



NEWS AND NOTES

from

The Fauquier Historical Society

Vol. 4, No. 1

WARRENTON, VIRGINIA

Winter 1982

PROFILE: George Washington In Celebration Of A 250th Anniversary

The victory at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, not only made possible the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights, but also established the worth and value of the individual, religious freedom, and spread the concepts of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness throughout the world.

George Washington, the man most responsible for the Yorktown victory, was born February 11, 1732, to Augustine and Mary Ball Washington at Popes Creek Farm, later called Wakefield, in Westmoreland County, about 30 miles southeast of Fredericksburg. At this early date he already was a fourth generation American.

His great-grandfather, John Washington, the progenitor of the line in America, settled along the Potomac River in an area later to become known as the Northern Neck. He acquired a large amount of land, some in a patent up the Potomac, just below its watergate at Little Hunting Creek. This plantation, later named Mount Vernon, not only played a dramatic role in the history of the Washington family, but in the lives of many Americans as well.

Augustine, a restless sort of person, acquired an interest in an iron mine and to be nearer to its operation, in 1738, moved the family to a farm on the north bank of the Rappahannock about a mile below Fredericksburg. Here he died suddenly, in 1743, leaving Mary, a domineering and sometimes unreasonable mother, to rear the children and run the farm. She continued to live there

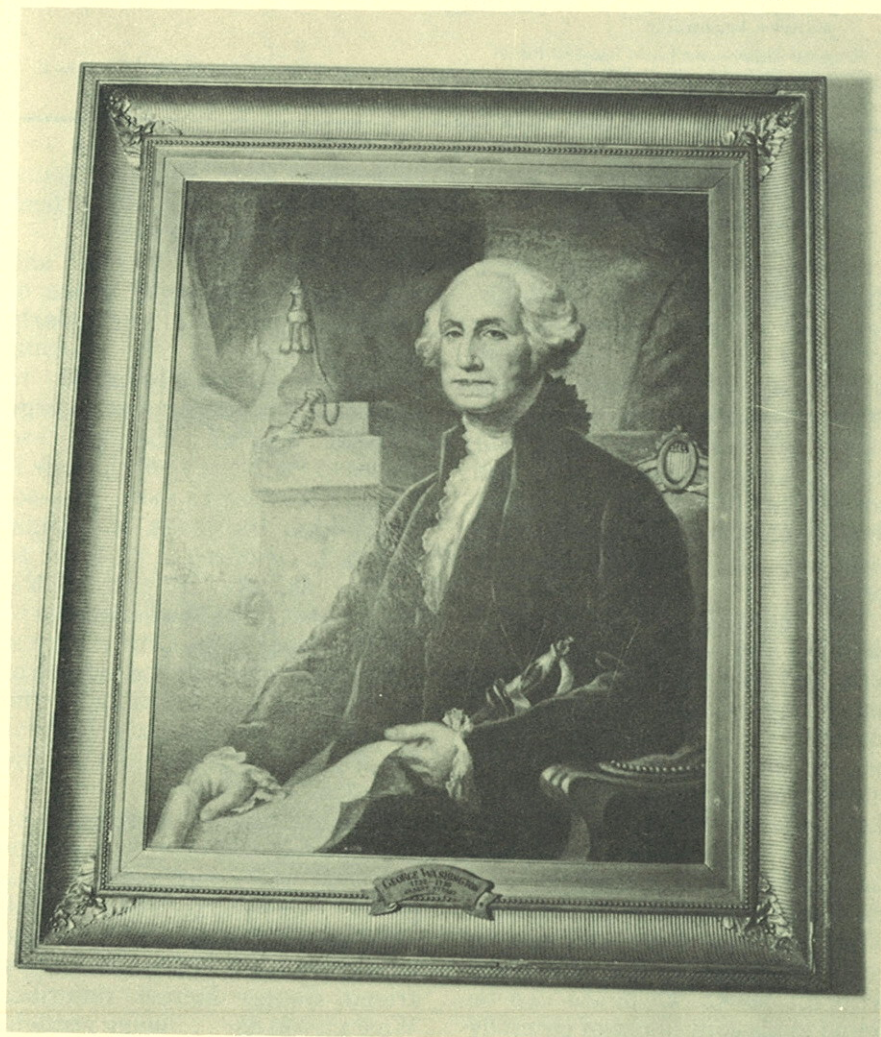


Photo by Isabelle Palmer

A copy of Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington, painted by an unknown artist, hangs in the Fauquier Club.

until 1772, when George purchased a home for her in Fredericksburg.

During his adolescence, George's aspirations were closely linked to his brother Lawrence, who had married a daughter of William

Fairfax of Belvoir. George looked at his brother's home overlooking the Potomac and, remembering that its owner was a member of the Burgesses, he aspired to do as well someday.

