

## This Day in History... October 15, 1966

# Wolf Trap Farm National Park

On October 15, 1966, the Wolf Trap Farm National Park for Performing Arts was established in Virginia. It's the only National Park dedicated exclusively to the performing arts.

According to local records, wolves used to run wild in the Fairfax County area and bounties were given to those who could trap them. In 1739, a branch of the Difficult Run tributary system was named Wolf Trap Creek, one of the early-recorded instances of the use of this name in the area.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the Wolf Trap property was bought and sold among wealthy families in the Fairfax area. One of them was Bryan Fairfax, a friend of George Washington.

In 1930, Catherine Filene Shouse acquired about 53 acres of this land. Within three years, she owned 168 acres. She had bought the property to provide a weekend home for her children living in Georgetown. Over time, they grew corn, wheat, alfalfa, and oats and raised chickens, ducks, turkeys, horses, and cows. They also bred horses and dogs and built a stable and a hay barn. Shouse's husband was a politician, Jouett Shouse, and they often hosted large gatherings of public figures, including Omar Bradley and George C. Marshall.

In 1966, Mrs. Shouse decided she wanted to preserve Wolf Trap and protect it from the encroaching roads and suburbs. She also wanted to create a place where people could enjoy the arts as well as nature. Therefore, she met with Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall and agreed to donate 100 acres of land to create the park. In arguing for support of the park, Udall stated that Wolf Trap would "augment the park and recreation opportunities in the National Capital region and involve the expenditure of only a minimum of Federal funds."



*This stamp was issued at Wolf Trap Park in 1982.*

Virginia Senator A. Willis Robertson introduced a bill to Congress to establish and fund the Wolf Trap Farm Park, and it was signed into law on October 15, 1966. Along with the federal creation of the park, Mrs. Shouse established the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts. Together, this public/private partnership would work together in operating the park. The National Park Service would attend to the park grounds, while the non-profit foundation would oversee the production of performances and educational programs.

In addition to her land donation, Mrs. Shouse also offered more than \$2 million to build the Filene Center for performances. The groundbreaking for the Filene Center came two years later and in 1969, the park hosted its first concert.

Wolf Trap held its inaugural season in 1971, with its first full performances that June. This event included the New York City Opera, the National Symphony Orchestra, Choral Arts Society of Washington, United States Marine Band, and the Madison Madrigal Singers. That summer they also hosted the National Folk Festival and Richard Nixon became the first president to visit the park for a performance of the Musical Theater Cavalcade.

In 1982, a fire destroyed the Filene Center. People from around the world joined in to raise money. A total of \$29 million was raised from over 16,000 donors in 47 states and five foreign countries. President Ronald Reagan and former Presidents Nixon and Jimmy Carter also hosted a star-studded three-hour telethon that raised over \$390,000 for the new Filene Center. Additionally, the USPS issued its first stamp honoring Wolf Trap Park as part of a series honoring cultural attractions in and around Washington, DC. Thanks to all these efforts, the Filene Center reopened in June 1984.

In 2002, the park's name was changed to the Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts. Wolf Trap hosts about 95 shows every season from May to September for about 424,000 visitors.



*Stamp issued for the 100th anniversary of America's first national park. It pictures the old Filene Center.*

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