

# "The Property of the Nation": Democracy and the Memory of George Washington, 1799-1865

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## Recommended Citation

Costello, Matthew Ryan, ""The Property of the Nation": Democracy and the Memory of George Washington, 1799-1865" (2016). *Dissertations (2009 -)*. 642.  
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“THE PROPERTY OF THE NATION”: DEMOCRACY  
AND THE MEMORY OF GEORGE  
WASHINGTON, 1799-1865

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,  
Marquette University,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

May 2016

ABSTRACT  
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This dissertation explores how Americans personally experienced George Washington's legacy in the nineteenth century through visits to his estate and tomb at Mount Vernon. By the 1820s many Americans had conflicting memories of the American Revolution and its most iconic figure, George Washington. As America grew more divided, so too did the memory of Washington. On multiple occasions, government factions and organizations attempted to claim his remains for political reasons. At the same time, Americans and foreign travelers journeyed to Mount Vernon to experience his tomb and forge a deeper personal connection with the man. These visitors collected objects such as sticks, stones, and flowers from his gravesite, mementoes that not only represented their visits but also served as a reminder of a nostalgic American past. African slaves, free blacks, and European gardeners greeted these visitors as the first historical interpreters of Washington history. These individuals not only shared anecdotes but they also wove themselves into the narrative to profit from their affiliation with Washington. The history of Washington's tomb therefore illuminates the origins of an American celebrity culture, one that elevated Washington in significance and also ultimately transformed him into a democratic figure.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Matthew R. Costello, B.A., M.A.

For the last seven years, I have had the distinct privilege to pursue my vocation in history. There were few graduate programs that were willing to take a chance on me, but the Marquette History Department welcomed me with open arms. Their financial, professional, and personal support shaped me into the scholar and person I am today. Thank you to the faculty who mentored me, and the staff who helped me along the way. I also want to thank my graduate colleagues who were vital to the shaping of this project and my professional development.

This dissertation began as a research paper in Dr. James Marten's graduate seminar. Whether it was an assignment or an entry for the *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee Project*, Dr. Marten's editorial acumen improved my writing and clarity. I am deeply grateful for the support of Fr. Steven Avella, whose passion for the subject and high expectations compelled me to become a real historian. Finally, this project could not have happened without Dr. Kristen Foster. She encouraged me make the project my own and gave me the freedom to discover my topic. Whenever I felt overwhelmed, conflicted, or unsure about the project's direction, Dr. Foster's invaluable advice always put things into perspective.

I want to thank my family for their love and support during this process. My parents, Tim and Debbie, who encouraged me to pursue my dreams; my grandparents, Anthony and Patricia, who taught me the meaning of hard work; my brothers Dan and Jeff, who occasionally beat some sense into me; Dr. Robert Pettus Hay, whose love for George Washington has not only influenced my research but also forged our friendship;

and finally, my amazing wife Kristen. Your love, reassurance, and patience saved me countless times, and we share this accomplishment together.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
INTRODUCTION: GEORGE WASHINGTON AND DEMOCRACY.....	1
CHAPTER	
I.    “THE PROPERTY OF THE NATION”: THE MEMORY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THE POLITICS OF DISINTERNMENT.....	26
II.   THERE’S MONEY IN OLD GEORGE’S BONES: JOHN AUGUSTINE WASHINGTON III AND THE ADVENT OF HISTORICAL TOURISM.....	84
III.  CULTIVATORS OF LEGEND: WASHINGTON STORYTELLERS AND THE SLAVE COMMUNITIES AT MOUNT VERNON.....	142
IV.  FRONTIERSMAN, SOLDIER, AND FARMER: THE DEMOCRATIC WASHINGTON IN POPULAR CULTURE.....	199
V.   THE CIVIC PILGRIMAGE: WASHINGTON’S TOMB AND THE VENERATION OF WASHINGTON MEMENTOES.....	250
VI.  “GUARDIANS OF A NATIONAL SHRINE”: THE MOUNT VERNON LADIES’ ASSOCIATION AND THE LEGACY OF WASHINGTON.....	303
CONCLUSION.....	357
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	365
APPENDIX A.....	407
APPENDIX B.....	409
APPENDIX C.....	412
APPENDIX D.....	415

## Introduction

### George Washington and Democracy

While Americans in the nineteenth century linked George Washington to the advent of American democracy, he actually held no love for that particular form of government. His military and political experiences had shaped a much darker view of the people. After his surrender at Fort Mifflin, Washington reported to Virginia Lieutenant Governor Robert Dinwiddie that he capitulated because of insufficient provisions and an inexperienced soldiery. His distaste for militia intensified when he took command of the Continental Army. Militias were composed primarily of small landowners, laborers, merchants, and farmers all with little military experience. Washington's inability to build a professional army plagued him for most of the war, as these men lacked the training and knowledge needed to challenge the British army. As a result, Washington frequently found himself at odds with the men who enlisted to fight the British. He was appalled by their excessive drinking, fraternizing with women in camp, stealing from civilians, and disregard for the authority of officers. While not all soldiers engaged in these behaviors, Washington frequently wrote of a disturbing pattern of malfeasance and poor discipline amongst his men.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Account by George Washington and James Mackay of the Capitulation of Fort Mifflin, July 19, 1754, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. William Abbot et al. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), Colonial Series, 1, 159-164; John Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009), 23-24, 95-96; Edward Lengel, *General George Washington: A Military Life* (New York: Random House Books, 2005), 46-48, 63-65, 106-108; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, June 2, 1780, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 3, 411-412; Harry Ward, *George Washington's Enforcers: Policing the Continental Army* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press, 2006), 30-44; Holly Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community*

Washington's frustrations with the common men under his command came to a head during the American defeats at Long Island and Manhattan in 1776. While Washington committed a number of tactical mistakes, he blamed the fall of New York on his naïve recruits. Writing to his cousin Lund after the defeats, Washington expressed his dissatisfaction: "I am wearied to death all day with a variety of perplexing circumstances—disturbed at the conduct of the militia, whose behavior and want of discipline has done great injury to the other troops, who never had officers, except in a few instances, worth the bread they eat." As the war progressed, Washington constantly grumbled about the army's shortcomings to officers, generals, and members of the Continental Congress. In addition to his frequent requests for supplies and provisions, Washington complained to Congress about "the general defective state of the Regiments which compose our Armies." Writing to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, he chastised states that sent meager militia forces whose presence "have been so severely and ruinously felt" on the battlefield. But Washington's pleas were often ignored, as delegates lacked the funds and feared the possibility of one man commanding a standing army.<sup>2</sup>

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*during the American Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 30-84; Caroline Cox, *A Proper Sense of Honor: Service and Sacrifice in George Washington's Army* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 73-117, 121-136; For an examination of the young men who served in the army, see John Ruddiman, *Becoming Men of Some Consequence: Youth and Military Service in the Revolutionary War* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 57-116; Stephen Brumwell, *George Washington: Gentleman Warrior* (London: Quercus, 2012), 213; John W. Hall, "Washington's Irregulars," in *A Companion to George Washington*, ed. Edward Lengel (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 320-343; For more on the mutinies of the army, see John A. Nagy, *Rebellion in the Ranks: Mutinies of the American Revolution* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> George Washington to Lund Washington, September 30, 1776, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Dorothy Twohig et al. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), Revolutionary War Series, 6, 440-443; George Washington to John Hancock, October 13, 1777, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. Philander Chase et al. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), Revolutionary War Series, 11, 497-501. *The Papers of George Washington*



Despite his reservations and grievances about the common men who served under him, these ordinary Americans never directly heard Washington's criticisms. These concerns were privately voiced, and soldiers had little knowledge of their general's longstanding frustration with their performance in battle. Above all else, Washington detested poor discipline, and militias were often guilty of this, but they were also inexperienced and poorly supplied. These circumstances furthered the perception that they were inadequate as trained soldiers. Still, Washington understood the need to mollify his political and military critics, and the militia served its purpose as one of the scapegoats for his struggles during the American Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

After resigning his commission as Commander-in-Chief in 1783, Washington produced a momentous political tract advocating for national unity. In his widely disseminated Circular to the States, Washington argued for "[a]n indissoluble Union of the States under one Federal Head." The United States required a "supreme power to regulate and govern," and without it, "every thing [sic] must very rapidly tend to Anarchy and confusion." Washington cautioned that the new nation's success rested on reforming the national government and citizen allegiance to the Union, warning that the new country would only succeed if Americans could learn to "forget their local prejudices and policies." Washington's admonition became prophetic when Massachusetts farmers and landowners coalesced in opposition to tax increases and farm foreclosures in 1786. The

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indexes reveal how Washington felt towards the militia, as his comments on their inadequacies and unreliability vastly outnumber his compliments of them; E. Wayne Carp, *To Starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administrators and American Political Culture 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 53-152; Brumwell, *George Washington: Gentleman Warrior*, 237-238, 354-355; Lengel, *General George Washington: A Military Life*, 140-147, 159-160, 164-171. Washington later blamed the soldiers under his command for the loss of Long Island and his subsequent retreat from Manhattan in a letter to John Hancock.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American*

rebels, mostly Revolutionary War veterans, armed themselves and even attempted to seize the federal arsenal at Springfield. In the aftermath of the rebellion, prominent individuals advocated for reforming the national government. Elected to serve as a Virginia delegate to the Constitutional Convention, Washington left for Philadelphia with the belief that only a strong, centralized government could protect the new country from enemies abroad and prevent insurrection at home.<sup>4</sup>

While ordinary Americans were not invited to the Constitutional Convention, Shays's Rebellion had left its mark on the minds of the delegates: the people could not be trusted to govern themselves. Elected unanimously as President of the convention, Washington oversaw the debates. While Washington attempted to appear neutral, those in attendance knew of his preference for a stronger, federal government. Representatives debated important issues like representation, taxation, Congressional powers, slavery, and the creation of the executive branch. No one could deny, however, that a weak, decentralized national government wielded little authority over the states, all of which had their own forms of government, constitutions, factional politics, and democratic processes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> George Washington to Henry Lee, October 31, 1786, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1891), 11, 76-79; *The Diaries of George Washington*, May 17, 1787, 1783, eds. Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 5, 158. Washington waited months to accept the position; François Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 5-8; Nicholas P. Cole, "George Washington and Republican Government," in *A Companion to George Washington*, ed. Edward Lengel (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 430-446; George Washington, Circular to the States, June 8, 1783, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938), 26, 483-496; Leonard Richards, *Shays's Rebellion: The American Revolution's Final Battle* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 412-413.

<sup>5</sup> Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*, 469-518, 532-536; Richard Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution* (New York: Random

As delegates debated the form of the new national government some looked to the state constitutions for inspiration, while others examples to avoid. Considered radically democratic for its time, Pennsylvania's 1776 constitution abolished property requirements for male voters and office-holders, governed from a single body of representatives, and maintained a collective executive. In Massachusetts, citizens roundly rejected the state constitution drafted by elite leaders. A special convention in 1780 secured a constitution based on the consent of directly elected representatives. Elites of other states worried about the stability of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, as they stretched popular sovereignty to encompass more Americans. While the reasons for Shays's Rebellion were much more complex, elites feared that democracy would result in mob rule and anarchy. Later resistance movements and rebellions against the government in these states only confirmed their suspicions.<sup>6</sup>

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House, 2009), 16-21, 31-36, 68-69, 193-194; Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 15-26; Whit Ridgway, "George Washington and the Constitution," in *A Companion to George Washington*, ed. Edward Lengel (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 413-429.

<sup>6</sup> Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*, 226-237, 438-442; Pennsylvania's convention of elected delegates were determined to form a new government for the people, and as such, took drastic measures to expand suffrage and curtail possible abuses of executive power. Benjamin Franklin presided as President of the Convention, and favored the unicameral legislature. He also revised the draft as a member of a committee, and generally approved the measures taken by Pennsylvania delegates. See *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, July 29 – August 15, 1776, ed. William Willcox et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 22, 529-534; Massachusetts followed the lead of Pennsylvania and Delaware in organizing a special convention of delegates to draft their state constitutions and not the elected officials in the state legislature. In order to ensure the fairest possible means of representation, the franchise was opened to all men, regardless of property ownership. The Constitution also permitted free males sixteen and older the right to vote for House representation, but there was a tax contingency attached to it. The Massachusetts Constitution, with its popularly elected executive, independent judiciary, and weaker legislature later influenced the framing of the United States Constitution. John Adams drafted the constitution, and is considered the architect of the document. See *The Papers of John Adams*, October 28-31, 1779, eds. Gregg Lint, Robert Taylor (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1989), 8, 228-271; Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*, 218, 438-448. Wood correctly asserts that the Massachusetts Constitution was much less democratic than Pennsylvania's, but its mixed system

After the ratification of the Constitution, Washington was elected unanimously to serve as the nation's first executive. During his presidency Washington witnessed the unfolding of the French Revolution and the gruesome consequences of democratic excess. Washington initially applauded the efforts of the French to eliminate monarchical tyranny in favor of liberty. In several letters to French officials, he offered "an earnest prayer that [the Revolution] may terminate in the permanent honor and happiness of your Government and People." But the French Revolution evolved, Washington worried that radicalism might gradually destroy the progress of the movement. "The renovation of the French Constitution is indeed one of the most wonderful events in the history of Mankind," he wrote, but "my greatest fear has been, that the Nation would not be sufficiently cool & moderate in making arrangements for the security of that liberty." French revolutionaries declared war against the monarchies of Austria, Prussia, Sardinia, the United Netherlands, and Great Britain. Washington responded with a proclamation of neutrality, announcing that the United States would not aid France in its wars. But even as Washington wisely avoided war with any European power, he could not help but blame democracy and its iconoclasts for the systemic violence in France.<sup>7</sup>

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of representation still allotted for the people to elect representatives to its House of Representatives.

<sup>7</sup> George Washington to Charles Hector, Comte d'Estaing, October 13, 1789, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. William Abbot, Dorothy Twohig et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993), Presidential Series, 4, 168-169; Washington used variations of this line in several letters written on October 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. See George Washington to Charles Armand Tuffin, Marquis La Rouërie, October 13, 1789, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. William Abbot, Dorothy Twohig et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993), Presidential Series, 4, 175-176; George Washington to Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, October 13, 1789, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. William Abbot, Dorothy Twohig et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993), Presidential Series, 4, 184-185; George Washington to Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, marquis de Lafayette, October 14, 1789, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. William Abbot,

As France moved towards democratic radicalism, Washington focused his attention on reducing the country's Revolutionary War debt, supporting Alexander Hamilton's proposed tax on whiskey. Pennsylvanian farmers, small landowners, and veterans challenged the law by attacking collectors and petitioning for redress. These protests and bouts of violence grew in number, and by 1794 western Pennsylvania threatened the national government with full-scale insurrection. Washington linked the rebels' actions to the French Revolution and Thomas Jefferson supporters writing, "I consider this insurrection as the first *formidable* fruit of the Democratic Societies." Washington believed that political demagogues were responsible for sowing "the Seeds of Jealousy & distrust among the people, of the government, by destroying all confidence in the Administration." Determined to protect the authority of the federal government, Washington took command of 13,000 soldiers and authorized Major General Henry Lee's march on western Pennsylvania to meet 7,000 rebels, most of whom fled the field before any shots were fired. While the Whiskey Rebellion collapsed without the use of force, it reaffirmed the power of the federal government to quell dissent within the states. It also heightened Washington's apprehension of democracy and confirmed his belief that the Union must be preserved at all costs.<sup>8</sup>

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Dorothy Twohig et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993), Presidential Series, 4, 191-192; George Washington to Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay Graham, January 9, 1790, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. William Abbot, Dorothy Twohig et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993), Presidential Series, 4, 551-554; George Washington, Neutrality Proclamation, April 22, 1793, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Philander Chase et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005), Presidential Series, 12, 472-474.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York: Alfred Knopf Press, 2004), 221-224; Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon*, 308-315; George Washington to Henry Lee, August 26, 1794, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. Theodore Crackel et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), Presidential Series, 16, 600-605. Henry Lee, a former general under Washington during the American Revolution, was given command of the militia to end the rebellion. This was the

As America's preeminent citizen the American people cherished and celebrated George Washington, but this never quelled his fear of mob rule, nor did Washington believe that all men were equals. Democracy was one of the many perceived threats to the fragile Republic, and in Washington's opinion the French Revolution served as a grim reminder that "the people" were either unfit to govern or vulnerable to manipulation by demagogues. The actions taken by disenfranchised Pennsylvanians further convinced him that only republicanism could sustain America. But Washington, much like his Federalist colleagues, was either not cognizant of the democratic impulses released by the American Revolution or refused to believe the longevity of their power. While Washington appreciated the support that "the people" gave him, his deep belief in republicanism cast them as his social inferiors, and any hint of equality with the people would certainly have made him uncomfortable.

In the early days of the American Republic, there were few men who could match George Washington's popularity. Born to a moderately wealthy Virginia family, he ascended the ranks of the militia, fought in the French and Indian War, and overcame incredible odds to defeat the British. By the nineteenth century Americans loved both him and the myths that surrounded his rise to prominence, but this had not always been

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same Henry Lee that Washington confided in during Shays' Rebellion. Washington made similar comments to Burgess Ball, writing: "Insurrection in the Western counties of this State is a striking evidence of this; and may be considered as the first *ripe fruit* of the Democratic Societies." See George Washington to Burgess Ball, September 25, 1794, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Theodore Crackel et al. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011), Presidential Series, 16, 722-724; William Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty* (New York: Scribner, 2006), 5-9; Thomas Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3-8; Carol S. Ebel, "One Cause, One Purpose, One Nation: George Washington, the Whiskey Insurrection, and Executive Authority," in *A Companion to George Washington*, ed. Edward Lengel (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 447-470.

the case. The death of his father Augustine ensured that George would never receive the same education as other notable Founders. Some of these colleagues privately regarded Washington as uninformed and a poor public speaker. Many of his military contemporaries considered him an abysmal tactician, and some of his subordinates during the Revolution even attempted to circumvent his authority. He experienced private denigration from members of the Continental Congress and some of his officers, all while enduring public ridicule from Loyalists, neutrals, and disgruntled patriots. The Revolutionary War inspired both ardent Washington supporters and bitter critics, but the Virginian's perseverance and character elevated his reputation among his contemporaries and the American populace by the end of his life.<sup>9</sup>

Much to the chagrin of more intellectual leaders such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, after the war political and cultural agents glorified Washington incessantly, casting him as the icon of the Revolution. With the popular support of the people, Washington became the natural choice for the presidency under the new Constitution. His presence brought legitimacy to the new American government, but more importantly he served as the political and cultural substitute for King George III. While the Revolution had rejected monarchy, Americans did not simply lose their British colonial identity overnight, nor did they forget the traditions and rituals of Englishmen. In

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<sup>9</sup> Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues, and Exploits of General George Washington* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1918, 1800); Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington*, 217-220; Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon*, 12-14; For the best overview of Washington's military leadership, see Edward Lengel, *General George Washington: A Military Life* (New York: Random House Books, 2005); the oft-quoted letter regarding Washington's intelligence is from Thomas Jefferson, who wrote in 1814: "His mind was great and powerful...no judgment was ever sounder. It was slow in operation, being little aided by invention or imagination, but sure in conclusion." See Thomas Jefferson to Walter Jones, January 2, 1814, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Retirement Series, 7, 100-104.

postwar street celebrations, parades, and public demonstrations, President Washington served as a unifying figure, a man who was not king but at times appeared quite regal. During his journey to Philadelphia for his inauguration in 1789, Americans greeted him on his tour, erected triumphal arches for his passage, and offered dinners and toasts in his honor. While all of these rituals were modeled on British political traditions, they were also imbued with republican symbols and rhetoric, signifying Washington's newfound authority and his status as America's most virtuous citizen.<sup>10</sup>

While Washington carefully cultivated his image, the founding generation did everything in its power to transform him into a national symbol. They compared him to the Roman hero Cincinnatus for his willingness to surrender power and return to his plow after the war. Religious leaders likened him to Moses for leading the American people out of political slavery towards freedom. This is not to say that Washington was completely disinterested in the hero-making process; he frequently sat for portraits, sculptures, and celebrated national days with Americans, including his birthday February 22. But he also knew that the best way to preserve his reputation was by appearing

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<sup>10</sup> Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol* (New York: The Free Press, 1987); Paul K. Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1999); Sandra Moats, *Celebrating the Republic: Presidential Ceremony and Popular Sovereignty, from Washington to Monroe* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 10-34; for more on the symbolism and material culture of Washington's presidency, see Amy Hudson Henderson, "Furnishing the Republican Court: Building and Decorating Philadelphia Homes, 1790-1800," (Dissertation, University of Delaware, 2008); Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); *The Boston Evening Post*, 29 December 1760; *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 2 January 1761; *The Boston Gazette*, 5 January 1761; *The Boston Evening Post*, 5 January 1761; *Boston Post Boy*, 5 January 1761; *New York Mercury*, 5 January 1761; *New York Gazette*, 12 January 1761; *The New York Packet*, 22 April 1790; *New York Daily Gazette*, 22 April 1790; *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 22 April 1790; *Independent Gazetteer*, 24 April 1790; *Burlington Advertiser*, 27 April 1790; *Massachusetts Spy*, 29 April 1790; *Weekly Museum*, 1 May 1790; *New Hampshire Gazette*, 5 May 1790; Gerald Kahler, *The Long Farewell: Americans Mourn the Death of George Washington* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 11-20; Gerald Kahler, "Washington in Glory, America in Tears: The Nation Mourns the Death of George Washington, 1799-1800," (Ph.D. Dissertation, William and Mary, 2003).



reluctant in these grandiose gestures. Even after he left the presidency, Washington remained a national celebrity. Americans sought out the legend at his home Mount Vernon, ignoring his desire for privacy in his retirement. Obligated by his public persona and the code of southern hospitality, Washington frequently entertained strangers who found their way to Mount Vernon. Ironically, in his final years, Washington found himself bound by the cult of personality that he and others had created after the Revolution.<sup>11</sup>

After Washington's death in 1799, politicians immediately began competing for control of his memory. President John Adams and Alexander Hamilton orchestrated ceremonies and public commemorations that highlighted Washington's character, his commitment to Federalist principles, and the importance of maintaining a national standing army. These politicians hoped to use the memory of Washington to coalesce power in the national government, but by 1799 the political tide had already turned against the Federalists. In their factional attacks, Jefferson's Democratic-Republicans carefully criticized Washington and they avoided the excessive hero worship in which Federalists reveled. Jefferson's supporters promoted more democratic commemorations that celebrated ordinary Americans, the soldiers, sailors, laborers, and farmers who all contributed to independence. Outside of politics, religious leaders attempted to over-Christianize the late President to gain favor with their congregations, and the Freemasons

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<sup>11</sup> Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol*, 41-89, 115-118; Robert P. Hay, "George Washington: American Moses," *American Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (Winter, 1969): 780-791; Harlow Giles Unger, "Mr. President": *George Washington and the Making of the Nation's Highest Office* (Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2013), 68-69; Gordon Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 31-63.

endeavored to link their organization with the sacred image of the brotherhood's most famous member. Thus began the many efforts by different groups to shape the narrative of Washington, a struggle that transcended the realm of public memory and extended to his bodily remains for ultimate affirmation.<sup>12</sup>

This dissertation examines the democratization of the memory of George Washington in the nineteenth century, a process that transformed him from an elite, aristocratic planter and symbol of republicanism into a figure of American democracy. Historians have focused primarily on Washington the symbol, the creation of Washington myths, and the role his memory played in larger nationalist commemorations. Scholars, however, have yet to explore the connections between democratization, celebrity culture, and the forging of a collective, popular memory of Washington. Public days of commemoration were typically planned by elites with different agendas; these episodes shed little light on how the greater American populace remembered Washington. The story of Washington's tomb and its popularity tell us more about how ordinary Americans remembered, shared, and believed in a variety of narratives that made Washington a man of "the people." A study of Washington's tomb as a sacred and

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<sup>12</sup> Moats, *Celebrating the Republic: Presidential Ceremony and Popular Sovereignty, from Washington to Monroe*, 63-90; Gerald Kahler, *The Long Farewell: Americans Mourn the Death of George Washington* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008). Kahler examined how these three groups—Federalists, clergymen, and Masons all attempted to use mourning occasions to remind the wider American public of their relationships with Washington and how his presence "purified" their intentions or messages; Robert E. Cray Jr., "Commemorating the Prison Ship Dead: Revolutionary Memory and the Politics of Sepulture in the Early Republic, 1776-1808," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (July 1999): 565-590; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 40-52; Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999); Simon Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Sarah Purcell, *Sealed With Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

national space also illuminates the temporal malleability of the past. George Washington can be used as a lens through which we might better understand a given era. His iconic status allows scholars to deconstruct claims about the man and better view the issues of the day. For many Americans in the early nineteenth century, Washington's grave offered moments of tranquility and the illusion of unity in an otherwise divisive and fast-changing world.<sup>13</sup>

This dissertation engages the growing field of memory and commemoration studies. Social scientists and theorists, led by Maurice Halbwachs, a Durkheimian French philosopher and sociologist, first blazed this trail of inquiry in the 1920s. Halbwachs argued that the process of remembering the past was shaped by the shifting social, political, religious, and economic dynamics of the present. By forging a shared experience of a person or event, groups could shape a wider collective memory, one that individuals could use for recall even if they had no memory of the event or figure in question. Therefore, memory was not solely determined by the individual but shaped by the cultural context of the group's collective experiences. Commemorative events were especially significant to this process, as group leaders reconstructed the past to face the

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<sup>13</sup> Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (seven volumes: 1984–1992) Paris: Edition Gallimard; Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26, (Spring 1989): 7-25; Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). Wood argued that the ideas of the Revolution unleashed democratic forces that the Founders neither intended nor desired; I argue that this process included the democratization of the memory of the Founders themselves; Richard Wightman Fox, *Lincoln's Body: A Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015). Fox explores the imagery and presentation of Abraham Lincoln's body and how artists and commentators linked his ungainly appearance with modesty, humility, and Unionism.

challenges of the present, highlighting certain figures or events and disregarding others to fit contemporary circumstances or needs.<sup>14</sup>

French historian Pierre Nora expanded this framework, arguing that social groups selectively choose individuals or events to remember and forget while inventing rituals and customs to support their collective memory of the past. Ruptures within historical continuity, he argued, spurred the creation of constructed sites of cultural memory to allow individuals to differentiate between memory and history. Sites of memory are vitally important for capturing and affirming the historical past, as “memory crystallizes and secretes itself,” in places, commemorations, and objects where Archives, museums, churches, cemeteries, rituals, and monuments all offer a means to understand the human desire to preserve the past through cultural remembrance. Nora argued that as memory slipped from the present into the historical past, societies built *lieux de mémoire* to salvage a recollection of the past from the modernist desire to promote change. The rise of the modern state greatly accelerated this process, creating memory “without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth.” Washington’s tomb, in this context, thus served as one of these sites of memory. The struggle to control the memory of Washington, the visitors to his grave, and their rituals at Mount Vernon all suggest that Americans engaged in Nora’s process of creating their own collective remembrance of the man;

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<sup>14</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925); Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952, reprint 1992); Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1912, reprint 1995).

while governments, organizations, and individuals sought his body to validate their distinct conceptualizations of Washington.<sup>15</sup>

In his Pulitzer Prize winning-book, *People of Paradox: The Inquiry Concerning the Origins of American Civilization*, Michael Kammen argued that the dynamics of the imported and the indigenous truly distinguished the development of the American character from its European counterparts. Identified as “biformities,” Kammen linked the unresolved ideas, ideologies, and events of colonial America with the innate human tendency to contradict oneself. Memory sits at the nexus of our own paradoxes, because remembering the past and reconstructing the past are two entirely different phenomena with different constraints and considerations. Kammen followed this work with *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination*, which illuminated the distortions of the Revolution in our national traditions. Kammen contended that popular culture—not the work of historians or professional scholars—served as a better barometer for understanding how American attitudes towards our nation’s past evolved over time. Written by social conservatives for entertainment purposes, historical novels were the most influential in shaping American perceptions of the Revolution as a “rite of passage,” a pervasive theme that historians still employ. These works not only stripped

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<sup>15</sup> Nora, ed. *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (seven volumes, 1984–1992) Paris: Edition Gallimard.; Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26, Spring, 1989, 7-25; John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). American historian John Bodnar applied the theories of Halbwachs and Nora to the American experience in the twentieth century, arguing that public memory was not only crucial for the past and present but also for the future. He contended that “official memory” was designed as a construct to protect those in positions of power, maintain the status quo, and provide social stability in a time of change or upheaval. Bodnar explored the differences between “official memory” and “vernacular memory,” defined as the ethnic, local, and regional communities’ remembrance of a subnational past, and how these two forms of memory clashed in modern America as official memory sought cultural hegemony over other narratives in the public realm.

away the radicalism of the Revolution but it also shaped the event and its consequences in the American imagination in a much more restrained and conservative manner.<sup>16</sup>

Kammen's works broke new ground on American memory, and his research prompted other historians to ask new questions about other major historical events. In *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, Alfred Young explored the life of George Robert Twelves Hewes, an unknown Boston cobbler who lived through some of the defining moments of early American history. Young discovered that biographers of Hewes identified the shoemaker as the last survivor of the "Boston Tea Party," a phrase that is now synonymous with the Revolution but did not actually exist until Hewes' biographers invented it. Young also connected these narratives, as remembered by Hewes in the 1830s, to the turbulent times at hand as class consciousness and growing labor movements dominated public life in nineteenth-century Boston. Hewes' story reminds us how Americans deliberately and selectively remember history, and it illuminates how a wide variety of social groups clashed for the heritage of the Revolution, allowing their disagreements to shape public memory and commemorative politics.<sup>17</sup>

In *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol*, Barry Schwartz traced the origins of public adulation for Washington, arguing that in a new country that lacked traditional institutions of authority—the crown, an established church, or an aristocratic class—a symbol was necessary to facilitate wartime morale and national belonging among the American people. During the war, politicians and pastors presented

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Kammen, *People of Paradox: An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of American Civilization* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 14-24; Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 186-220.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999), xv-xvii.

Washington as the defender of American liberties. After his ascendancy to the presidency, these agents promoted the new federal government by projecting Washington as *the* model of republican virtue in order to promote citizen loyalty. In Schwartz's estimation, Washington possessed many appealing traits and a number of deficiencies and weaknesses. He was a man of ordinary intelligence and talents, characteristics that by no means imply greatness. Schwartz provocatively contended, however, that the collective efforts of early nineteenth-century editors, politicians, columnists, playwrights, artists, and preachers invented the greatness of Washington, turning him into a figure of titanic proportions.<sup>18</sup>

Schwartz followed this line of reasoning post-Civil War, arguing that the memory of Washington democratized during the late nineteenth century. Focusing specifically on imagery and its producers, and theorizing that these images reflected consumer tastes, Schwartz asserted that Washington's reputation transformed from a genteel, aristocratic man of power into an individual with democratic characteristics. His "adeptness at frontier living, his experience at common labor and attachment to the common people, his kindness to children, his strong romantic inclinations were traits that Americans had always associated with democracy," wrote Schwartz. Writers, historians, and artists emphasized these themes to lower Washington from his pedestal and place him beside the folk hero and martyr Abraham Lincoln in the national pantheon of heroes. While his argument centered more on the creators of imagery, Schwartz's analysis reaffirmed the

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<sup>18</sup> Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 6-7, 38-39. For a similar study on Thomas Jefferson, see Merrill Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

idea that the past is not absolute, but rather a relatively stable construction upon which new elements are occasionally overlaid in times of great social change or upheaval.<sup>19</sup>

While Schwartz's work is important, his sole focus on the producers of Washington material culture leaves out the consumers of these shifting interpretations. In order to fully understand the evolving nature of the memory of Washington, one must explore how ordinary Americans experienced and remembered Washington, how different individuals shaped his memory for public consumption, and how political factions, fraternal organizations, and institutions competed to control his memory. While Schwartz's contention that Washington became democratized during the late nineteenth century rings true, this dissertation argues that this process began before the Civil War. As economic, political, and cultural developments of the nineteenth century reshaped the country, these democratic shifts also transformed the memory of George Washington. As white Americans became more politically active, Washington the elite planter faded from memory as a more democratic Washington appeared, a humble man who encouraged faithful citizenship, devotion to country, self-improvement, and a willingness to fight for what was right.

In order to understand the depths of this popularized Washington, one must look beyond public commemorations and critically engage individual experiences and recollections of Washington. By examining nineteenth-century traveler accounts to Mount Vernon, this study critically engages how Americans remembered Washington during moments of intentional devotion, and explores how these individuals shared their memories with the wider American populace, shaping a collective memory of the

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<sup>19</sup> Barry Schwartz, "Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington," *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 2 (April 1991): 229-236.



democratic Washington. The growth of American printing and literacy in the nineteenth century allowed more Americans to write, read, and share information than ever before. Newspapers, magazines, and periodicals frequently published Mount Vernon traveler stories as interest pieces, and these memories were shared with a growing literate audience. While many readers would never kneel at Washington's tomb, these tales created a public and sacred Mount Vernon while transforming Washington into a symbol for the people.

By frequently referring to Washington as “the property of the nation,” writers and visitors furthered the idea that he belonged to all Americans, not governments or organizations. In *Inventing the People*, Edmund Morgan explored the intellectual and philosophical origins of “the people,” and how the Founders harnessed the idea of popular sovereignty to forge a government of few that ruled over the many. America's early leaders utilized the idea of popular sovereignty to challenge the divine right of kings. But after the Revolutionary War state politics dominated the Articles of Confederation, weakening the national government. Morgan concluded that “the people” were invented in 1787 as a counterweight to factions and self-interested state politicians, shifting political power back to a centralized authority and public-minded men of the “better sort.” The Founding Fathers, however, were unaware of the power they bestowed upon “the people,” as ordinary Americans channeled this rhetoric of freedom and equality to assert their rightful place in politics, religion, and popular culture. The language of equality drove a wider belief in egalitarianism that transformed the republic into a democracy, a consequence that the Founders neither intended nor desired.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 13-15; 304-306; Wood, *The Radicalism of the American*

By recognizing the sovereignty of “the people,” the Founders struggled to control the memory of the Revolution, its ideals, and the course of the republic. As suffrage expanded at the state level in the 1820s, white men partook in this grand democratic experiment, linking their rise to political prominence with the legacy of the Revolution. Elites could not reclaim the Revolution or George Washington from popular culture, but they did attempt to seize George Washington’s remains as an instrument of political power. While different factions and organizations maintained that these endeavors were simply out of respect for Washington and on behalf of the people, the possession of the hero’s body would permit those in power to control the narrative of Washington’s life and his meaning for the nation. This struggle produced many versions of Washington; yet in leaving the General to rest at Mount Vernon, he ultimately belonged to the American people.<sup>21</sup>

This dissertation features six chapters, organized thematically to explore the democratic evolution of the memory of George Washington. The first chapter examines the efforts of politicians, political parties, government assemblies, and fraternal organizations that pursued Washington’s body for their own ideological reasons. By acquiring his remains, these groups attempted to control the narrative of Washington’s life and serve as the guardians of Washington’s legacy for future generations. But as

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*Revolution*, 6-8, 229-234; Gary Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Viking Press, 2005), xvii. Nash argues that the Revolution brought about the rise of political consciousness of the disenfranchised, much to the chagrin of those in “positions of power and privilege.”

<sup>21</sup> Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 233-243; Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*, 9-28. Wood argues that one of the reasons we laud the Founders so much in American culture is because we have not had a generation of collective political leadership of equal merit since the early Republic. Wood credits egalitarian democracy for this, as Americans became more politically active and selected ordinary leaders of lesser ability, knowledge, and expertise.

America democratized and more people stepped forward to claim Washington as their own, calls for re-internment fueled discontent rather than unity. Americans increasingly began to identify Washington as “the property of the nation,” and in a country that defined citizenship by property, ownership came to define the American character. The federal government, the state of Virginia, the Freemasons, and the Washington family all considered themselves the rightful owners of Washington’s bones, but the failure of these governments and associations to entomb him in their monuments gave credence to the popular belief that the memory of Washington belonged to all Americans.

The second chapter examines Washington’s transformation into a democratic commodity. The advent of the transportation and market revolutions made Washington’s tomb more available to visitors and allowed businesses to profit from the memory of Washington. The market for Washington memorabilia grew with these revolutions, as did the collective memory that Washington belonged to all Americans because they could now own something linked to the man. While the Washington family resisted taking part in visitor excursions and the creation of material mementoes, the last proprietor of Mount Vernon, John Augustine Washington III, embraced them. By allowing steamboats to land directly at Mount Vernon, John Augustine Washington democratized access to Washington’s world, furthering the notion that Washington belonged to the nation. As the estate crumbled into disrepair, visitors clamored for government intervention to save Mount Vernon and prevent the monopolization and exploitation of the memory of George Washington.

The third chapter explores the roles of foreign-born laborers, slaves, and free blacks in democratizing the memory of Washington at Mount Vernon. These individuals

were not only responsible for everyday work on the plantation but also guiding the many visitors across the grounds and to the tomb. Their compelling stories were often reprinted in newspapers, periodicals, and magazines, portraying Washington's everyday life and habits with a wider reading American public. Their abilities to weave themselves into Washington folklore ennobled them in visitors' recollections, so much so that travelers seemed to forget, if only briefly, their status as indentured servants and slaves. Visitors craved interaction with anyone who knew Washington personally as a way to further their own links to the past. Elderly slaves were the most sought-after guides, as their status and age lent credibility to their tales about Washington. While the evidence suggests many of these elderly guides were not actually slaves of George Washington, their ability to elaborate on his character promoted the idea that Washington belonged to the people, and the similarities in their tales suggest that slaves were sharing stories to increase profits.

The fourth chapter explores cultural efforts to transform Washington the republican symbol into a more common man and friend of democracy. After the Revolution contemporaries portrayed Washington as a god-like figure, elevating him for worship and emulation. But as political and religious democracy spread, cultural agents shaped public perceptions of Washington, recasting him as one of the people. By immersing the public in Washington folklore, poetry, and imagery of his tomb, these cultural producers democratized Washington. While they did not directly challenge Washington the deity, they did reshape the national symbol to fit the changing political and social landscapes. Artists, poets, musicians, and writers labored to profit from Washington's name, but their endeavors fostered the transition from demi-god to man,

making Washington appear more democratic in their writings, poems, music, and imagery. Visitor perceptions of his tomb became integral to this conversion, as Americans viewed his resting place more romantically as an expression of Washington's humility and modest nature.

The fifth chapter examines the semi-religious meaning of Washington's tomb, as visitors often referred to themselves as "pilgrims" on a "pilgrimage" to see the "relics" of George Washington. Pilgrims often criticized Washington's family for his simple tomb at Mount Vernon, but its modest appearance did not stop visitors from either believing this spot was holy ground or participating in ritualistic behavior. Travelers often took items from the estate—tree branches, flowers, sticks, and pebbles—but to the Washington family, these guests were simply strangers who vandalized the grounds. Despite the family's objections, many Americans believed that Washington belonged to the nation, therefore so did his home, former possessions, and tomb. They justified their intrusion as a right, that all Americans merited the opportunity to perform a civic pilgrimage to his tomb. The phenomenon of "pilgrimages" to Mount Vernon highlights the significance of Washington's tomb to public and personal expressions of American political culture. Visitors, armed with their own memories of Washington, descended upon the grounds and sought items to link themselves to a cherished, nostalgic past. By taking items near Washington's tomb, they invented traditions that linked their experiences with the legend of George Washington, fostering a greater sense of national belonging through the physical possession of objects.

The final chapter explores the efforts of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union (MVLA), a private organization that took up the cause to save Mount Vernon

on behalf of the nation. The group did so under incredible political, social, and sectional duress. The MVLA preserved Mount Vernon and Washington's grave from ruin in 1858, and while the organization trumpeted patriotism and benevolence in its cause, it also reveled in the opportunity to become the exclusive guardian of George Washington's legacy. These women entered the public sphere by redefining their domestic responsibilities as civic duties, and this transference of obligation justified their commitment to make Mount Vernon the property of the nation. They solicited subscriptions and funds from across the country, offering Americans the chance to contribute to saving Mount Vernon, and their success fulfilled the popular belief that the memory of Washington belonged to the American people.

After Washington's death, his popularity grew among all classes and groups of people. As America transitioned from a republic to a democracy, Americans came to believe that he belonged to everyone, regardless of social status, economic class, political allegiance, or religious denomination. In their pursuit of national unity, the Founders had created a symbol that eventually bred competition, as Americans produced different versions of Washington. Government attempts to acquire both the body and Mount Vernon failed under the constraints of sectional and factional politics; yet its inability to secure Washington's body allowed more Americans to remember and reconstruct a Washington that reflected their own beliefs and calmed their anxieties. Politicians, travelers to Mount Vernon, businessmen and entrepreneurs, indentured servants and slaves, and the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association all fostered the popular belief that Washington was the "property of the nation," and this dissertation explores how these

Americans, grappling with contemporary societal and political uncertainty, fought to control the past.

The phrase “property of the nation” in regards to the memory of Washington first emerged in 1817 from the pen of Alexander Contee Hanson of the *Baltimore Federal Republican*. A Federalist Senator from the state of Maryland, Hanson advocated for government intervention to save Washington’s home and tomb from disrepair, arguing that Mount Vernon, “consecrated by all the best feelings of the human heart,” deserved to be protected by the nation Washington did so much to build. Hanson concludes that, “[t]he ashes of Washington should be the property of the nation; and as he devoted his life from cradle to grave, to the service of his country, that country ought to guard his consecrated remains.” This phrase, repeated in journals, letters, published visitor accounts, and popular culture, facilitated the growing belief that Washington belonged to all Americans. This idea resonated with the egalitarianism of the Revolution, and over time ordinary Americans eagerly joined the fray to claim Washington for themselves.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *The American Beacon*, 14 November 1817, *Alexandria Gazette*, 17 November 1817; *Salem Gazette*, 21 November 1817; *Berkshire Star*, 4 December 1817.

## Chapter 1

“The Property of the Nation”: The Memory of  
George Washington and the Politics of Disinterment

Almost overpowered by the afflictive stroke of Divine Providence, that has so severely wounded your Bosom I take the pen, not to offer consolation—No that is wholly out of my power. All I can do is, to mix my tears, my Heart felt sorrows with yours. And to tell you, that you do not Grieve, you do not weep alone. Thousands mourn with you, and thousands, yet unborn will have to mourn.

-Ann Huntington to Martha Washington, January 4, 1800

After retiring from the Presidency, George Washington returned to his beloved Mount Vernon, intending to live the rest of his days in quiet repose. His contributions and service to the United States, however, made him a national hero; and thus until his death, Washington was obligated to serve the public through the persona he created and his contemporaries promoted. Strangers found their way to his estate, hoping to meet and converse with the man who symbolized the glory of the Revolution. According to his diary, George and his wife Martha hosted dinner guests on 203 of the 310 days recorded in the year 1798 alone. The Washington family not only fed these travelers but also gave them lodging, a tradition that Americans came to expect from Washington’s heirs. The extension of hospitality was customary for members of the Virginian gentry, but Washington’s generosity also reflected his belief that he must remain the model for republican virtue and citizenship. This often meant sacrificing his privacy and quiet dinners with Martha, but he believed this was all for the greater good.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Huntington to Martha Washington, January 4, 1800, box 1, *The Peter Family Archives*, Fred W. Smith National Library; Mary V. Thompson, ““That hospitable mansion”: Welcoming Guests at Mount Vernon,” *Dining with the Washingtons: Historic Recipes*,



While he entertained friends, politicians, foreign dignitaries, and strangers on a regular basis, most of Washington's time was spent organizing his wartime papers, returning correspondence, reading newspapers and political tracts, and improving Mount Vernon's farms. There were few tasks that Washington did not personally order or oversee himself, as he applied his military-style organization to an estate that was in shambles when he returned from war. Like many Virginia estates, tobacco had depleted Mount Vernon's soils, prompting Washington to experiment with new crops and plants before the war to return nutrients to the land. He voraciously read agricultural manuals to change how Mount Vernon was farmed, incorporating crop rotation and implementing wheat and corn production. He also built a large mill and distillery at Dogue Run, turning his grains into flour, cornmeal, and whiskey. This systematic overhaul of the estate required extensive capital, free and slave labor, and Washington's obsession with self-improvement.<sup>2</sup>

On Thursday, December 12, 1799, Washington set out to monitor farming activities across his estate. The day began with a heavy rain, but as Washington

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*Entertaining, and Hospitality from Mount Vernon*, ed. Stephen McLeod (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 14-15; Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency George Washington* (New York: Alfred Knopf Press, 2004), 241-244; John Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009), 255-256; Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington, Man and Monument* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, third edition 1982), 188-189; James Thomas Flexner, *The Indispensable Man* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), 368; According to Washington's diary, there were guests on 203 of 310 recorded days. In total, Washington mentions dining with some 350 individuals during the year 1798 at Mount Vernon, many of who stayed for multiple days. His largest recorded dinner party was on July 12, 1798, and featured the names of 27 guests. See *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. Donald Jackson et al. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 6, 276-329.

