

The Papers of *George Washington* NEWS

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WASHINGTON ON THE WEB

www.virginia.edu/gwpapers



New Washington Papers home page.

The Papers of George Washington unveiled its new website in February 2000, just in time for Washington's annual birthday celebration. The updated site makes it easier for scholars, teachers, and students to find the information they need. It also provides a point of entry for people with a general interest in Washington's life and times.

Christine Madrid French, the project's digital developer and webmaster, redesigned the site with colorful graphics and a new easy-to-navigate format. The site features six sections: Project Information, Maps & Images, Frequently Asked Questions, Documents & Articles, Indexes to the Volumes, and Search-Translate.

The Project Information section includes an on-line version of *The Papers of George Washington News*, contributor information, a current version of our Style Manual (our primary guideline for editing *The Papers*), and detailed information on each completed volume.

The new Maps & Images section contains not only many of the portraits and sculptures made of Washington, but also regional maps and sketches drawn by him. The Frequently Asked Questions section aims to answer your queries regarding George (who did not cut down the cherry tree!), his wife Martha, and their plantation home, Mount Vernon.

Documents & Articles is one of the most popular sections, featuring Washington's Farewell Address and

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Website continued

his Thanksgiving Proclamation, along with a number of speeches and letters selected by our editors as important documents in the study of Washington's life. This section also features the work of graduate assistant Sam Turner, who created on-line versions of the recent exhibit catalogs, "A Concert of Mourning," commemorating the bicentennial of Washington's death, and "In His Own Hand," an examination of the editing process for Washington's extensive collection of papers. (To request printed copies of these two exhibit catalogs, please e-mail the project at gwpapers@virginia.edu or call 804-924-3569.) Visitors to the Documents & Articles section also will find electronic versions of Editor Emeritus W. W. Abbot's lectures, "The Young George Washington and His Papers" and "George Washington in Retirement."

The Indexes section contains the names of persons identified in the ongoing letterpress edition of *The Papers of George Washington* and the volume and page numbers where the identifications appear. Search-Translate instantly searches the website by keywords and concepts and translates the content into languages other than English.

Graduate assistants Sam Turner and Spencer Bakich also developed an "e-postcard" section where website visitors can send images of Washington with a personalized message. Recipients can pick up their e-postcards on the web with a special password.

Be sure to check the site often as we add new information daily! Nearly 30,000 visitors have been recorded since the opening date of the website.



Detail of Washington's sketch of River Farm, from the new Maps & Images section of the Washington Papers website. Courtesy of the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Love and Marriage According to George Washington

History classes have given Americans some familiarity with Washington the Revolutionary War general and Washington the first president of the United States, but most people have little knowledge about the more personal aspects of his life. While Washington was not exactly the "cool dude" in the new golden dollar coin ads on television and in the newspapers, neither was he the somewhat grumpy-appearing man on the dollar bill. Washington was a loving husband, a doting father and grandfather to his wife's children and grandchildren, and a patriarchal benefactor to nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

As the head of a large extended family Washington often gave advice and direction, both solicited and unsolicited, on a variety of topics. Perhaps surprisingly, one of these subjects was love and marriage. There has been much speculation by historians about his marriage to the widow Martha Custis, but about its success Washington had no doubt, as his remarks to Charles Armand-Tuffin on 10 August 1786 indicate: "For in my estimation more permanent & genuine happiness is to be found in the sequestered walks of connubial life, than in the giddy rounds of promiscuous pleasure, or the more tumultuous and imposing scenes of successful ambition." Unfortunately for later historians, Martha, shortly before her death, destroyed nearly all her correspondence with her husband in an attempt to preserve the privacy of their relationship. But Washington's thoughts on love and marriage in general can be found in the letters he wrote to his grandchildren and other family members and friends. His words, written over two centuries ago, give a glimpse into the mind of Washington on a subject far removed from politics.

