George’s Caribbean Excursion

Lynn Price, Assistant Editor, Washington Papers

George Washington only traveled abroad once in his life, sailing to the British island of Barbados in the West Indies when he was a young man. The trip was not strictly for pleasure, however; George’s older half-brother Lawrence was in ill health, suffering from pulmonary difficulties. Not only was Barbados known at the time for possessing a healing climate for such maladies, but the Washingtons also had both family connections and commercial ties to the island.

When the brothers set sail in the fall of 1751, George was 19, and Lawrence was 33. George kept a careful account of the voyage, noting in particular the weather and the progress of the ship, an effort he repeated on the voyage back to Virginia. The stormy weather is a theme throughout the diary, with mention of a nearby hurricane and many references to violent winds and swells, at least one of which made George “very sick.”

The food consumed on the journeys to and from the island also featured prominently in George’s daily remarks of life at sea. Various types of fish—from dolphin fish to pilot fish—are referenced, with careful note of how they were caught, brought on board, and dressed for meals. One entry describes a failed attempt to entice two barracudas with bait, resulting in a supper of only one small dolphin fish.

While on the island, George and Lawrence engaged in the social life and cultural activities of the day. George attended the theatre to see the Tragedy of George Barnwell as well as dined with a variety of individuals, including family friend Gedney Clarke, Judge George Graeme, and “some Ladies.” The island experience also included new fruits; George noted the delicious oranges and avocados, choosing the pineapple as his favorite. The agriculture and economy of the island also captured his attention. George wrote, “The Earth in most parts is extremely rich & as black as our richest Marsh,” discussing the sugar industry, island crops, and cattle.

Beginning in mid-November, there is a month-long gap in the diary during which George “Was strongly attacked with the small Pox” and was too ill to write. He recovered and returned to the Barbados social scene on December 12.

Continued on page 11.
As a youth, George Washington was accustomed to standing on his own. On his journey through the wilderness of western Pennsylvania in the winter of 1753–1754, during which he survived an assassination attempt and a dunking in the ice-choked Allegheny River, among other trials, Washington projected a can-do enthusiasm that would have impressed any modern-day adrenaline junkie. But that attitude did not last.

By the end of the 1750s, Washington was a changed man. Years of war and privation had brought him face to face with his physical limitations. To achieve his dreams—even to survive—he knew he needed a life partner. Martha Dandridge Custis, whom he married on January 6, 1759, was just that: a partner, and a woman on whom he increasingly relied for strength as the years passed and his public and private responsibilities increased.

Our new project to identify, transcribe, annotate, and publish the papers of Martha Washington and the Washington and Custis families places George Washington fully in the context of the people who helped to make him great. People like Martha, her children and grandchildren as well as George’s parents, siblings, and nephew Bushrod were not just auxiliaries but active partners in his many accomplishments. By publishing their papers, we not only bring them to the forefront but also bring George into sharper focus. For this reason, it seems only appropriate to change our project’s name from the Papers of George Washington to the Washington Papers.

Our editorial team remains focused on completing the publication of George Washington’s papers. We are hard at work on the final three volumes of the Presidential Series (volumes 19–21), while in the Revolutionary War Series, we are editing volumes 25–26, which take the Continental Army to the brink of the winter 1780–1781 campaign that culminated at Yorktown. We are also nearing completion of the first three-year stage of our project to publish George Washington’s financial papers. Our new editorial team, meanwhile—thanks to generous support from the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association—is preparing a new edition of the young George’s Barbados diary and beginning work on the two-volume edition of Martha’s letters.

As always, we thank our donors—Mount Vernon, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Packard Humanities Institute, among others. We also receive vital financial support from individuals whose donations, by mail or through our new online giving webpage, continue to ensure that the legacy of George Washington—and now his wife and family—will be made available in perpetuity to citizens of the nation he helped to create.

Edward G. Lengel
Professor and Director, The Washington Papers
Martha Washington Revisited

Katy Gehred
RESEARCH ASSISTANT, WASHINGTON PAPERS

George Washington is a figure of almost mythological proportions in American history. His wife, on the other hand, exists in the public imagination as more of a quiet, grandmotherly figure. So who was Martha Washington, and why is it important for historians to study her?

The Washington Papers aims to answer these important questions with the new Martha Washington Papers project, launched on July 1. Research editors and assistants at the University of Virginia’s Dynamics Building have begun tracking down correspondence to and from Martha. Work will soon begin on transcribing, annotating, and publishing these documents in a format that is easy for researchers to use.

Martha’s papers will allow us to look at George Washington as a brother, husband, and stepfather instead of “His Excellency,” bringing him down from his pedestal and showing us a more human side of the man. Through Martha’s eyes, we see the relatively unknown George Washington.

Martha’s letters also help to reveal the day-to-day life of George Washington’s time. Her papers include food orders for large parties, descriptions of clothing, and packing lists. Some entries show how she supervised the slaves who performed all the tasks necessary for running Mount Vernon. As any curator can tell you, knowledge about the work, textiles, foods, furnishings, and clothing of a time period is essential to understanding it.

But Martha’s papers are more than just a different way to gain insight into George. They are worthy of historical study in their own right.

Martha was on the scene during the American Revolution, frequently visiting her husband at his military camps. She presided over the Friday night “Republican Court” in the earliest days of American democracy and wouldn’t allow card playing, wine drinking, or late hours. As a plantation mistress of a household with many slaves, Martha, more than most, exemplifies the tensions that arose within that “peculiar institution.”

During a Fourth of July Celebration in 1798, the ladies of Middlesex, Connecticut, commemorated Martha with this toast: “Mrs. Washington—May we in her ever recall to mind the valor, patriotism and magnanimity of the hero who conducted us to freedom.”

The Martha Washington Papers project has started the process of reclaiming the first First Lady.

WASHINGTON PAPERS IN THE NEWS

The creation of the Washington Papers’ new Martha Washington Papers project has sparked a flurry of media attention.

- A post on the Washington Post’s higher education news blog outlined the Washington Papers’ latest expansion and introduced the exciting possibility that unknown letters penned by Martha Washington might be discovered.

- National Public Radio’s Weekend Edition Sunday program interviewed Edward G. Lengel, director of the Washington Papers, about the common, contemporary portrayal of Martha. “The popular perception really dates back from the 19th century in the images you see of Martha as an older lady in a knitting cap who looks very docile,” said Lengel during his NPR appearance. “I see her as a very vigorous, intelligent and active figure, and that really comes out through the letters.”

- UVA Today, a daily compilation of the latest University of Virginia news, and WVTF Public Radio, the public radio service of Virginia Tech, also featured stories about the significance and goals of the Martha Washington project.
Filming George Washington

Caitlin Conley
RESEARCH EDITOR, WASHINGTON PAPERS

It is important to us here at the Washington Papers to create many types of doorways that lead to an encounter with the Washington family. If you are a student starting a paper, a teacher planning classes, or merely curious about why the Spanish King gave George a donkey, where would you first look for information? Perhaps our bound volumes, perhaps our website, or maybe our Wikipedia page.

Or perhaps you would start with YouTube and Vimeo.

Last October, we began a video project to showcase Washington documents, explain our work, and give brief glimpses into George's long-ago world. So far, the videos have fallen into two categories: educational, short videos about George and his times, and videos depicting certain facets of the work we do at the Washington Papers. Of course, none of us had really made videos before we decided to embark on this adventure, but we decided to see what we could do with a willingness to experiment. It was quite a learning curve!

Undergraduate assistant Claire Romaine and I, with the help of Eva Lucy Alvarado, navigated recording in a studio, battled with microphones and tripods, and cut together minutes-long videos from hours of footage. We produced videos that would introduce the amazing resources that we create here, including the Bibliography Project and the Day-by-Day Project. We also made videos that we hoped would be useful in elementary school classrooms; we filmed the beautiful heritage breeds at Mount Vernon for a series on George's farm animals. The series included quotes from his documents, graciously read by our editors and various students.