Continued on page 2

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George Washington

Continued from Page 1

George's home on the Rappahannock River, comfortable yet far from commodious, contained six rooms, four down and two up. The furniture, as well as the china, glassware, linens and supply of books, was inferior to that of homes in the area. It was not difficult for George to realize that his family stood on the lower rung of the Virginia colonial gentry.

His education, incomplete, sketchy, and without direction or plan, consisted of a short period under the teaching of a one-eyed ex-convict in Fredericksburg, a period when he attended a school run by a minister of the Church of England, and at times when he stayed with his brothers, Lawrence and Augustine. He excelled in mathematics, and while other students were at play, he could be found in the classroom with his books. Evidence can be found in his copy books of carefully transcribed problems, of mathematical rule after rule, of his famous *Rules of Civility*, of his easy flowing and legible handwriting, and of certain forms of poor spelling which he never corrected.

At age sixteen he spent more and more time with his brother at the Hunting Creek farm that

Lawrence later named Mount Vernon after a military officer with whom he had served.

Here he often visited and mingled with the upper strata of colonial gentility, particularly when he visited the Belvoir Plantation which belonged to Lawrence's brother-in-law George William Fairfax. George had access to the library which made it possible for him to move at ease, first within the levels of colonial culture he admired, and, later, to become an integral part of the culture that would be demanded of the President of the United States. His association with the owners of Belvoir and the individuals who visited there became a substitute for his lack of education in the schools of England.

Women were attracted to Washington, and men admired his physique and countenance, those physical characteristics which later reinforced his ability to lead men in military action. In 1760, a friend, George Mercer, described Washington as "... being straight as an Indian, measuring six feet two inches in his stockings, and weighing 175 pounds. His frame is padded with well-developed muscles, indicating great strength. His bones and joints are large, as are his feet and hands. He is wide shouldered, but has not a deep or round chest, is neat waisted, but is broad across the

hips, and has rather long legs and arms." Mercer also said that at all times Washington was composed and dignified with movements that were graceful and a walk that was majestic.

Washington's good looks, physical strength and constitution served him well all his life, including the years of the Revolution. In spite of experiencing a number of illnesses common in the colonial era, during the war years he remained remarkably well and suffered little from the rigors, privations and exposures of war.

At Belvoir, Washington came in contact with several members of the Fairfax family, including the sixth Lord Fairfax, who thought highly of himself, shunned women, and loved fox hunting. He greatly admired young George, a good fox hunter.

Lord Fairfax engaged George, age sixteen, to go with a company of employees to survey the Fairfax holding on the frontier at and beyond the Blue Ridge. Lord Fairfax, a recluse, established himself at Greenway Court where Washington made his headquarters. Here he experienced the rigors of surveying on a wide frontier in an area largely unexplored.

Realizing that he needed money, good at calculations and with some experience behind him, at seventeen he set himself up as a surveyor and established an office in Winchester. He worked only four years as a surveyor, 1747-1751, but this experience and knowledge served him well in the French and Indian War, as did his knowledge of map reading in the Revolutionary War which followed.

Always a leader in the French and Indian conflict, at the age of twenty-two, Washington discovered that he was Virginia's most acclaimed leader. Following the conclusion of the war in the west, he returned to Mount Vernon, now his since the death of Lawrence in 1752, and of his last surviving child two years later. The youth, who seemed destined to the lower realms of Virginia gentility, suddenly found himself vaulted to the top and a member of

Continued on Page 3

George Washington

Continued from Page 2

the House of Burgesses.

He hastened to Williamsburg and on January 6, 1759, married Mrs. Martha Dandridge Custis, a lady whom he had met there the previous March. Mrs. Custis brought to the Washington household 15,000 acres of land, mostly near Williamsburg, several town lots, 200 to 300 slaves, and between 8,000 and 10,000 pounds in bonds. She did better; she married a gentleman and an outstanding manager who entirely relieved her of responsibility.

The house at Mount Vernon was highly regarded by Washington. The plantation consisted of 2,500 acres when ownership passed to him, but it ultimately grew to 8,000 acres through his persistent purchasing of nearby properties. The three hundred people on the plantation made it almost self supporting.

While almost half of the 36 years he lived at Mount Vernon were spent in public service, his land and farming were his first love. His will lists his holdings, at the time of his death, as 53,875 acres, with his estate totaling \$530,000. He could have been land poor, however, for at times he was hard pressed for ready cash.

When the Second Continental Congress unanimously elected George Washington as the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army in June 1775, they may have selected the only man who could bring the colonies together and make possible the victory at Yorktown six years later.

The colonies were seeking a leader, and the world was in desperate need of a new nation dedicated to life, liberty, and the dignity of the individual. It needed a nation that would dare to mold on its money "In God We Trust." Perhaps that trust in the Supreme Power made a leader like George Washington possible. He was a man pre-eminent.

- Jennings Flathers

Airlie Farm Ham

Directions for Cooking*

Soak a one-year-old ham in cold water for 36 hours, a two-year-old 48 hours, changing the water every 12 hours. After soaking trim the ham (if necessary), then wash and scrape it thoroughly.