Washington gave cautionary advice on selecting one's marriage partner to teenage granddaughter Betsey (Elizabeth Parke Custis) in a letter of 14 September 1794:

Do not then in your contemplation of the marriage state, look for perfect felicity before you consent to wed. Nor conceive, from the fine tales the Poets & lovers of old have told us, of the transports of mutual love, that heaven has taken its abode on earth: Nor do not deceive yourself in supposing, that the only mean by which these are to be obtained, is to drink deep of the cup, & revel in an ocean of love. Love is a mighty pretty thing; but like all other

delicious things, it is cloying; and when the first transports of the passion begins to subside, which it assuredly will do, and yield—oftentimes too late—to more sober reflections, it serves to evince, that love is too dainty a food to live upon *alone*, and ought not to be considered farther than as a necessary ingredient for that matrimonial happiness which results from a combination of causes; none of which are of greater importance, than that the object on whom it is placed, should possess good sense—good dispositions—and the means of supporting you in the way you have been brought up. Such qualifications cannot fail to attract (after marriage) your esteem & regard, into wch or into disgust, sooner or later, love naturally resolves itself; and who at the sametime, has a claim to the respect, & esteem of the circle he moves in. Without these, whatever may be your first impressions of the man, they will end in disappointment; for be assured, and experience will convince you, that there is no truth more certain, than that all our enjoyments fall short of our expectations; and to none does it apply with more force, than to the gratification of the passions.



Elizabeth Parke ("Betsey") Custis, 1785,
by Robert Edge Pine. Courtesy of
Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia.

Despite her grandfather's counsel, Betsey's subsequent choice of a husband was not sound. She married Thomas Law on 21 March 1796, but the couple separated in 1804 and divorced in 1811.

Washington's thoughts on marriage, when written to older family members or friends, could be less somber, as in the case of his letter of 20 September 1783 to Lund Washington, the manager of Mount Vernon and a distant cousin:

For my own part, I never did, nor do I believe, I ever shall give advice to a woman who is setting out on a matrimonial voyage; first, because I never could advise one to marry without her own consent; & secondly, because I know it is to no purpose to advise her to refrain, when she has obtained it. A woman very rarely asks an opinion, or requires advice on such an occasion, 'till her resolution is formed; & then it is with the hope & expectation of obtaining a sanction, not that she means to be governed by your disapprobation, that she applies. In a word, the plain english of the application may be

summed up in these words—I wish you to think as I do; but if unhappily you differ from me in opinion, my heart, I must confess is fixed, & I have gone too far *now* to retract.

A lighter and wittier side of Washington is revealed in his reaction to the news that Revolutionary War veteran Joseph Ward would marry at the age of 47. In a letter of 20 December 1784 to the historian William Gordon, he writes:

I am glad to hear that my old acquaintance Colo. Ward is yet under the influence of vigorous passions—I will not ascribe the intrepidity of his late enterprize to a mere *flash* of desires, because, in his military career he would have learnt how to distinguish between false alarms & a serious movement. Charity therefore induces me to suppose that like a prudent general, he had reviewed his *strength*, his arms, & ammunition before he got involved in an action—But if these have been neglected, & he has been precipitated into the measure, let me advise him to make the *first* onset upon his fair del Tobosa, with vigor, that the impression may be deep, if it cannot be lasting, or frequently renewed!

To read the complete text of the above letters and others on love and marriage, see "Washington's Advice on Marriage" on the Washington Papers' website at www.virginia.edu/gwpapers.

—Christine S. Patrick

Volume Updates

Revolutionary War Series

Volume 10

11 June through 18 August 1777

The University Press of Virginia recently published volume 10 of the *Revolutionary War Series*, which covers the period between 11 June and 18 August 1777. It opens with Washington headquartered at the Continental army's encampment at Middlebrook, N.J., about seven miles northeast of New Brunswick, the location of the main British force under General William Howe. From this strategic vantage point in the Watchung Mountains, Washington could survey the country between Perth Amboy and New Brunswick while keeping an eye on the road to Philadelphia. At Middlebrook he weighed contradictory intelligence reports, some of which pointed to an imminent British attack on his army while others indicated that General Howe was interested in capturing Philadelphia. Washington positioned his troops accordingly. "The views of the Enemy," he surmised, "must be to give a severe blow to this Army and to get possession of Philada. Both are objects of importance; but the former of far the greatest—while we have a respectable force in the field, every acquisition of territory they may make will be precarious and perhaps burthensome." Washington also considered the possibility that Howe might attempt to rendezvous his troops with General Burgoyne's army, thought to be en route from Quebec to Albany by way of Lake Champlain and the Hudson River.