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Wulf, *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 19-28; Walter Scheib, "Foreword," *Dining with the Washingtons: Historic Recipes, Entertaining, and Hospitality from Mount Vernon*, ed. Stephen McLeod (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 8-9; Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon*, 351-366; Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2010), 778-779.

continued to ride, the weather took a turn for the worse. There were bouts of hail, snow, and rain that soaked Washington as he rode, and the storm halted work for the day. He returned in the evening and chose to remain in his damp garb for supper. The next morning Washington awoke with a sore throat. Thinking it was nothing more than a cold, he rode out again to supervise work on the farms. By the end of the day, his voice had grown hoarse. Washington awoke around two in morning on Saturday with a terrible pain in his throat. Martha immediately sent for the family doctor, James Craik. In the meantime, George Rawlins, an overseer at the estate, bled Washington at the General's request, a remedy that Washington had employed for previous illnesses. While they waited for Craik, Rawlins gave Washington a concoction of molasses, butter, and vinegar to soothe his aching throat, but this homemade remedy was difficult to swallow.<sup>3</sup>

Still waiting for Dr. Craik, Martha decided to call upon a second doctor named Gustavus Brown early the next morning. Craik arrived first at around nine o'clock and proceeded to bleed Washington again. He then gave Washington a vinegar sage tea solution to gargle and administered an enema to produce cleansing. When Washington's condition worsened, Craik and Brown sent for a third physician, Elisha Cullen Dick, and proceeded to bleed Washington again. The doctors gave him several doses of calomel, but this only weakened him further. They then agreed that Washington should be bled,

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<sup>3</sup> December 12-13, 1799, *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. Donald Jackson et al. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 6, 378; Ed Larson, "Approaching the Rubicon and Crossing the Bar: Washington's Death and the Rise of Republican Rule," *The Georgia Review* 62, no. 3 (Fall 2008), 551-560; Flexner, *The Indispensable Man*, 395-402; Peter Henriques, "The Final Struggle between George Washington and the Grim King: Washington's Attitude toward Death and an Afterlife," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 78-83; Washington knew Dr. Craik from their military service during the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. The doctor established a clinic in Alexandria after the war and became Washington's personal physician during his presidency and retirement. See also Jean B. Lee, *The Price of Nationhood: The American Revolution in Charles County* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 46-47.

and they performed this treatment for the fourth time. George asked Martha to bring him his wills, and after he reviewed them, he instructed her to burn one and keep the other. In the evening, Washington began to feel death tightening its grip around him, but he assured those present, “I am not afraid to go.” In a final desperate attempt to save his life, the doctors applied blisters and cataplasms to his body, but these also failed to restore Washington. On December 14, 1799 between ten and eleven o’clock at night, George Washington left this world and passed into the afterlife. Ten days later President John Adams and Congress asked Martha for permission to move her husband’s body in the future to the Capitol, a proposal designed to solidify Washington’s legacy as a national icon by symbolically interring his remains into the political heart of the nation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tobias Lear to Thomas Law, December 14, 1799, Fred W. Smith National Library; Tobias Lear’s Narrative Accounts of the Death of George Washington, December 15, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. William Abbott et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 542-555. An abridged version was conveyed in a letter to President John Adams, and that letter was repeatedly published in newspapers. See *New Jersey Journal*, 24 December 1799; *The Weekly Museum*, 28 December 1799; *Herald of Liberty*, 30 December 1799; *Newport Mercury*, 31 December 1799; *Political Repository*, 31 December 1799; *Norwich Packet*, 2 January 1800; *Federal Observer*, 3 January 1800; Peter Henriques, “The Final Struggle between George Washington and the Grim King: Washington’s Attitude toward Death and an Afterlife,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 78-83. Medical histories of Washington’s symptoms argue that he suffered from acute epiglottitis, an infection that attacks the epiglottis and swells it in size, blocking the airway and rendering the patient unable to breath. Most cases of acute epiglottitis are bacterial in nature and require antibiotics and hospitalization for treatment. Even if his physicians performed a tracheotomy to help him breath, without proper antibiotics the bacterial infection would have eventually killed Washington. The treatments afforded to him were the standard practices of the day and made his death much more painful as he slowly suffocated to death. Most bacteria that cause this kind of affliction require a human host and cannot survive on surfaces or in the air. Washington dined with Bryan and Thomas Fairfax (and an unnamed daughter), Bryan’s sister Mrs. Hannah Washington and her son Whiting on December 11, but none of these visitors exhibited symptoms or became ill after the visit, suggesting that it was not transmitted to Washington. It is also possible that the bacteria came from Washington himself. Washington’s poor dental health might have produced the bacteria that attacked his epiglottis, but this is just speculation. If it were a viral infection, the bleeding of Washington would have contributed to his death, as the removal of white blood cells would have made the infection more virulent. See December 12-13, 1799, *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. Donald Jackson et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1979), 6, 378; John Adams, Theodore Sedgwick,

Historian Michael Kammen has contended that the ritualistic act of reburial offered organizers and participants the opportunity to revel in a figurative resurrection of reputation. These episodes provide rich layers of social, cultural, and political dynamics of that particular moment in time, and as Americans sought to reconcile the memory of prominent figures with local, regional, and national loyalties, the pride of possession and place drove the public's desire to dig up the dead. While Kammen only discussed successful reburials, his assessment of this innate cultural need to cherish heroes by proclamation and possession rings true today. The victory in the Revolution cemented Washington's place in the pantheon of America's heroes, and until his death he effectively controlled his image and legacy. But with Washington gone, many actors and groups attempted to manipulate his memory to further political ideas or agendas. As federal and state governments quarreled over constitutional authority, internal improvements, and expansionism, the fight to possess Washington's remains represented more than just political bickering in the early Republic. By disinterring Washington and placing him in a spot more suitable to their liking political elites yearned to reconstruct the memory of Washington on their own terms, believing that the possession of his body would give them a greater sense of political legitimacy and cultural power.<sup>5</sup>

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and Samuel Livermore to Martha Washington, December 24, 1799, box 1, *The Peter Family Archives*, Fred W. Smith Library.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Kammen, *Digging Up the Dead: A History of Notable American Reburials* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 7-12. Kammen briefly mentions the failed attempts to move Washington's body in his work, but his focus is more on successful reburials. For other studies on the politicization of the Revolutionary dead, see Matthew Dennis, "Patriotic Remains: Bones of Contention in the Early Republic," in *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America*, eds. Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 142-148; Robert E. Cray Jr., "Commemorating the Prison Ship Dead: Revolutionary Memory and the Politics of Sepulture in the Early Republic, 1776-1808," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (July 1999): 565-590; Robert E. Cray, "Remembering the USS *Chesapeake*: The Politics of Maritime Death and Impressment," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 445-474.

This chapter explores the efforts of the politicians, political parties, government assemblies, and fraternal organizations that pursued the President's body for their own ideological reasons. By acquiring the remains, these groups intended to control the narrative of Washington's life and serve as the guardians of Washington's legacy for future generations. But as America democratized and more people stepped forward to claim Washington as their own, calls for re-internment fueled discontent rather than unity. Americans increasingly began to identify Washington as "the property of the nation," and in a country that defined citizenship by property, ownership came to define the American character. The federal government, the state of Virginia, the Freemasons, and the Washington family all considered themselves the rightful owners of Washington's bones, but the failure of these governments and associations to entomb him in their monuments gave impetus to the popular belief that the memory of Washington belonged to all Americans.<sup>6</sup>

As word of Washington's passing traveled south to Charleston and north to Boston, Americans responded with widespread grief across the country. In Philadelphia, the Common Council "passed a resolution . . . to have the bells muffled for three days . . . as a public testimony of respect due to his exalted and most excellent character." In Boston,

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<sup>6</sup> Kammen, *Digging Up the Dead: A History of Notable American Reburials*, 7-12; Matthew Dennis, "Patriotic Remains: Bones of Contention in the Early Republic," in *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America*, eds. Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 142-148; Robert E. Cray Jr., "Commemorating the Prison Ship Dead: Revolutionary Memory and the Politics of Sepulture in the Early Republic, 1776-1808," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (July 1999): 565-590; Robert E. Cray, "Remembering the USS *Chesapeake*: The Politics of Maritime Death and Impressment," *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 445-474; Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992), 231-235. Wood argued that the rhetoric of democracy employed by elites to encourage rebellion quickly grew beyond their control, as more middling Americans used these concepts to radically alter American politics and society after the war.

“the offices and stores were shut, the bells tolled; and the Theatre and Museum were closed.” In New York, the Common Council approached several religious sects asking “their respective churches to be dressed in mourning, and that their respective bells be muffled and tolled every day from twelve to one o’clock until the twenty fourth.” Members of the committee pledged to wear black crape on their arms, and encouraged “the inhabitants of this city to do the like.” Many Americans displayed their sorrow by participating in mourning rituals and mock funerals, which often featured speeches, eulogies, illuminations, and the occasional empty coffin.<sup>7</sup>

Washington left explicit instructions for his family on his deathbed and in his will. First, they laid him out that night on the dining table to ensure he had expired. Dr. Dick measured the body for a coffin, and Tobias Lear traveled to Alexandria to order the mahogany casket. On Monday Lear instructed laborers and slaves to open the tomb by tearing down the brick wall and replacing it with a wooden door. On Tuesday afternoon Washington’s coffin arrived and the family dressed and laid him out in the New Room at Mount Vernon until Wednesday, December 18. While Washington requested a funeral “without parade,” hundreds gathered to oversee the entombment of his body.

