

ISLAND HISTORY

The splendor of America's frontier is reflected in the tranquil beauty of timeless Blennerhassett Island. Yet the placid nature of the isle belies its turbulent past.

Ice Age

Blennerhassett Island's antiquity spans back to Ice Age hunters 13,000 years ago. Native American tribes lived on the island almost continuously, until white settlers began to flock to the Mid-Ohio Valley in the 1780s.

Many artifacts and tools dating to these ancient residents of Blennerhassett Island are on display at the Blennerhassett Museum of Regional History in downtown Parkersburg, at 2nd and Juliana streets.

Noted Island Visitors

Blennerhassett Island is a legendary historic site for a variety of reasons. During the 1760s, the famous Delaware Indian, Nemacolin, made the island his home. In addition, renowned figures including George Rogers Clark, Johnny Appleseed, Henry Clay, Walt Whitman and Gore Vidal visited the island.

The Blennerhassetts and the Island

Harman Blennerhassett, a wealthy Irish aristocrat, and his wife, Margaret, settled on the island in 1798 and began building a magnificent mansion and estate. However, he became entangled in a mysterious military enterprise with Aaron Burr in 1806. As a result, President Thomas Jefferson accused both men of plotting treason in attempting to establish an empire in the Southwest.



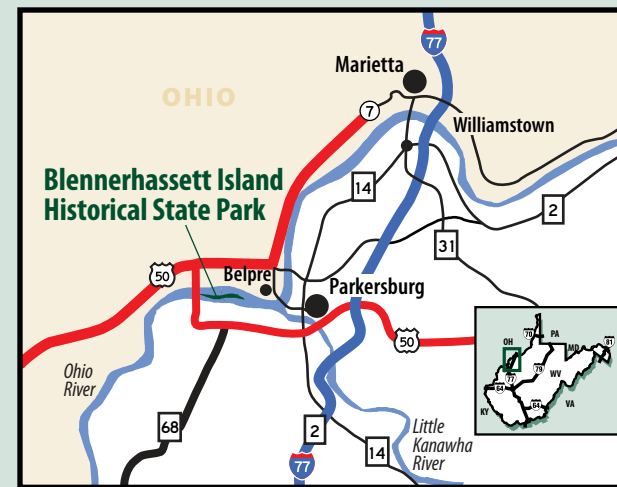
Blennerhassett fled the island, but was captured and imprisoned in the Virginia State Penitentiary. Although Burr was tried and acquitted and Blennerhassett was released, the lives of both men were largely ruined. Interestingly, most historians now agree that Burr had set sights on northern Mexico for his dominion, not the American West.



The exquisite mansion accidentally burned to the ground in 1811, leaving little visible trace of its graceful, semicircular lines. However, modern archaeologists rediscovered its foundations in 1973. Through a continuing program of careful historical and architectural research, the mansion has been recreated for visitors. The interior is furnished with some of the original pieces owned by the Blennerhassetts and other furnishings of the era. (Prior to the fire of 1811, many pieces had been sold or given to friends and eventually recovered via donation or purchase.)

The Putnam-Houser House

"Maple Shade" was brought to the island by barge in December 1986, from a bluff in Belpre, Ohio. Today, the 1802 two-story frame house is completely restored. It is a tribute to pioneering spirits of its builders, Aaron Waldo and Charlotte Loring Putnam, both from old New England, who came to settle the Northwest Territory after the Revolutionary War. The Blennerhassetts were their friends. Find the "Maple Shade" story on the state park's website.



LOCATION

Blennerhassett Island is located on the Ohio River near Parkersburg, W.Va. The Blennerhassett Museum and park offices are in downtown Parkersburg.

Access to Parkersburg, W.Va., is via U.S. 50 and I-77.

For maps and specific directions to departure point for the island via the **Island Belle**, visit www.blennerhassettislandstatepark.com/location.html

Motorcoach and tour groups welcome!

Escorted mansion tours and other activities on Blennerhassett Island, and in the Blennerhassett Museum, are great activities for educational field trips or tour itineraries. Call for group planning and assistance.

Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park

137 Juliana Street
Parkersburg, West Virginia 26101
304-420-4800

www.blennerhassettislandstatepark.com

West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation, 324 4th Avenue, South Charleston, WV 25303

STATEMENT OF POLICY REGARDING THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
TO USE FACILITIES AND PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS

Visitors are responsible for observing park rules and regulations.

"It is the policy of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources to provide its facilities, accommodations, services and programs to all persons without regard to gender, race, color, age, religion, national origin or disability. Proper licenses, registration and compliance with official rules and regulations are the only sources of restrictions for facility use or program participation."

"The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources is an equal opportunity employer."

Information provided in this brochure is current as of design date, but subject to change thereafter.

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Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park





THINGS TO DO

Visitors to the island enjoy lush hardwood groves, long beaches and broad fields providing habitat for white-tailed deer, waterfowl and songbirds. Island interests include:

- Tour of Blennerhassett Mansion
- Horse-drawn wagon rides
- Bicycle rentals
- Gift shop
- Self-guided walking tours
- Visit "Maple Shade" — the Putnam-Houser House
- Hiking
- Refreshment stand
- Variety of special events



NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

- Farmers Castle Museum, Belpre, Ohio
- Henderson Hall house museum, Williamstown
- Historic Blennerhassett Hotel, Parkersburg
- North Bend State Park
- North Bend Rail Trail
- Oil & Gas Museum, Parkersburg
- Smoot Theater, Parkersburg
- Veterans Museum, Parkersburg



THE BLENNERHASSETT MUSEUM OF REGIONAL HISTORY

An ideal beginning to experiencing the history of the Blennerhassetts as well as the Parkersburg, W.Va., and Belpre, Ohio, area begins at this museum. A feature video covers the history of the Blennerhassetts' island, as well as the famous Stahl Collection of prehistoric Indian artifacts.

Museum visitors can trace the history of the Ohio Valley, the city of Parkersburg and the island through exhibits of 18th- 19th- and 20th-century relics. Open year-round, the museum admission is a nominal fee. Tours are self-guided.



SEASONS OF BLENNERHASSETT

Blennerhassett Island is open Tuesday – Sunday beginning May 1 and through Labor Day. The island is closed on Mondays with the exception of holidays that fall on a Monday. After Labor Day, the island is open Thursday – Sunday through the end of October. The Blennerhassett Museum is open year-round (closed on Monday). Please call the park office or check the hours of operation on the state park website to verify dates and time.

THE ISLAND BELLE STERNWHEELER

Travel to Blennerhassett Island is by the Island Belle sternwheeler, which carries up to 149 individuals and is available for private charters. The website, www.blennerhassettislandstatepark.com, maintains current departure information.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Events and activities on the island and also at the museum are posted online and are updated frequently. Some special events scheduled each year include:

- **Brunch with Margaret** — a mid-morning brunch and mansion tour with none other than Margaret as your hostess.
- **Sundae Sunday Evening Cruises** — who doesn't like ice cream and an evening sternwheeler ride.
- **Family Fireworks Cruise/Adventure** — coordinating with annual Parkersburg Homecoming activities.
- **Island Frolic** with evening meal — dinner, island tours and more.
- **Mansion by Candlelight** (two nights only during second weekend of October) – little electric, all candlelight, early 19th-century activities, harvest meal, music and more.

GROUPS

Take advantage of the island's unique historical interpretation and activities. Field trips, motorcoach itinerary stops, and other organized groups are welcome. E-mail blennerhassettislandsp@wv.gov for group bookings or inquiries.