For his part, Howe, whose army outnumbered the Americans by a margin of more than two to one, hoped to lure Washington away from his defensive positions and force a general engagement. When a series of British maneuvers culminated in late June without bringing on the desired battle, Howe evacuated his army from New Jersey to Staten Island, leaving Washington completely in the dark as to the enemy's



Charles Willson Peale's sketch in his diary of the artist and General Washington, 1777. Courtesy of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

From volume 10 of the *Revolutionary War Series*.

next move. The unexpected British withdrawal left Washington in a situation that he considered "truly delicate and perplexing, and makes us sensibly feel now as we have often done before, the great advantage they derive from their navy." Although Howe had abandoned the idea of attacking the main Continental army, from his new disposition the British commander easily could put his troops aboard naval transports to attempt a junction with Burgoyne via the Hudson, move upon Philadelphia by way of the Delaware River or the Chesapeake Bay, sail farther south into Virginia or to Charleston, S.C., or sail northward and invade one of the New England states.

Washington responded to the new situation by marching his army back to its old camp at Morristown, where it could better assist the American troops at Peekskill, N.Y., if Howe moved up the Hudson, and yet remain in a position to interfere with any British designs on Philadelphia. Although surveillance reports revealed that the British were preparing for "a longer Voyage than up the North River [Hudson River]," the British capture of Ticonderoga, N.Y., in early July convinced Washington that Howe would try to join Burgoyne, and he swiftly marched the Continental

army into New York state, where it remained until it became clear that the British fleet had gone out to sea rather than up the Hudson. Washington then returned to New Jersey, where he made preparations for the defense of Philadelphia, but with several critical weeks of the summer campaign already passed, he confessed of his foe, "I am now as much puzzled about their designs as I was before, being unable to account upon any plausible plan, for Genl Howe's conduct in this instance or why he should go to the Southward rather than cooperate with Mr Burgoyne."

—*Frank E. Grizzard, Jr.*

Presidential Series

Volume 10

10 March through 15 August 1792

This volume, currently being edited, includes such topics as the arrangements for a new expedition, under Anthony Wayne, against the hostile Indian nations in the Northwest Territory; the visit of Iroquois chiefs to Philadelphia; the first congressional investigation, which looked into Major General Arthur St. Clair's defeat of 4 November 1791; a boundary dispute with the British on Lake Champlain; the establishment of the U.S. Mint; Washington's contemplation of retiring after his first term; and the first use of the presidential veto.

The inaugural veto was prompted by Congress's passage of "An Act for an apportionment of Representatives among the several States according to the first enumeration." Its presentation to the president for his approbation on 26 March 1792 created a sharp divergence of opinion among Washington's closest advisors. In recognition of this fact, Washington in early April 1792 called on Edmund Randolph, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Henry Knox to give him their opinions of the bill. Attorney General Randolph and Secretary of State Jefferson complained separately on 4 April that as the bill established the total number of representatives, 120, by dividing the aggregate of the federal census by 30,000, it was unconstitutional. The Constitution required, they argued, the choice of a common divisor (a number that would divide each state's population evenly) and the

division of the population residing in each state by that number to establish the size of the House of Representatives. The fact that the bill gave an additional member to the eight states with the largest fraction left over after dividing by 30,000 was, according to Randolph, "repugnant to the spirit of the constitution" in that it tacked "the numbers of one state to those of another for the purpose of procuring a member," with the result that, contrary to the Constitution, the number of representatives in those states exceeded the stipulated one for every 30,000. Although Jefferson acknowledged that "this representation, whether tried as between great & small states, or as between North & South, yeilds, in the present instance, a tolerably just result," he urged that it be vetoed because it was unconstitutional and introduced principles that were liable to be abused in the future. Jefferson favored the reduction of "the apportionment always to an arithmetical operation, about which no two men can ever possibly differ."

Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton and Secretary of War Henry Knox, on the other hand, opposed a presidential veto in this instance. Knox argued on 3 April that the Constitution was unclear about "whether the numbers of representatives shall be apportioned on the aggregate number of all the people of the United States, or on the aggregate numbers of the people of each state." As the constitutionality of the bill was, Knox said, "only doubted not proved but the equity of the measure apparent, it would appear rather a delicate measure for the President to decide the question contrary to the bill as passed." Hamilton wrote Washington on the following day that, while he had not yet read the

continued next page

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First Veto, continued from page 5

bill, it seemed to him that the bill “performs every requisition of the constitution; and it will not be denied that it performs this in the manner most consistent with equality.” Like Knox, Hamilton believed that “In cases where two constructions may reasonably be adopted, and neither can be pronounced inconsistent with the public good, it seems proper that the legislative sense should prevail” and the bill should be signed into law (all documents in Library of Congress: GW Papers).