We learned more with each video—about everything from filming technique to what our audiences’ needs are—and we have received great feedback that will help us improve for the future. Currently, we are developing partnerships with University of Virginia departments and students as well as with filmmakers and a public television station. Our goal is to reach more K–12 educators and students in innovative, fun, and accessible ways. The possibilities for further videos are endless—mythology, the battle for Fort Necessity, mammoth bones, distilling whiskey. Indeed, part of our aim is to show just how many opportunities there really are to be creative with these documents.

If you are curious about what we have done so far, all videos are posted at gwpapers.virginia.edu, or search for “George Washington’s Woolly Tribe” on YouTube. Keep an eye out for more of our great resources to come!
Martha Washington Expansion Strengthens Relationship with Mount Vernon

Katie Lebert
COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT, WASHINGTON PAPERS

Opened on September 27, 2013, the Fred W. Smith Library located at Mount Vernon is itself an expansion upon the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association’s (MVLA) original mission of preservation. It seeks to further education about the life, liberty, and legacy of George Washington, an aim in which the MVLA has become increasingly interested. Their new mission strives to create a presidential library that will become a place for learning not only about Washington but also the founding era.

Enter Doug Bradburn, the founding director of the Fred W. Smith Library, more affectionately known as the Washington Library. Formerly a professor at the State University of New York (SUNY)-Binghamton and an expert in the founding era, Bradburn saw this as an opportunity to make an impact in the field as well as in public education. Responsible for the strategies behind expanding the resources and increasing the scope of Mount Vernon’s educational goals, he reached out to the Washington Papers to discuss how to boost scholarship and education about the first president.

It was then that Edward G. Lengel, director of the Washington Papers, suggested expanding into the Washington family.

Perspectives from Washington’s parents, wife, and wife’s descendants, Lengel believed, would keep Washington relevant.

Passionate about the idea, Bradburn explains that its significance is immeasurable. First and foremost, he believes the expansion will respond to the current scholastic interests of today. Often, Bradburn sees visitors attracted to the social and cultural life of the people of the era. As the MVLA is eager to deepen its education of the period, these textures of life will significantly shape Mount Vernon’s museum and Washington Library. As scholarship of the family and the period grows, so too will understanding of the material world. Indeed, with a broader context of life, he adds, many historic sites and museums will be able to offer more complex educational insights.

Personally, Bradburn is interested to see more of Martha, who has been largely overlooked in the scholarship of our founding. Wanting to learn about her experiences as a mother, the tragedies she faced, and her choice in George, Bradburn reflects that “there is a whole woman there, but she is too much in the shade of George.”

As a longtime history lover, Bradburn concludes that he is excited for the opportunity to hear new stories and to see farther down the unbroken line of human experience.
A Friendship Forged in War
John Jay and George Washington

Robb Haberman
ASSOCIATE EDITOR, THE SELECTED PAPERS OF JOHN JAY

In the closing phase of the Revolutionary War, George Washington wrote to John Jay in Paris, requesting an update on the progress of peace negotiations. Washington took the opportunity to remark on the close bond that he felt with Jay, noting, “I entertain the friendly sentiments towards you, which I have ever experienced since our first acquaintance” (18 Oct. 1782, EJ: 12492). Although scholars have investigated the meaning and significance of friendship among the revolutionary generation, Jay and Washington have as yet received scant attention. Founded on mutual respect and recognition of one another’s talents, theirs was a friendship sustained amid the uncertainties and hardships of the Revolution.

An early correspondence from the spring of 1776 highlights Jay’s appreciation for Washington’s military leadership. Then serving on a congressional committee, Jay praised the commander in chief for his recent success at the siege of Boston. “The disinterested and patriotic Principles which led you to the Field,” he informed Washington, “have also led you to Glory…. Those Pages in the Annals of America will record your Title to a conspicuous Place in the Temple of Fame” (2 Apr. 1776, EJ: 1137). Jay worked closely with Washington that summer, coordinating operations in New York that fortified the Hudson River, procuring artillery for the Continental Army, and securing the region from Loyalist threats.

