandeur can be enjoyed on the grounds of Houghton House with its formal terraced gardens featuring one of the oldest Linden trees in the United States, an 18th-century milk house adjacent to the gardens, and the enclosed cemetery containing the 1910 memorial to William Paca, who had lived on nearby Wye Island.

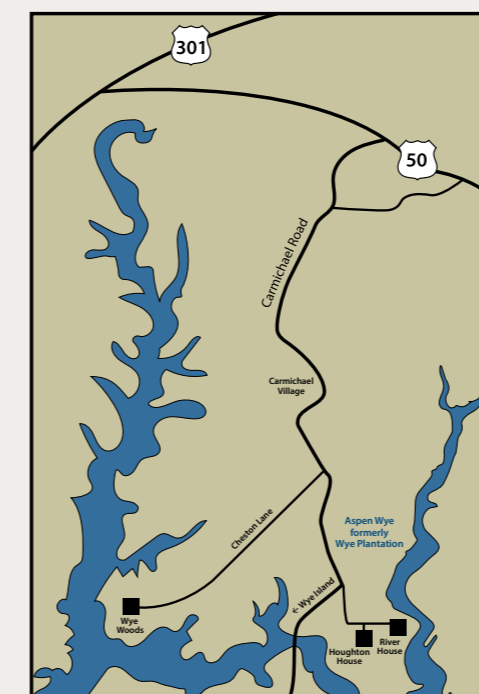
"It's just a different feeling when you're able to be in a home that has the capacity for 130 people, and you have the water in the background. It makes for a special event, and people feel like they are part of something bigger, [the Aspen Institute]...This thousand-acre parcel is very special."

—Cindy Buniski, Vice President, Administration and Facilities, Aspen Institute, Retired

Wye's proximity to the nation's capital, security, and beauty lends itself to deep, difficult conversations. During the 1990s, the Institute began conducting hundreds of leadership seminars and programs and the property served as host to numerous



Julian Bond



international meetings. In 1995, the Middle East and the Syrian-Israeli Peace Talks were held at Wye and in 1998, President Bill Clinton, Palestinian Chairman Yasir Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and King Hussein of Jordan met there to produce the Wye Accord for Peace in the Middle East.

Over the years, the Institute continued to attract statesmen, diplomats, and leaders in industry and academia for meaningful dialogues. The Great Collisions program series held a weekend-long seminar on Islam and the West, moderated by Bill Moyers, and featuring Muslim, Christian, and Jewish journalists and scholars from seven different countries. The Wye Fellows Program has connected intellectually curious neighbors and friends of the Institute to such prominent national and international leaders as Queen Noor of Jordan, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, civil rights icon Julian Bond, and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

WHAT LIES AT THE END OF CARMICHAEL ROAD?

Just as Arthur Houghton strove for his own personal enlightenment, Wye has offered countless individuals over the years opportunities to escape from their normal environments and immerse themselves in the beauty of nature where they could reflect on fundamental questions, challenge their minds and harness that inspiration to benefit mankind.

Escape to Aspen Wye A Gathering of Ideas and Innovation



The Story of the Aspen Institute's Wye River Campus on Maryland's Eastern Shore and the Legacy of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr.