During the fall of 2002 the Washington Papers topped the fifty-volume mark with the publication of volumes 10 and 11 of the Presidential Series. The publication of Revolutionary War Series volume 13 in August 2003 brings the current overall total to fifty-two volumes. Of the modern editions of papers of American presidents, only the Papers of Woodrow Wilson, which were published in sixty-nine volumes between 1966 and 1994, have previously surpassed fifty volumes. The published Washington Papers are expected to total about ninety volumes when finished about 2020.

The fact that Washington’s papers are so voluminous—more numerous than those of any of the nation’s other founders—comes as a surprise to many people, because Washington usually is thought of more as a man of action than as a writer. The central roles that Washington played as commander in chief of the Continental army during the eight and one-half years of the Revolutionary War and as the first president of the United States for two terms required him to correspond regularly with a wide range of persons. Although his formal education was limited, he succeeded through dint of his own efforts as a young man in making himself an effective letter writer. Washington, however, seldom indulged in introspective writing or expressed himself in quotable epigrams. For that reason one has to read his extensive papers at length and in considerable detail in order to come to terms with his private character, his public roles, and the crucial relationship between them.

Since the Washington Papers project began in 1969, the editorial staff has sought to make this edition truly comprehensive by conducting a continuing worldwide search for documents written not only by Washington but also to him, and since the project began publication with the six volumes of Washington’s Diaries between 1976 and 1979, the staff has maintained a high level of productivity by editing the Papers in series corresponding to significant segments of Washington’s life. Having finished the Colonial, Confederation, and Retirement series during the 1980s and 1990s, the editors are now focusing on completing the larger Revolutionary War and Presidential series, and they have begun work on a hybrid letterpress/electronic edition of Washington’s extensive financial papers. Revolutionary War volume 14 (March–April 1778), which covers the middle part of the Valley Forge encampment, and Presidential volume 12 (January–May 1793), which includes Washington’s second inauguration, are expected to be published in 2004, bringing the number of completed volumes to fifty-four—about sixty percent of the estimated final total. Five other volumes are currently in the process of being edited for future publication.

— Philander D. Chase
That George Washington spent a great deal of time and effort tending to the establishment of the city that now bears his name is well known. What is less known is that his labors on behalf of the Federal City encompassed more than verbally championing it or approving the city plans and the designs of the Capitol and President’s House. Washington often found himself refereeing squabbles involving the three commissioners of the District of Columbia, their employees, and the many proprietors of the land on which the city would be built. The challenge for the president, and one which he met with great success, was to work diligently in private while maintaining his public persona as one who had delegated authority and therefore was uninvolved in the minutiae of city affairs.

In the summer of 1790 President Washington signed the “Act for establishing the temporary and permanent seat of the Government of the United States,” commonly known as the Residence Act. This act established the District of Columbia on territory ceded by Virginia and Maryland, and it moved the seat of the federal government from New York City to Philadelphia, where it was supposed to remain until 1800. During the intervening period, the city on the Potomac River was to be made suitable for occupation by, at the very least, the three branches of government. The Residence Act also authorized Washington, without the need for Senate confirmation, to appoint “as long as may be necessary, three commissioners, who . . . shall, under the direction of the President” be responsible for surveying the district, purchasing all necessary land from proprietors, and supervising the construction of federal buildings.

On 20 January 1793, Washington addressed conflicts at the Federal City in a letter to proprietor Uriah Forrest: “I . . . am therefore persuaded, that every considerate person, who is interested in its establishment, will use his influence to heal differences & promote harmony among those engaged in the execution of the work.” Forrest would get his chance to follow Washington’s advice during a dispute between the commissioners, Daniel Carroll, Thomas Johnson, and David Stuart, and chief surveyor Andrew Ellicott, who in early January had tendered his resignation, effective 1 May, amid accusations of slowness and inaccuracy. Ellicott blamed his impending departure on false allegations propagated by Stuart (Ellicott to the D.C. Commissioners, 18 Jan., in DNA: RG 42, Records of the Commissioners for the District of Columbia, Letters Received, 1791–1802). Stuart, in turn, accused Thomas Jefferson of inciting Ellicott (Stuart to GW, 18 Feb.). Jefferson denied the charge and even sent Washington “full copies of the only letters . . . written to mister Ellicott in the course of the years 1792. & 1793” (Jefferson to GW, 14 Feb., 4 Mar.). The president believed Jefferson’s claims of innocence and forwarded the letters to Stuart (GW to Stuart, 3, 4 Mar.).