Jay’s presidency of the Continental Congress from December 1778 to September 1779 marked another important milestone in their developing friendship. While Jay held office, various schemes were hatched to discredit Washington. Jay remained his steadfast supporter, however, even as General Horatio Gates leveled a barrage of criticism at Washington and lobbied to have him removed from command (21 Apr. 1779, EJ: 8412, draft). Jay also probably empathized with Washington. His confession to Washington that “There is as much Intrigue in this State House as in the Vatican, but as little secrecy as in a boarding School,” suggests that he too was burdened with unruly subordinates in a fractious and factionalized Congress (26 Apr. 1779: EJ: 8414, draft).

This wartime friendship therefore helped realize the successful prosecution of the conflict against Britain. Moreover, it proved pivotal in seeing the nation through the critical period of the 1780s and for ushering in the age of federalism in the following decade. For instance, even after appointing Jay as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Washington still sought his advice on all matters of state, urging him to respond with “the freedom of frankness of friendship” (19 Nov. 1790, EJ: 7247).

To view the original documents, visit The Papers of John Jay Online Collection at columbia.edu/cu/web/digital/jay/search.html and enter the listed EJ number cited in this essay in the section labeled “Jay ID.”
A Capitol Issue Toward the End of Washington’s Presidency

Neal Milikan
ASSISTANT EDITOR, WASHINGTON PAPERS

During the last six months of his presidency, problems with the development of Washington, DC, occupied much of George Washington’s time. One such issue was the pace of construction of certain structures in the city. On October 6, 1796, Thomas Law sent Washington a jocular petition written from the point of view of the Capitol building. “Your Petitioner would scorn to request any improper partiality, but humbly suggests that the prosperity of all & the existence (he may say) of the City depends upon his being ready for the reception of Congress.”

In response, Washington wrote to the three DC commissioners—Gustavus Scott, William Thornton, and Alexander White—on January 29, 1797, hoping that “great exertions will be used to forward the Capitol in preference to any other object. All others indeed depend, in a high degree, thereon, and are, or ought to be, subordinate thereto.” The commissioners, however, replied on February 6 that the Capitol was not more important than other office buildings and that they believed “the executive buildings ought to have the preference of some months, because the papers must be on the spot before the removal of Congress, and they cannot be removed in a day.” On February 15, Washington responded to the commissioners that construction of the president’s house should slow: “I am now decidedly of opinion that the edifices for the Executive Offices ought to be suspended… and that all the means (not essential for other purposes) & all the force, ought to be employed on the Capitol.”

Washington also repeatedly requested the commissioners to relocate their residences to within the boundaries of the new city in order to assuage the complaints of inhabitants accusing them of absenteeism. “The dissensions, & controversies which so frequently happen in that City, are extremely to be regretted; and nothing, I am persuaded, will contribute more to appease them, and to remove the jealousies which, without, will forever exist, than the residence of the Commissioners within the City.” While Washington sympathized with the commissioners regarding the complaints they received (“the discontents with which you are assailed by one or other of the Proprietors in the Federal City, must, unquestionably, be very disagreeable & troublesome to you, for they are extremely irksome to me”), he also realized that his final instructions regarding Washington, DC, would in large part determine whether his namesake city was ready for government habitation in 1800.

1. DLC: GW.
2. DLC: U.S. Commissioners of the City of Washington records.
4. DLC: U.S. Commissioners of the City of Washington records.
5. GW to the Commissioners for the District of Columbia, 27 November 1796, DLC: U.S. Commissioners of the City of Washington records.
6. GW to the Commissioners for the District of Columbia, 1 December 1796, DNA: RG 42, Records of the Commissioners for the District of Columbia, Letters Received.
Where Are They Now?

Many accomplished graduate students have contributed immensely to the Washington Papers. And they continue to make significant strides in their current professional endeavors.

Margaret Lewis served as a research assistant for Washington Papers Associate Editor William M. Ferraro. Her many responsibilities included biographical research, copyediting, and organizing and cataloging the Papers’ library. Lewis is now an assistant professor of history at the University of Tennessee at Martin, where she teaches world history and early modern European history courses. Her new book, *Infanticide and Abortion in Early Modern Germany*, will be published by Routledge early next year.

