

# Historic Grounds Walking Tour



7. Log Cabin: The log cabin is thought to have functioned as a detached kitchen. Before the 1940s, there was no kitchen inside of Mount Bleak, and its proximity to the home allowed for easy transportation of food. This setup allows for the added benefit of fire safety while decreasing smoke residue inside Mount Bleak. Evidence suggests the repurposing of some timbers from an 18th-century structure from nearby Clarke County.

Take a peek inside the door. Do you spot the staircase? It is believed the second floor was home to enslaved individuals who lived on the property in the 19th century. The Settle Family had as many as 14 enslaved peoples while living in Mount Bleak. As of 1860, records for the farm show three "slave cabins." The log cabin is possibly one of those structures. As of today, the other missing structures have yet to be discovered. Although their story is not forgotten, little is known about the lives of the enslaved.

Following the years of enslaved labor, the log cabin remained in use as housing through much of the 1940s. Oral histories from Susie Penic describe the log cabin as the home of her grandmother who worked for the Hadows. While in the 1950s, oral histories from Robert McFarland, son of the Scott Farm Manager, show this to be a workshop.

8. Visitor Center: Several buildings, including the park's office, were caretaker homes. The park's current Visitor Center was constructed for such a purpose in the 1940s to provide a better home for caretakers. By the 1970s, it was expanded to its current size, housing a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living room.

9. Kitchen Garden: 18th and 19th-century farms maintained herb and vegetable gardens for daily produce. Families also canned or dried produce for winter supplies.

Kitchen gardens transformed into Victory Gardens in World War II. The Hadows maintained a victory garden outside of the Log Cabin in the 1940s.

Today, the park's garden is planted and maintained by dedicated volunteers. The food produced is used in our cooking programs and sold at the Friends of Sky Meadows' Farm Market.

10. Hammer Mill Shed: Housing a vital piece of farm equipment, the hammer mill was crucial to grain production. Passing along a series of small "hammers," these mills processed a variety of grains for long-term storage, utilized through the mid-20th century. Walk around the building and imagine how loud this farm must have been!

11. Dairy Barn: Home to a small milk setup, hay and livestock, the dairy barn was constructed in 1941. Although the farm was never a large-scale dairy operation, milking cows were kept for personal use.

In the wake of the industrial boom of the 1950s, daily farm operations changed. Power equipment transformed and mechanized farming. Repurposed today, the barn houses agriculture storage and a variety of farm equipment from the first half of the 20th-century.

12. Blacksmith Forge: Blacksmiths conducted an essential trade in pre-industrial communities. Nowhere was this more true than in the Virginia frontier, along the Blue Ridge Mountains. Blacksmiths made a living producing and repairing tools and implements for their farming neighbors. In the 18th century, John Edmonds, a local of Paris, established a blacksmith shop at his Wayside Cottage on Route 17 near the park entrance.

Today, Sky Meadows continues this tradition. Members of the Blacksmith Guild of the Potomac transformed this cattle loafing shed into their forge in 2012. In 2013, the park opened the blacksmith shop as a permanent addition to the Historic Area. Guild members operate the forge on select weekends throughout the year, demonstrating blacksmith skills and crafting tools and other items for use here on the farm.

## Sky Meadows Mission

To provide minimal impact recreation, thus allowing people to feel a part of the site, and connect with the agricultural practices which formed this unique pastoral landscape over time.

Focusing on nature, history, agriculture, and peaceful recreation; our events and programs provide visitors opportunities to make a deeper connection to the story of Sky Meadows and its landscape.

.....

## Become a Volunteer

Volunteers and program partners are Sky Meadows State Park's most valuable and appreciated resource. We are able to offer special events and programs because many people give their time, energy, and passion.

We always welcome more people to lend a hand. There are numerous ways you or your group can get involved.