The commissioners and Ellicott soon proved they needed little prodding from others to aggravate their relationship. On 12 and 13 March they quarreled over whether the surveyor should defend his work orally or in writing. The commissioners demanded the latter, but Ellicott insisted on the former. “Writing,” said Ellicott, “will be a work of time: which at present, is of too much importance, to be wasted in an enquiry that, will eventually be found too trifling.” Exasperated, the commissioners fired Ellicott and demanded “all papers concerning the Business.” When he turned in every document that he believed “appeared of the least importance to the public,” the commissioners countered that “your Judgement is not to decide, our Demand is for all.” Ellicott then promised to send “every scrap . . . which bears the mark of a pen.” He returned the commissioners’ last letter of 13 March unread: “From a strong presumption that the enclosed letter is from you, I have declined opening it” (all letters in DNA: RG 42, Records of the Commissioners for the District of Columbia, Letters Received and Sent, 1791–1802).
Uriah Forrest chose this moment to follow Washington’s advice and attempted to remedy the situation. The commissioners, however, rebuked Forrest, telling him that “a proprietor has now [sic] Right than any other private person to interfere, with the Conduct of the Commissioners” (D.C. Commissioners to Forrest, 14 Mar., ibid.). They then complained to Washington about such interference, but received no immediate reply.

Meanwhile, on 16 March Ellicott also called on Washington and asked him to undertake “an examination” of the whole affair. “Otherwise,” Ellicott complained, “I shall consider myself a sacrifice at the schrine of igno-rance.” Washington replied indirectly through Jefferson, who told the surveyor “that it would be out of the line of his [Washington’s] interference to originate orders relative to those employed under the Com-missioners” (Jefferson Papers, 25:425–26).

Yet on 2 April the president did intervene, when he encountered Ellicott “On my way to, and at the landing of George Town.” Writing to the commissioners, Washington described his “conversation with Major Ellicott— who says . . . he is persuaded he can expln to your entire satisfaction if you will afford him a can-did & patient hearing . . . This I assured him you would do.” Nevertheless, Washington reassured the commissioners that he had reminded Ellicott “in stronger terms than ever that I would not interfere between the Commissioners & the characters Subordinate to them” (GW to the D.C. Com-missioners, 3 April).

As for the commissioners’ complaints about proprietary interference, Washington said “it . . . [is] . . . painful to me, to see such interference of the Proprietors.” Yet only months before he had enjoined Forrest to do just that! Now the president told the commissioners that proprietors “had no more to do with the conduct of” the commissioners than did any other American citizen. Washington even accused the proprietors of “acting the parts of suicides to their own interests, as far as their conduct could effect it” (GW to the D.C. Commissioners, 3 April).

On 4 April the commissioners reinstated Ellicott. Not wanting “to tire” Washington “with particulars” of the settlement, they offered him no details (D.C. Commissioners to GW, 9 April). And thus ended one of the most telling episodes in the founding of the Federal City. But the rancorous quarrels surrounding Andrew Ellicott’s tenure as chief surveyor provide more than just a glimpse at the in-fighting that took place in the city of Washington before there even was a city of Washington. The Ellicott affair illuminates an important facet of the complex man who did so much to establish the nation’s capital near his home on the Potomac River. Concerned primarily with keeping the city on schedule, Washington decried interference, even while interfering or prodding others to do the same. His role in solving the dispute between Ellicott and the District of Columbia’s commissioners proved that he would define on his own terms the Residence Act’s call for the commissioners to be “under the direction of the President.” At the same time, he endeavored to balance the use of his sub-stantial influence with his desire to appear as, and actually be, a delegant who resided above the oftentimes juvenile fray. While he may have maintained that appearance in public, Washington’s actions and private letters indicate that his concern for the Federal City led him to use methods he normally avoided and claimed to abhor.