“My time at the Washington Papers helped me to hone and develop research and editing skills, and taught me a great deal not only about George Washington but about the work that goes on ‘behind-the-scenes’ in academia,” said Lewis.

During his time at the Washington Papers, Peter Luebke assisted with the research for document annotations and helped correct the digital edition’s index as well as the short title list. Currently, he is a historian for the United States Navy at Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) in Washington, DC. His primary duties revolve around the Naval Documents of the American Revolution project, which collects, transcribes, edits, and annotates documents related to the American Revolution at sea.

“The Washington Papers gave me solid grounding in the best practices of modern scholarly documentary editing,” said Luebke. “My experiences at the Papers helped me get my current job and also provided a wonderful model of how to go about producing a scholarly documentary edition.”

Undergraduates Make History at the Washington Papers

An avid reader, Emily Scerbo is a third-year history and foreign affairs undergraduate at the University of Virginia (U.Va.), involved in the research behind the Washington Papers. Looking for more research experience outside of the classroom, Scerbo took her history program advisor’s suggestion that she apply for a position. She enjoys how this experience frequently deepens her understanding of history and historical research and provides the opportunity to encounter small discoveries. Equally invigorated by her role of indexing names mentioned throughout the volumes, Emily concludes that she would relish a profession in academia.

A rising second year at U.Va., Sarah Tran applied for a research role at the Washington Papers when she serendipitously saw the announcement of the Papers’ Martha Washington expansion on U.Va.’s website. Though a science student with medical aspirations, Tran says she was eager to experience history more deeply, a field she has always been interested in. Today, she catalogues numerous references of Martha in George’s papers, and she finds that the experience has transformed her view of the subject and encouraged her to consider a major in history.
Our Summer with George

Tamara Purdin, TEACHER, LAMARQUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Jennifer Jaso, TEACHER, SARASOTA MIDDLE SCHOOL

Why would two teachers from Sarasota, Florida, want to work at the Washington Papers? It’s simple—we not only possess a passion for teaching history, but we have a desire to continue our own learning.

Every school year, we strive to cultivate complex thinkers and well-informed, dynamic participants in today’s society. While our instructional content may not solely focus on U.S. history, we always find a way to integrate George Washington. By the end of the first week of school, our students have little doubt about our enthusiasm for George. This interest soon sparked an idea, which in turn led to an amazing opportunity. On June 28, we left our families and homes for what would be six weeks in Charlottesville to work at the Washington Papers.

Tamara’s assignment included editing Washington’s Financial Ledger B. Initially, this project’s goal was to simply transcribe the ledger. However, her part in this project later included editing the transcribed ledgers so as to translate them into modern language. Tamara’s final task focused on creating a taxonomy for easy accessibility when the website becomes available.

Jennifer’s first task was to assist with the Day-by-Day Project. Its goal is to develop an online resource that chronicles every day of Washington’s life. Jennifer’s responsibilities included editing and posting entries to the project’s website. When she completed that project, she spent her last three weeks examining people, places, and events in Washington’s Barbados diary.

Although we had worked with primary documents in previous research experiences and doctoral work, there was still much to learn in the world of documentary editing. This journey gave us the opportunity to observe and experience the archival and curating processes, as well as the effort put into making the lives of our founding fathers accessible.

Each person working at the Washington Papers is qualified, professional, and personable. The editors and staff at the Washington Papers have truly enriched our lives.

Though the portrait of George Washington hanging in both our classrooms has always been significant, it now symbolizes a deeper connection to history through our experience at the University of Virginia and the Washington Papers.
Of Note & Upcoming Events

On March 30, 1767, Lund Washington, the overseer at Mount Vernon, writes a letter to George Washington to update him on the state of the crops on his plantation. Following the conclusion of the letter, Martha Washington adds a note to “My Dearest,” sharing that she is “sorry you will not be at home soon” and signing off as “your most affectionate.” Courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association.

Coming in February

In partnership with the University of Virginia’s Lifetime Learning program, the Washington Papers will hold an all-day event focused on Martha Washington.