Washington was placed on the portico overlooking the Potomac River as “a multitude of persons” paid their respects to their departed hero. The funeral company of cavalry, infantry, a band, clergy members, Masonic brothers, and citizens solemnly escorted Washington’s remains down the pathway to the family tomb. “The general’s horse with

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<sup>7</sup> *Alexandria Times*, 16 December 1799; *Philadelphia Gazette*, 18 December 1799; *Universal Gazette*, 19 December 1799; *Centinel of Liberty*, 20 December 1799; *The Spectator*, 21 December 1799; *Massachusetts Mercury*, 24 December 1799; *The Daily Advertiser*, 24 December 1799; Gerald Kahler, *The Long Farewell: Americans Mourn the Death of George Washington* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 11-20; François Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington’s Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 25-30.

his saddle, holsters, and pistols” trotted rider-less last, and mournful music and artillery shots echoed off the trees as the pallbearers entombed Washington.<sup>8</sup>

As the nation mourned, letters of condolence for Martha poured into Mount Vernon from across the country and the Atlantic. Washington’s personal secretary, Tobias Lear, was responsible for organizing the General’s papers, settling his business accounts, and writing notes of acknowledgement on Martha’s behalf. Alexander Hamilton, Timothy Pickering, Henry Lee, Gouverneur Morris, Henry Knox, the Marquis de Lafayette and his son Georges Washington Lafayette, and Theodore Sedgwick all sent written sympathies. Martha also received letters from lesser-known individuals, and Lear crafted responses based on the letter writer’s relationship with the Washington family. Few letters remain in Martha’s handwriting, but she did respond to her good friend First Lady Abigail Adams. Adams wrote: “I entreat, Madam, that you would permit a Heart deeply penetrated with your Loss, and sharing personally in your Grief to mingle with you the tears which flow for the much loved partner of all your joys and sorrows.” Martha responded, “May you long very long [sic] enjoy the happiness you now possess,

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<sup>8</sup> Tobias Lear’s Narrative Accounts of the Death of George Washington, December 15, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. William Abbott et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 542-555; Reproduction, *Tobias Lear’s Journal, 1799-1801*, December 14-18, 1799, Fred W. Smith Library; Washington Family to Mr. Nichols and Family, December 16, 1799, FWSL; George Washington’s Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. William Abbot et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 491; *Centinel of Liberty*, 20 December 1799; *Constitutional Diary*, 24 December 1799; *New York Gazette*, 26 December 1799; *Columbian Centinel*, 1 January 1800; *Constitutional Telegraph*, 1 January 1800; *Massachusetts Spy*, 1 January 1800; *Connecticut Journal*, 2 January 1800; *Farmer’s Weekly Museum*, 6 January 1800; *The Telescope*, 9 January 1800; for a printed version of Washington’s will and testament, see *Connecticut Journal*, 20 February 1800. This horse was not the famous “Nelson” that Washington rode in the Revolution, as Nelson died sometime in 1790.

and never know affliction like mine—With prayers for your happiness, I remain your sincere friend M. Washington.”<sup>9</sup>

Not all of these letters were as genuine or compassionate as Adams’. Some even requested favors from the bereaved widow. One man, Stephen Williamson, introduced himself as a “Captain of a company in the Rhode Island Regiment” who served under General Washington. Williamson informed Martha that he had a wife and four young children, and was recently arrested for mistakenly buying a stolen horse. Unable to locate the real thief, Williamson was convicted and sentenced to four years of hard labor in a Philadelphia penitentiary, and in the process had lost his property and his family was “turned out of doors.” What began as a letter of condolence ended as a rather blatant request of patronage; Williamson begged Martha to write to “his Excellency, Thomas McKean,” Governor of Pennsylvania and solicit a pardon on Williamson’s behalf. Williamson attempted to use the deceased’s name to free himself from his predicament, but Martha did not oblige his request.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Hamilton to Martha Washington, January 12, 1800, box 1, *The Peter Family Archives*, Fred W. Smith Library; Tobias Lear to Timothy Pickering, March 28, 1800, box 2, *Martha Washington Papers*, FWSL; Tobias Lear to Henry Lee, April 11, 1800, box 2, *Martha Washington Papers*, FWSL; Tobias Lear to Gouverneur Morris, April 23 1800, box 2, *Martha Washington Papers*, FWSL; Henry Knox to Martha Washington, January 17, 1800, box 2, *The Peter Family Archives*, FWSL; Theodore Sedgwick to Martha Washington, February 17, 1800, box 2, *The Peter Family Archives*, FWSL; Marquis de Lafayette to Martha Washington, February 28, 1800, box 2, *The Peter Family Archives*, FWSL; Georges Washington Lafayette to Martha Washington, March 24, 1800, box 2, *The Peter Family Archives*, FWSL; Abigail Adams to Martha Washington, December 25, 1799, box 1, *The Peter Family Archives*, FWSL; Martha Washington to Abigail Adams, December 31, 1799, box 1, *The Peter Family Archives*, FWSL; Edith Gelles, *Abigail Adams: A Writing Life* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1998), 119; Phyllis Lee Levin, *Abigail Adams: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 388. Adams would visit Martha twice after Washington’s death, once with her husband John and another with friends.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Williamson to Martha Washington, January 16, 1800, box 2, *The Peter Family Archives*, Fred W. Smith Library. There is no response to this letter by either Martha or Tobias Lear in the Fred W. Smith Library, and I have not found any records to verify Williamson’s service in the American Revolution.



Other strangers appealed to Martha in order to honor the memory of her husband. Colonel William Smith sent her plans for a monument drawn out of “the respect paid to his memory.” Several individuals requested locks of Washington’s hair, a ritual that seems strange to us today but was common practice in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Peleg Wadsworth, a Revolutionary War veteran and grandfather of the future poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, wrote on behalf of his daughter in hopes “of obtaining some relic of the great man whose death America and the World deplore with you.” Tobias Lear sent Wadsworth a “lock of hair” and assured him that “Mrs. Washington receives your expressions of condolence with due sensibility.” Julia Bowen, Mary Howell, Sarah Halsey, and Abby Chase of Providence, Rhode Island also wrote Martha asking for a lock of hair and maintained that their “fathers fought with Washington” in the Revolution. Martha acquiesced to their request in March 1800, thanking the ladies for their gesture of respect and veneration.<sup>11</sup>

The President of Britain’s Board of Agriculture, John Sinclair, wished to publish his correspondence with Washington and sought Martha’s permission to do so, promising her that some of the profit from sales would be allotted as a “Tribute of Respect to his Memory.” This process, according to Sinclair, could be expedited if Martha advocated on its behalf. Lear took his time responding to Sinclair, returning his note nearly two years later. Another man named William Winstanley wrote directly to Lear, telling him

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<sup>11</sup> Colonel William Smith to Martha Washington, January 1, 1800, box 2, *Martha Washington Letters*, Fred W. Smith Library; Peleg Wadsworth to Martha Washington, March 26, 1800, box 2, *The Peter Family Archives*, FWSL; Tobias Lear to Peleg Wadsworth, April 5, 1800, box 2, *The Peter Family Archives*, FWSL; Julia Bowen et al. to Martha Washington, February 14, 1800, box 2, *Martha Washington Letters*, FWSL. There is a copy of Martha’s response, but the language and writing of the letter suggest that Lear authored it. See Martha Washington to Julia Bowen et. al., March 18, 1800, *Martha Washington Reproductions*, FWSL. Bowen’s claim seems authentic, as her father Ephraim Bowen served the entire war, rising to the rank of Deputy Quartermaster General in Rhode Island.

that he planned to paint a full portrait of Washington. In order to perfectly capture the man, Winstanley requested “one of [Washington’s] suits of velvet” for his art model to don for the painting. While many letters were sent out of respect to Martha, others were deliberate attempts to use the memory of Washington for personal or professional gain. President John Adams and representatives of the federal government were no different than Wadsworth, the ladies of Providence, or Sinclair. Only six days after Washington’s burial, these national officials called him back into public service.<sup>12</sup>

Tobias Lear had informed President Adams of Washington’s death the previous week, telling him that “[n]ot a groan nor a complaint escaped [Washington], even in extreme distress.” Adams shared the disheartening news with Congress and confirmed the rumors: “It has pleased Divine Providence to remove from this life, our excellent fellow-citizen George Washington...it remains for an affectionate and grateful people, in whose hearts he can never die, to pay suitable honor to his memory.” John Marshall, a representative of Virginia and future Supreme Court Justice, was appointed to lead a Congressional committee tasked with determining the proper means to memorialize Washington. The committee’s report was read twice, and unanimously approved by both the House and the Senate. The resolution proposed the construction of a marble monument in the Capitol and requested that Washington’s family give his body “to be deposited under it.” Despite the growing political discord between Federalists and

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<sup>12</sup> John Sinclair to Martha Washington, June 2, 1800, box 2, *The Peter Family Archives*, Fred W. Smith Library. While there is no reply from Tobias Lear, he did sign the bottom of Sinclair’s original letter with the following: “Answd by T. Lear Febry 23 1802.” John Sinclair and Washington exchanged letters throughout the 1790s. See John Sinclair to George Washington, May 18, 1792, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Philander Chase et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), Presidential Series, 10, 397; George Washington to John Sinclair, July 20, 1794, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Theodore Crackel et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), Presidential Series, 16, 394-397; William Winstanley to Tobias Lear, December 23, 1799, FWSL.