— John C. Pinheiro
Fitzpatrick’s Writings of Washington Now Online!

The Papers of George Washington and the University of Virginia’s Electronic Text Center recently cooperated in placing online an electronic edition of John C. Fitzpatrick’s Writings of Washington.

John Clement Fitzpatrick (1876–1940), a Washington, D.C., native who from 1912 to 1928 had served as assistant chief of the Library of Congress’s Manuscripts Division, was a member of the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission organized by Congress in 1932 to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of Washington’s birth. When the Commission decided to create a new edition of Washington’s writings, it designated Fitzpatrick as the editor. His edition, The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799, published by the Government Printing Office between 1931 and 1944, quickly became the standard primary reference source for scholars interested in George Washington.

Comprised of more than 17,400 letters and documents in thirty-seven volumes (plus a two-volume index), Fitzpatrick’s Writings is a monumental achievement by any standard. Fitzpatrick’s experience at the Library of Congress, which owns the single largest collection of Washington manuscripts (more than 60,000 documents), ably prepared him for the herculean effort necessary to bring out an edition of that scale over such a short span of time. Fitzpatrick also produced several Washington-related works, the most important of which are The Diaries of George Washington, 1748–1799 (4 vols., 1925) and a biography of the subject that had become his life’s work, George Washington Himself (1933).

Respected as Fitzpatrick’s Writings is, it focused—as did two smaller nineteenth-century editions of Washington’s letters—almost exclusively on documents written by him or generated on his behalf. Letters sent to Washington appear in notes only, and thus the edition, like most documentary works of individuals edited before the advent of modern scholarly editing in the 1950s, presents only one side of the story. For the full record one must turn to The Papers of George Washington, the modern and more comprehensive edition being edited at the University of Virginia since 1969. A worldwide search for Washington’s papers has located some 135,000 surviving documents, including not only his outgoing letters, orders, reports, proclamations, and addresses, but also all the correspondence, enclosures, and other documents sent to him. These documents are being published in an anticipated ninety volumes, over half of which have been edited and are in print. The edition should be completed within another twenty years. Electronic publication also is planned, and in fact has begun with the online publication in September 2000 of The Papers’ six-volume letterpress edition of The Diaries of George Washington, which appeared in print between 1976 and 1979. Meanwhile, Fitzpatrick’s Writings still provides scholars with access to important material not yet published in the new annotated Papers. It is also hoped that the electronic edition of Fitzpatrick’s Writings of Washington will introduce this valuable resource to a new audience.

"To support the Laws, & to prevent the prostration of Government"
Washington’s Response to Harbingers of the Whiskey Rebellion
A document from recently published Presidential Series volume 11

To Alexander Hamilton

Sir, Mount Vernon Sept 17th 1792.

Your Letters of the 8 and 9. inst. are received. The latter came to me on Saturday morning by Express, from the Post Office in Alexandria. I gave the Proclamation my signature and forwarded it in the afternoon of the same day, by a special messenger, to the Secretary of State for his countersign. If no unforeseen delay happens, the return of it may be in time for Friday’s Post, so as to be with you the Tuesday following.

It is much to be regretted that occurrences of a nature so repugnant to order and good Government, should not only afford the occasion, but render such an interference of the Executive indispensably necessary. When these happen, lenient & temporizing means have been used, and serve only to increase the disorder; longer forbearance would become unjustifiable remissness, and a neglect of that duty which is enjoined on the President. I can have no hesitation therefore, under this view of the case, to adopt such legal measures to check the disorderly opposition which is given to the execution of the Laws laying a duty on distilled spirits, as the Constitution has invested the executive with; and however painful the measure would be, if the Proclamation should fail to produce the effect desired, ulterior arrangements must be made to support the Laws, & to prevent the prostration of Government.

Were it not for the peculiar circumstances of my family, I would return to the Seat of Government immediately; at any rate I hope to do it in the early part of next month, or before the middle thereof.2 With esteem & regard, I am &c. G: Washington

LB, DLC:GW.

1. GW issued his proclamation urging compliance with the federal excise tax on whiskey on Saturday, 15 September. GW received the countersigned proclamation from Jefferson at Mount Vernon on Friday, 21 September (see GW to Hamilton, 21 Sept.), and Hamilton received it at Philadelphia on Tuesday, 25 September (see Hamilton to GW, 26 Sept.).