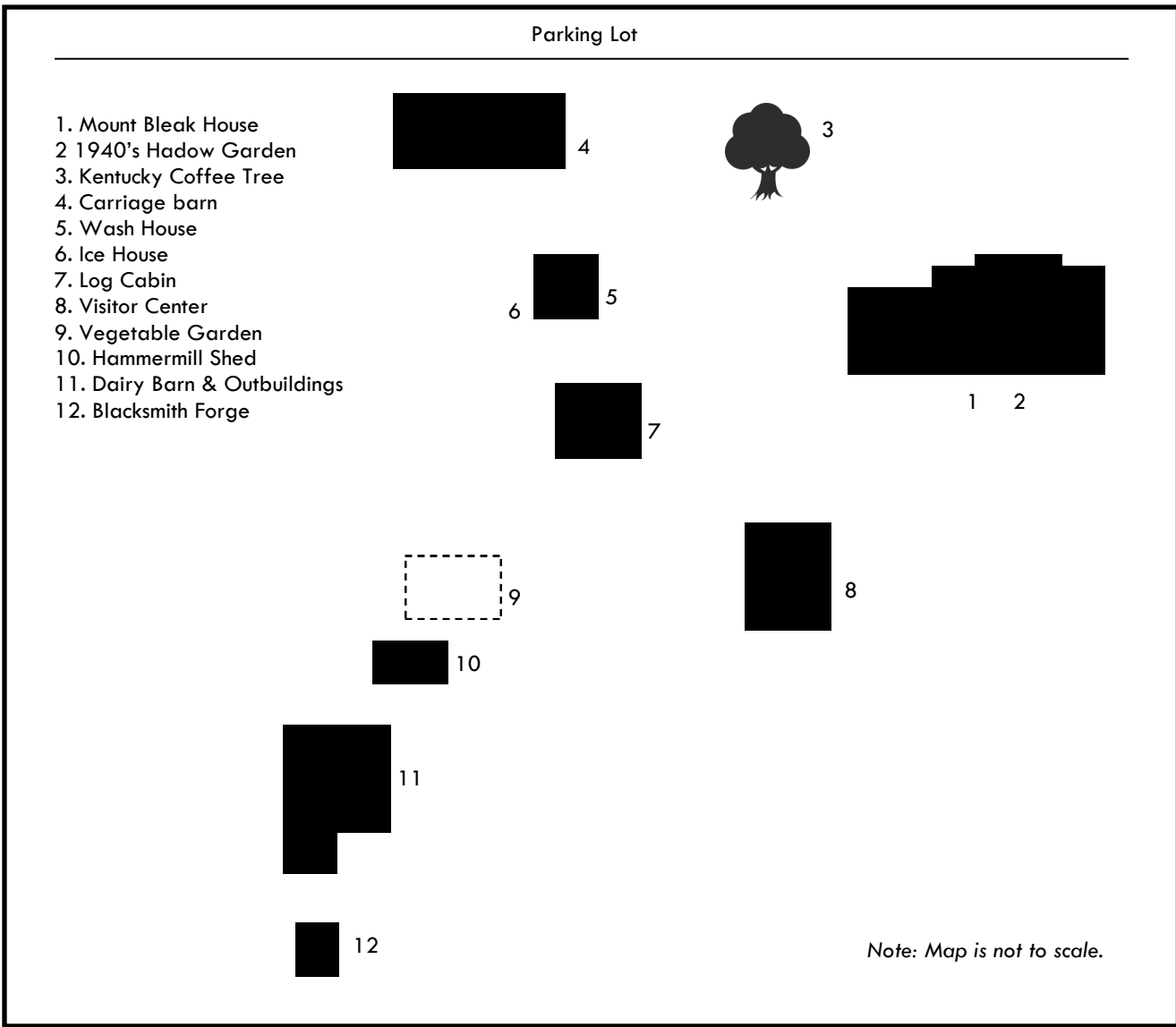
To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit [www.virginiastateparks.gov](http://www.virginiastateparks.gov), email [skvolunteer@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:skvolunteer@dcr.virginia.gov), call 540-592-3556, or stop by the park's Visitor Center.