Place the prepared ham skin-down in a boiler full of cold water, to which has been added one pint of vinegar and a small bunch of herbs. Let the water simmer slowly 20 minutes for each pound of the ham's weight. During the process of cooking the boiler must be kept full, replenishing it with hot water of about the same temperature. Do

not allow the water to boil, and do not stick forks or skewers into the ham while cooking.

When the ham is cooked turn over in the boiler, peel off the skin very carefully so as not to tear the fat, then cover ham lightly with beaten white of egg, sprinkle with brown sugar and cracker dust and bake in a slow oven until brown (about 20 minutes). Put ham away in a refrigerator, or other cold place, for 24 hours before cutting.

*Directions for curing an Airlie ham are given in the Fall issue, Vol. 3, No. 4.

Flea Market and Auction

The old furniture stored in the attic, the garden tools you no longer use, old china, and bric-a-brac from here and there can all be turned into money at our Flea Market and Auction scheduled for Old Town Day next May. The proceeds will go toward the renovation of the Old Gaol Museum.

More information will become available as the May date approaches. In the meantime, please lay aside articles which you would like to contribute to a good cause. Large pieces can be stored at the museum if necessary. Call Jennings Flathers at 347-7386.

Museum Closes

The Old Gaol Museum has closed for the Winter season and will re-open in April. Alternate telephone numbers are 347-1273 and 347-7280.

Membership Chairman Needed

Due to the resignation of membership chairman Joan Staiko, the Society is in need of a volunteer to complete her term of office which ends on May 31, 1982.

Any member interested in this position should call Dr. Robert Anderson at 347-4217.

Please Return To:
The Fauquier Historical Society, Inc.
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Warrenton, Virginia 22186

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() - Individual or family - \$10
() - Contributing - \$15

() - Sustaining - \$25 and over
() - Student - \$3
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How would you be willing to help the Society this year?

Can You Help?

News and Notes will contain in each issue a list of as many persons as possible who are conducting historical or genealogical research on persons or places related to Fauquier County. To be included in this column, write the Fauquier Historical Society, P. O. Box 675, Warrenton, VA 22186. Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope.

RUFFNER. Mrs. Eugenie Fellows, 21 Williams Blvd, Zephyrhills, FL 33599, would like information on Daniel Ruffner listed in the 1850 Ohio census as the head of household where Joseph, H. L. and William, sons of Joseph B. and Lucy Palmer, were working as farmers.

BARBER. Marilyn Sage, 144 Marshall Place, Longmont, CO 80501 is interested in locating antecedents of Andrew J. Barber, also known as T. Barber, b. Oct. 5, 1827 in Fauquier d. Ill. 1902. Married, Jan. 10, 1867, to Mary Agnes Lake, b. Apr. 21, 1848, d. Mar. 24, 1867; may be buried at Sharon Cemetery, Middleburg, VA. Andrew later m. Margaret Lake, dau. of Bayliss Lake in Ill. Andrew was son of Nicholas Barber who came from England in 1819 and of Phoebe Woolfe, d. of Andrew Woolfe, of Fauquier.

Washington's Rules of Civility*

In the Presence of Others Sing not to yourself with a humming Noise, nor Drum with your Fingers or Feet.

Sleep not when others Speak, Sit not when others stand, Speak not when you Should hold your Peace, walk not on when others Stop.

Turn not your Back to others especially in Speaking, Jog not the Table or Desk on which Another reads or writes, lean not upon anyone.

Keep your Nails clean and Short, also your Hands and Teeth Clean yet without Shewing any great Concern for them.

When you meet with one of Greater Quality than yourself, Stop, and retire especially if it be at a Door or any Straight place to give way for him to Pass.

Use no Reproachfull Language against any one neither Curse nor Revile.

Wear not your Cloths, foul, unript or Dusty but see they be Brush'd once every day at least and take heed that you approach not to any uncleanness.

Play not the Peacock, looking every where about you, to See if you be well Deck't, if your Shoes fit well, if you stokings Sit neatly, and Cloths handsomely.

Gaze not on the marks or

blemishes of Others and ask not how they came. What you may Speak in Secret to your Friend deliver not before others.

While you are talking, Point not with your Finger at him of Whom you Discourse nor Approach too near him to whom you talk especially to his face.

Treat with men at fit Times about Business & Whisper not in the Company of Others.

Be not Curious to Know the Affairs of Others neither approach those that Speak in Private.

It is unbecoming to Stoop much to ones Meat, Keep your Fingers clean & when foul wipe them on a Corner of your Table Napkin.

In Company of your Betters be not longer in eating than they are lay not your Arm but only your hand upon the Table.

If others talk at Table be attentive but talk not with Meat in your Mouth.

Labour to keep alive in your Breast that Little Spark of Celestial fire Called Conscience.

*When George Washington was fifteen years old, he copied in an exercise book certain rules of behavior which he thought were important. The spelling and capitalization of Washington's time are used.

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