Visit alumni.virginia.edu/learn for updates about the event and information on how to register.

January 14

A team from the Washington Papers will meet with a group of representatives from organizations such as the Library of Congress, Mount Vernon, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. During the closed session at Mount Vernon, the Papers will unveil a beta version of its Financial Papers project, a digital documentary edition of George Washington’s financial documents, including ledgers, account books, and receipts. The group will discuss the project’s history as well as the challenges of working with financial documents and developing technologies. Some of the guests will also present short papers about their work with financial papers at other institutions.

March 18–20

Edward G. Lengel, director of the Washington Papers, will be a featured speaker at the fifth annual Conference on the American Revolution, which will take place from March 18 to 20 at Colonial Williamsburg’s Woodlands Hotel Conference Center. Lengel will discuss the Battle of Germantown, while other prominent scholars of the Revolutionary War will explore a variety of topics, such as Benedict Arnold’s march to Quebec, the rebels’ stand at Bunker Hill, and the leadership of George Washington. For more information about the conference, which is open to the public, call 703.785.4373 or visit AmericasHistoryLLC.com.
Continued from page 1.

George returned to Virginia in early 1752—spending Christmas 1751 at sea while Lawrence travelled to Bermuda in an attempt to find the relief from his illness that Barbados had failed to provide. Without success, Lawrence eventually returned to Virginia where he passed away at Mount Vernon on July 26, 1752.

Unfortunately, the diary manuscript has deteriorated. Jared Sparks included excerpts in volume two of his 12-volume *The Writings of George Washington* in 1838. Those quoted pages are now missing from the diary, and evidence suggests that pages were already missing or mutilated when Sparks examined the manuscript. In 1892, Joseph Toner published a transcribed, annotated version of a further deteriorated diary.

Eighty-four years later, the Papers of George Washington published images of the diary without transcription or annotation in Volume 1 of *The Diaries of George Washington*. Today, the original manuscript is housed at the Library of Congress.

The Washington Family Papers project is in the process of creating a new transcription and an expanded annotation of George Washington’s Barbados diary. Images of the document, as well as the original manuscript, will be examined, and extensive research will be undertaken to place George’s experience into proper historical context. The diary will be published digitally and as an individual letterpress volume.

---

**Thank You to Our Supporters**

Public support is vital to the Washington Papers’ ongoing operations because it ensures that we can:

- Acquire images of rare documents held across the globe
- Transcribe and edit the documents with scrupulous accuracy
- Annotate the documents by means of carefully researched to enhance knowledge and understanding
- Publish the documents digitally to ensure that they are—always will be—available to all.

These generous supporters of the Washington Papers have furthered our mission of moving toward completion of this important project, and we thank them for their committed sponsorship for the calendar year of 2015:

- Theodore L. Ferraro
- Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association
- Packard Humanities Institute
- James & Jo Carol Porter
- William Ross
- William Vodrey
The Washington Papers, a grant-funded project, was established in 1968 at the University of Virginia, under the joint auspices of the University and the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association of the Union, to publish a comprehensive edition of Washington’s correspondence.

Follow us on Twitter and like us on Facebook for frequent news and updates about our projects and research.

Visit our website and give online at gwpapers.virginia.edu.
Join our mailing and email lists by emailing kcurtis@virginia.edu.

National Endowment for the Humanities Supports Washington Papers Project

As part of the 212 grants announced by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) on July 28, the Washington Papers will receive $318,000 in outright funding, which will support the completion of our project.

The grant will help prepare for publication volumes 20 and 21 of the Presidential Series and volumes 25–30 of the Revolutionary War Series.

The NEH is a founding supporter of the Washington Papers. Funding from the NEH and other organizations and private donors ensures that the Papers remains freely accessible in print and digital forms in perpetuity.

The Washington Papers remains grateful for the funding it continues to receive from the NEH, as well as from other foundations and private donors.

NEW! Donate Online to the Washington Papers...

It's now easy to donate online to the Washington Papers! Just visit gwpapers.virginia.edu and click on "Donate." Thank you for your generosity!