2. The critical illness of George Augustine Washington, GW’s nephew and manager of Mount Vernon, and the illness of some of the servants who would travel with him to Philadelphia kept GW at home until 8 October. He arrived in the capital on 13 October (see GW to Tobias Lear, 1 Oct., to Betty Washington Lewis, 7 Oct., and to Anthony Whitting, 14 Oct.).
"To shew that Gentn that I was not unapprized of his intriguing disposition"
Washington’s Response to Major General Thomas Conway’s Criticisms
A document from recently published Revolutionary War Series volume 13

To Major General Horatio Gates

Sir, Valley forge Jany 4th 1778

Your Letter of the 8th Ulto came to my hands a few days ago; and, to my great surprize informed me, that a copy of it had been sent to Congress—for what reason, I find myself unable to acct; but, as some end doubtless was intended to be answered by it, I am laid under the disagreeable necessity of returning my answer through the same channel, lest any member of that honble body, should harbour an unfavourable suspicion of my having practiced some indirect means, to come at the contents of the confidential Letters between you & General Conway.

I am to inform you then, that Colo. Wilkenson, in his way to Congress in the Month of October last, fell in with Lord Stirling at Reading; and, not in confidence that I ever understood, inform’d his Aid de Camp Majr McWilliams that Genl Conway had written thus to you “Heaven has been determined to save your Country; or a weak Genl and bad Counsellors would have ruined it” — Lord Stirling, from motives of friendship, transmitted the acct with this remark— “The inclosed was communicated by Colo. Wilkenson to Majr McWilliams, such wicked duplicity of conduct I shall always think it my duty to detect.”

In consequence of this information, and without having any thing more in view than merely to shew that Gentn that I was not unapprized of his intriguing disposition, I wrote him a Letter in these words. “Sir— A Letter which I received last night contained the following paragraph.

“In a Letter from Genl Conway to Genl Gates he says ‘Heaven has been determined to save your Country; or a weak Genl and bad Counsellors would have ruined it— I am Sir & ca.’”

Neither this Letter, nor the information which occasioned it, was ever, directly, or indirectly, communicated by me to a single Officer in this army (out of my own family) excepting the Marquis de la Fayette, who having been spoken to on the subject by Genl Conway, applied for, and saw, under injunctions of secrecy, the Letter which contained Wilkensons information— so desirous was I, of concealing every matter that could, in its consequences, give the smallest Interruption to the tranquility of this army, or, afford a gleam of hope to the enemy by dissensions therein.

Thus Sir, with an openness and candour which I hope will ever characterize and mark my conduct, have I complied with your request, the only concern I feel upon the occasion (finding how matters stand) is, that in doing this, I have necessarily been obliged to name a Gentn whom I am persuaded (although I never exchanged a word with him upon the subject) thought he was rather doing an act of Justice, than committing an act of infidelity; and sure I am, that, till Lord Stirling’s Letter came to my hands, I never knew that Genl Conway (who I viewed in the light of a stranger to you) was a correspondent of yours, much less did I suspect that I was the subject of your confidential Letters— pardon me then for adding, that so far from conceiving, that the safety of the States can be affected, or in the smallest degree injured, by a discovery of this kind; or, that I should be called upon in such solemn terms to point out the author, that I considered the information as coming from yourself; and given with a friendly view to forewarn, and consequently forewarn me, against a secret enemy; or, in other words, a dangerous incendiary; in which character, sooner or later, this Country will know Genl Conway. But— in this, as in other matters of late, I have found myself mistaken. I am Sir yr Most Obedt Servt

Go: Washington

ALS, NHi: Gates Papers; copy, written and signed by GW, enclosed in GW’s letter to Henry Laurens of this date, DNA:PCC, item 154; Adams, DLC:GW; copy, ScHi: Henry Laurens Papers; Varick transcript, DLC:GW. The mutilated text is supplied in angle brackets from the copy in DNA:PCC. A note on the cover of the copy in ScHi reads: “I would wish this to be shewn only to His Excellency the president.”
1. See GW to Henry Laurens, this date.