After careful consideration, Washington concluded that Randolph and Jefferson were correct about the unconstitutionality of the bill. Even so, he hesitated to veto it. Because “the vote for & against the bill [in Congress] was perfectly geographical, a Northern agt a Southern vote,” Washington feared that in vetoing it “he should be thought to be taking side with a Southern party” (Jefferson’s Memoranda of Consultations with the President, 11 March–9 April

1792, Library of Congress: Jefferson Papers). Further discussion with Randolph, Jefferson, and James Madison, however, allayed Washington’s concerns, and on 5 April the president decided to return the bill to the House of Representatives with the two objections that “there is no one proportion or divisor which, applied to the respective numbers of the States will yield the number and allotment of representatives proposed by the Bill” and that “the Bill has allotted to eight of the States, more than one [representative] for thirty thousand.” Congress, after receiving Washington’s veto message, the first in U.S. history, threw out the original bill and decided, on 10 April 1792, to apportion representatives at “the ratio of one for every thirty-three thousand persons in the respective States” (National Archives: Record Group 233, Second Congress, 1791–1793, Records of Legislative Proceedings, Journals).

—*Robert F. Haggard*

Announcements



Editor in Chief **Philander D. Chase** participated in a panel discussion at “National Visions of the Founders,” a one-day conference held in Philadelphia on June 15. The conference was hosted by the Founding Fathers Papers, Inc., and sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts of Philadelphia. To read all of the papers presented at the conference, please visit www.pewtrusts.com. Earlier in the spring, Chase spoke about Washington to members of the University of Virginia’s Bayly Art Museum and made a presentation about the Washington Papers to University of Virginia English Professor David Vander Meulen’s graduate seminar, Introduction to Scholarly Editing. This summer he will speak to the annual Monticello–Stratford Hall Summer Seminar for Teachers.

Associate Editor **Frank E. Grizzard, Jr.**, gave an after-dinner talk on George Washington and the Society of the Cincinnati to the Tennessee Society, Sons of the Revolution, at its annual banquet in Knoxville on February 26. He also made a presentation about the Washington Papers at Southside Virginia Community College in Keysville.

Assistant Editor **Christine S. Patrick** lectured on Washington and the Constitution at the George Washington Scholars Institute at Mount Vernon on June 28.

Volume 10 of the *Revolutionary War Series*, edited by **Frank E. Grizzard, Jr.**, was published in March 2000. It covers June through August 1777 and deals with Washington’s efforts to comprehend the puzzling British campaign plans for 1777 (see p. 4).

Volume 9 of the *Presidential Series*, (September 1791–February 1792), edited by **Mark A. Mastromarino** and **Jack D. Warren, Jr.**, includes the beginnings of the Federal City and General Arthur St. Clair’s disastrous Indian campaign. It is scheduled to be published in the fall of 2000.

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New Staff

In January the Washington Papers welcomed three new staff members:

Assistant Editor **David R. Hoth** was previously an assistant editor at the Andrew Jackson Papers at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Copy Editor **Tanya L. Stanciu** received an M.A. in English from the University of Virginia before working for several years at *Gadfly Magazine*, a local arts and culture magazine.

The project's digital developer, **Christine Madrid French**, holds an M.A. degree in architectural history from the University of Virginia. Before joining the Washington Papers, Chris worked at the University of Virginia's Digital Media Center.

The project bids farewell to research assistant **Lisa S. Medders**, now an editorial assistant at the Association for Investment Management and Research in Charlottesville, Virginia. We are grateful for her work on the inaugural issue of *The Papers of George Washington News* and for her skilled copy editing.

Major funding for *The Papers of George Washington* is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, as well as by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, the University of Virginia, the Packard Humanities Institute, and the Norman and Lyn Lear Foundation. Your gift, regardless of size, is important to the project in enabling it to meet the matching requirements of many of its grants and to maintain its high standards of quality and productivity.

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