.....

**Sky Meadows State Park**  
11012 Edmonds Lane  
Delaplane, VA 20144  
Phone 540-592-3556





Begin your walking tour on the back porch of the Mount Bleak House. Take a moment to enjoy the view of the Crooked Run Valley.

Since the 1760s, agriculture has shaped the Crooked Run Valley. As a young surveyor, George Washington recognized the land's potential. As one of the first landowners in the valley (land acquired as surveying payment from Lord Fairfax), Washington set a precedent by requiring tenants to maintain orchards on his land. Those who settled after followed suit, transforming the valley into the agricultural landscape you see today.

Mount Bleak Farm represents the Valley's agricultural heritage. The buildings you will explore shed light on the farm's evolution throughout its vast history.

For additional information about any of the buildings or the history of Sky Meadows, please ask a Ranger.

1. Mount Bleak House: Named after a 19th-century term for exposed, barren and windy, Mount Bleak is a Federal-style dwelling common to the Eastern region of the country. Built by Abner Settle in the 1840s, Abner farmed the property with his second wife, Mary Ann Kyle Settle, and their 12 children until 1866.

Much of what we know about the daily life at the Mount Bleak Farm, including the trying years of the Civil War, comes from the diary of Amanda Edmonds, niece to Abner and Mary and resident of the neighboring Belle Grove farm. Purchase a published copy of this diary in the park Visitor Center to experience stories of Mount Bleak House and the Settle family.

The Settles sold Mount Bleak Farm in 1866. The home's longest landowner, George Slater, renamed the farm *Slater's Place* and occupied it from 1868 to 1926. For much of the 1930s, the residence was vacant or occupied by tenant farmers, and eventually sold at auction. In 1941, Sir Robert Hadow, British Consulate member to the United States, purchased the 365-acre farm. Hadow renamed the property *Skye Farm* and utilized it as a safe haven for his family during World War II. During the Hadow's residency through 1946, Mount Bleak gained amenities common of the 20th century: electricity, heat and plumbing. By the 1950s, Mount Bleak Farm expanded to about 900 acres and sold to the Scott Family. It was then that the property gained the named *Sky Meadows*.

2. 1940's Hadow Garden: Lindsay Hadow, wife of Sir Robert Hadow, designed the flower beds surrounding the main house during their ownership from 1941 to 1946. The flowers you see today are a restoration of the garden Mrs. Hadow intended, guided by documents, receipts and images left from the Hadows.

3. Kentucky Coffee Tree: Common of the 19th century Gentlemen Farmer, Abner Settle held education in high regard. Before the Civil War, Abner's oldest son, Thomas Lee, studied medicine, graduating from Castleton Medical School in Vermont in 1856 and Kentucky School of Medicine in 1858.

Following the Civil War, Thomas came home and opened a medical practice in the nearby town of Paris. It is believed he brought back this Kentucky Coffee Tree from his time in that namesake state, and remains one of the few trees standing here since the 1800s.

4. Carriage Barn & Corn Crib: Built in the 1840s, the corn crib aided in drying and storing crops and housing transportation vehicles, spanning from horse pulled carriages in the 1840s to gas-powered cars in the 1960s. Walk into the open bay; notice the small hatches on the left? Imagine farmers using these to fill and empty the crib area of ear corn. Since demolished, the crib once extended to where you now see the gravel driveway. The remainder of the barn served as the farm 'garage.'

5. Wash House: It is unclear the building's initial purpose. Today we interpret this structure as a wash house. Serving Mount Bleak, this close proximity allowed for easy laundering. Peak into the doorway; can you imagine hand washing clothes for 14 Settle family members? This building was an equestrian tack room in the 1960s.

6. Icehouse: Below the wash house, under the ground, rests the ice house. Large blocks of ice were cut from local frozen-over ponds and insulated with hay or sawdust. Lasting all summer, this method paired with other food preservation aids such as salt-curing and canning.

**\*Please watch your step when entering the icehouse\***