2. GW inserted an asterisk at this place and wrote at the bottom of the page: “One of whom, by the bye, he was.”

3. On 27 October 1777 Gates’s aide-de-camp James Wilkinson, who was traveling to York in order to inform Congress of the victory at Saratoga, stopped at Stirling’s headquarters in Reading, Pennsylvania. While there Wilkinson provided Stirling’s aide-de-camp Maj. William McWilliams with his own version of the contents of Conway’s letter. McWilliams passed Wilkinson’s remarks on to Stirling (who had a feud of his own with Conway), and on 3 November, Stirling, noting that “such wicked duplicity of Conduct I shall alway’s think it my duty to detect,” sent GW a copy of Conway’s alleged remarks. About two days later GW sent Conway a chilly note quoting the passage he had received from Stirling, and Conway replied on 5 November claiming that it was not a true extract from his letter to Gates. Conway also spoke to Wilkinson about the affair and then informed Stirling that Wilkinson had declared that the passage did not appear in his letter to Gates (see Conway’s statement in Hammond, Sullivan Papers, 2:1–2). Stirling then wrote Wilkinson on 6 January 1778 requesting a clarification as well as a copy of Conway’s letter, but on 4 February Wilkinson replied in evasive terms and refused to furnish a copy of the letter (see Wilkinson to Congress, 22 Feb. 1778, containing copies of letters from Stirling to Wilkinson of 6 Jan. and Wilkinson to Stirling of 4 Feb., DNA:PCC, item 78; for the repercussions of this affair on relations among Wilkinson, Stirling, and Gates, see GW to Stirling, 21 Mar. 1778, Wilkinson to GW, 28 Mar. 1778, and Nelson, Stirling 122–23). It was not until 16 February, when John Fitzgerald sent GW a copy of a passage from the letter that he had procured from Henry Laurens, that GW was able to read a portion of what Conway had actually written, though the letter already had been perused by some members of Congress. Laurens claimed that the passage originally cited by Stirling did not exist; the extract he gave Fitzgerald was not calculated to reassure GW of Conway’s benevolence (see also Conway to GW, 27 Jan.,

Relations between GW and Gates had been strained since the autumn of 1777, when Gates had neglected to inform GW directly of the victory at Saratoga and resisted GW’s requests for troop reinforcements (see Alexander Hamilton to GW, 6, 10 Nov. 1777, and Horatio Gates to GW, 7 Nov. 1777). Their barely concealed mutual dislike increased as they debated Conway’s letter through the winter (see GW to Gates, 9 and 24 Feb. 1778, and Gates to GW, 8 Dec. 1777, 23 Jan. and 19 Feb. 1778). The growing hostility between GW and Conway meanwhile instigated uneasiness and sometimes bitter debate in American military and political circles. GW’s aides took an active part in the dispute, and may have encouraged GW to suspect that Conway, Gates, former quartermaster general Thomas Mifflin, and others were intriguing against him (see Conway to GW, 31 Dec. 1777, and GW to Henry Laurens, 2 Jan. 1778; see also Alexander Hamilton’s virulent condemnation of the “vermin” Conway and the “monster” of faction in his letter to George Clinton of 13 Feb. 1778, in Syrett, Hamilton Papers, 1:428).

GW was clearly sensitive to any open or implied criticism of his military leadership. It does not appear, however, that he believed an organized faction was plotting against him, although he was well aware of the dissatisfaction being voiced against him by some people (see, for example, Benjamin Rush’s letter to Patrick Henry of 12 Jan., printed in Patrick Henry to GW, 20 Feb., n.1). There is no evidence to indicate that the so-called Conway Cabal, which historians considered for many years to have been an organized conspiracy to displace GW as commander in chief, actually existed.

“If men are to be precluded from offering their sentiments on a matter which may involve the most serious and alarming consequences... the freedom of speech may be taken away and, dumb and silent, we may be led, like sheep, to the slaughter.”

George Washington, Newburgh, 1783
New Volumes

**Presidential Series, volume 10** (March–August 1792), edited by Robert F. Haggard and Mark A. Mastromarino, was published in September 2002. Among the topics covered are the first use of the presidential veto power, Gen. Arthur St. Clair’s disastrous defeat by Indians, and Washington’s efforts to expedite the construction of the new capital on the Potomac.

**Presidential Series, volume 11** (August 1792–January 1793), edited by Christine Sternberg Patrick, was published in December 2002. It covers preparations for a new Indian campaign under Gen. Anthony Wayne, the developing conflict within the cabinet between Hamilton and Jefferson, and Washington’s decision to accept a second term as president.

**Revolutionary War Series, volume 13** (December 1777–February 1778), edited by Edward G. Lengel, was published in August 2003. Covering the first third of the Valley Forge encampment, this volume documents the nearly disastrous supply crisis of that winter, Washington’s response to criticism by some officers and Congressmen, and his efforts to reorganize the army.

Forthcoming Volumes

**Revolutionary War Series, volume 14** (March–April 1778), edited by David R. Hoth, is scheduled to be published in the spring of 2004. Covering the middle part of the Valley Forge encampment, this volume documents the continuing efforts to supply the army, the training of its officers and soldiers, and the planning of the 1778 campaign.

**Presidential Series, volume 12** (January–May 1793), edited by Christine Sternberg Patrick and John C. Pinheiro, has not yet had a publication date set. It covers the last weeks of Washington’s first presidential term, his second inauguration at Philadelphia, establishment of the Federal City, and the drafting of the 1793 neutrality proclamation.
2003 Thomas Jefferson Award

On 15 March 2003 Assistant Editor Christine Sternberg Patrick attended the awards ceremony of the Society for History in the Federal Government at Shepherdstown, West Virginia, where she received the Society’s 2003 Thomas Jefferson Award for her editing of Presidential Series volume 11 (August 1792-January 1793). This award is given every other year for a documentary volume or edition that contributes significantly to the understanding of the history of the federal government. The Jefferson Award Committee’s presentation statement, which can be found at http://shfg.org/3awphoto.html along with a photograph of Dr. Patrick receiving the award from committee chair Dr. Caroline Hannaway, reads:

“The volume was chosen for the prize both for the relevance of its contents to the formation of the federal government and for Dr. Patrick’s editorial excellence. In the period in question, Washington decided to serve a second term as president, and the volume sheds light on the development of the American party system and the operation of the presidential cabinet. In selecting and arranging the documents, writing explanatory notes, and creating an analytical index, Dr. Patrick displays all the qualities as a historian and an editor that make this documentary edition outstanding.”

February 2003—Frank Grizzard addressed the annual meeting of the George Washington Society in Wilmington, Delaware, speaking about Washington’s birthday.

May 2003—Philander Chase and Beverly Runge perfected the text of Washington’s 1787-88 autobiographical “Remarks” for publication in George Washington Remembers, which will be published in early 2004 by Rowman & Littlefield. Philander Chase wrote the introduction to the volume.


July 2003—Philander Chase spoke on “George Washington’s Road Memories: Washington in Western Pennsylvania” at the Mother Cumberland Reunion at Shippensburg, Pennsylvania.

October 2003—Frank Grizzard presented a paper on Architectural Allusions to the University of Virginia in Edgar Allan Poe’s Writings at the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association’s conference in Missoula, Montana.

This semester at the University of Virginia, Frank Grizzard is hosting a lecture series for the School of Continuing Education & Professional Studies, entitled “The Real George Washington.”

October 2003—Edward G. Lengel is currently writing a book, General George Washington and the Birth of the American Republic, which will be published by Random House in the autumn of 2004. This full-length military biography ranges from the French and Indian War to the Quasi-War, and assesses Washington’s capacity as a military commander in the context of America’s growth as a military power. Based almost entirely on primary source material, it includes illustrations and almost a dozen maps.
New Editorial Board Members

In January 2003 nine new members joined the Washington Papers’ editorial board, bringing the total number of board members to twenty. The editorial staff is very grateful for the continuing service of the eleven distinguished scholars who have constituted our editorial board for the past two decades, and we welcome the new members, all of whom previously have assisted and supported the project’s work in useful ways. Board members will serve five-year terms beginning in 2003. The nine recent additions to the board are indicated on the list below by asterisks.

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