Democratic-Republicans, this moment of national grief convinced representatives of both parties that Washington's mortal remains should be reinterred in the city that shared his immortal name.<sup>13</sup>

President Adams communicated these wishes to Martha Washington, requesting her permission to move her husband to the Capitol. He enclosed the Congressional resolutions and asked for her approval for "the interment of the remains of General George Washington, in the manner expressed in the first resolution." Martha was moved by the gesture and citing her husband's example of forgoing "private wishes to the public will," she agreed to the request made by Congress. Lear crafted Martha's response, and newspapers circulated this letter around the country. Lear also wrote a private letter to Adams, describing the difficulty Martha had in reaching her decision and informing the President that he had promised Martha "that her remains would be deposited in the same Tomb" as her husband's. Martha needed a promise that she, now separated from him in life, would not be apart from him after her own death.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Philadelphia Gazette*, 19 December 1799; *Centinel of Liberty*, 24 December 1799; *House Journal*, 6<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 19 December 1799 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1826), 3, 540-542; *Senate Journal*, 6<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 19 December 1799 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1821), 3, 11-13; *Commercial Advertiser*, 26 December 1799; *The Weekly Museum*, 28 December 1799; *New-Jersey Journal*, 31 December 1799; *Salem Gazette*, 3 January, 1800; *Federal Observer*, 3 January 1800; John Adams, Theodore Sedgwick, and Samuel Livermore to Martha Washington, December 24, 1799, box 1, *The Peter Family Archives*, Fred W. Smith Library. For an overview on the development of Federalism, see Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> John Adams, Theodore Sedgwick, and Samuel Livermore to Martha Washington, box 1, December 24, 1799, *The Peter Family Archives*, Fred W. Smith Library; *Universal Gazette*, 16 January 1800; *Daily Advertiser*, 11 January 1800; *Russell's Gazette*, 16 January 1800; *American Mercury*, 16 January 1800; *Centinel of Liberty*, 17 January 1800; *Political Repository*, 21 January 1800; *Independent Gazetteer*, 21 January 1800; *New-Hampshire Gazette*, 22 January 1800; *Ostego Herald*, 23 January 1800; *Columbian Courier*, 24 January 1800; *Federal Observer*, 24 January 1800; *Herald of Liberty*, 27 January 1800; *Senate Journal*, 6<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 8 January 1800 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1821), 3, 18-19; *House Journal*, 6<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 8 January 1800 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1826), 3, 554-555; *Philadelphia Gazette*, 13

While Washington's will explicitly stated that he wished to be buried at Mount Vernon, some historians have suggested that he knew of the plan to move his body, and even encouraged the idea by approving Dr. William Thornton's design of the Capitol. Thornton, an English doctor living in the British West Indies, had actually missed the deadline to submit his drawing and wrote the Commissioners asking if he could still send his design. They agreed to receive it and eventually selected it as the winning design with the approval of President Washington and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. Washington found the plan superior to all other submissions, telling Commissioner David Stuart that he had "no hesitation in giving it a decided preference." Since Thornton submitted a half-finished design, the Commissioners gave him additional time to complete it. Once finished, he sent it along with a glowing letter of recommendation from Washington.<sup>15</sup>

The competition's runner-up, French architect Étienne Sulpice Hallet, was chosen to oversee the construction as superintendent of the Capitol, and he immediately began to scrutinize Thornton's plan on the grounds of expense and architectural practicality. Washington informed Jefferson of these objections and called a conference to discuss the design's discrepancies in Philadelphia. The meeting took place on July 15, 1793 and was

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January 1800; Letter, Martha Washington to John Adams, December 31, 1799, FWSL; Tobias Lear to John Adams, January 4, 1800, FWSL.

<sup>15</sup> C.M. Harris, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream: Politics, Design, and the Founding of the National Capital," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (July 1999): 552-553, 559-560; Rubil Morales-Vázquez, "Redeeming a Sacred Pledge: The Plans to Bury George Washington in the Nation's Capital," in *Establishing Congress: The Removal to Washington D.C., and the Election of 1800*, ed. Donald Kennon (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 151-152; Daniel Carroll to William Thornton, November 15, 1792, box 1, reel 1, *The Papers of William Thornton*, Library of Congress; William Thornton to David Stuart and Daniel Carroll, December 4, 1792, box 1, reel 1, *The Papers of William Thornton*, Library of Congress; George Washington to David Stuart, February 1, 1793, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Philander Chase et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), Presidential Series, 12, 81; 249; Pamela Scott, *Temple of Liberty: Building the Capitol for a New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 36.

attended by Thornton, his second architect Thomas Carstairs, Jefferson, Washington, Hallet, and the designer of the Presidential House James Hoban. The architects present confirmed many of Hallet's objections, and in doing so provided Hallet the opportunity to revamp Thornton's design to his own liking. It also did not hurt Hallet's cause that his revisions estimated that he could cut the cost of construction in half.<sup>16</sup>

The original Thornton design is lost, and all that remains of that plan is a description of it by Thornton to the Commissioners in April 1793. In this letter Thornton described the center of the Capitol as the "Grand Vestibule," and underneath it a "great repository," which some have interpreted as Thornton's future tomb for Washington. In the modified architectural plans, there is no tomb labeled and no mention of a tomb in any correspondence between Washington and Thornton. As Hallet began to take more liberty with Thornton's plan, including his elimination of the Grand Vestibule, Washington and the Commissioners began to question his methods. Thornton became a Commissioner of the District in September 1794, and after Hallet's dismissal for insubordination later that year Thornton reasserted control over the construction. While it is true that Washington advocated for Thornton's plan, there is no evidence to suggest

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<sup>16</sup> George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, June 30, 1793, box 1, reel 1, *The Papers of William Thornton*, Library of Congress; Tobias Lear to William Thornton, July 13, 1793, box 1, reel 1, *The Papers of William Thornton*, Library of Congress; Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, July 17, 1793, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Theodore Crackel et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), Presidential Series, 13, 236-239; George Washington to the Commissioners for the District of Columbia, July 25, 1793, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Theodore Crackel et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), Presidential Series, 13, 276-278; Don Alexander Hawkins, *William Thornton's Lost Design of the United States Capitol: A Study and a Reconstruction*, Office of the Architect of the United States Capitol; Dr. William Thornton's Capitol Plans, William Thornton, Plans and Drawings folder, OAUSC; Pamela Scott, *Temple of Liberty: Building the Capitol for a New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 37-43.

that he encouraged such a tomb. Thornton, however, certainly seemed to operate under this assumption after Washington's death.<sup>17</sup>

About a week after Congress requested Washington's body, Thornton penned an intriguing letter to John Marshall, the committee chair for commemorating Washington.

Thornton wrote:

At the time of his [Washington's] death I doubted not the nation would delight to honor this pattern of virtue, and would consider his remains as appertaining too much to our country; to permit them to be deposited without the most public mark of their admiration and affection. I doubted not they would deposit his body in the place that was long since contemplated for its reception; I accordingly requested it might be enclosed in lead. It was done and I cannot easily express the pleasure I feel in this melancholy gratification of my hopes that the Congress would place him in the Center of that National Temple which he approved of for a Capitol.<sup>18</sup>

Thornton implied that he told the Washington family to entomb Washington in a lead casket, a practice reserved for individuals of great wealth or status in the eighteenth century. A sealed leaden receptacle protected the body from decomposition and stemmed from the popular belief that one must look their best for the Second Coming of Christ; it also ensured that Washington's remains would be in better condition for future removal.

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<sup>17</sup> William Thornton to Commissioners of Washington D.C., April 10, 1793, box 1, reel 1, *Papers of William Thornton*, Library of Congress; Don Alexander Hawkins, *William Thornton's Lost Design of the United States Capitol: A Study and a Reconstruction*, Office of the Architect of the United States Capitol; George Washington to David Stuart, September 21, 1794, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Theodore Crackel et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), Presidential Series, 16, 694-696; C.M. Harris, "Washington's Gamble, L'Enfant's Dream: Politics, Design, and the Founding of the National Capital," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (July 1999): 552-553, 559-560; Rubil Morales-Vázquez, "Redeeming a Sacred Pledge: The Plans to Bury George Washington in the Nation's Capital," in *Establishing Congress: The Removal to Washington D.C., and the Election of 1800*, ed. Donald Kennon (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 151-152.

<sup>18</sup> William Thornton to John Marshall M.H.R., January 2, 1800, box 3, reel 2, *The Papers of William Thornton*, Library of Congress. There is no response to Thornton's request, but later Lear confessed in a tract written in the 1820s that it was at his "insistence the Body was enclosed in lead," with the intent of using "the Dome for his mausoleum." See William Thornton, "Sleep," 1829, box 17, reel 6, *The Papers of William Thornton*, Library of Congress.

Thornton recommended that a secret vote take place in Congress to oblige Martha Washington's request, noting that his involvement in facilitating the removal was "unknown to any of the Family." It certainly seems that Thornton had long believed that the Capitol would house the remains of Washington someday. Tobias Lear, John Adams, John Marshall, Martha Washington, and William Thornton—all Federalist supporters—played vital roles in forging the federal government's right to Washington's remains. This, however, was just the beginning of the political struggle for control of Washington's body, image, and memory.<sup>19</sup>

In the year 1800, Democratic-Republicans captured majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate in the wake of Washington's death. The man who embodied this movement, Thomas Jefferson, was elected President after Alexander Hamilton persuaded Federalists to support him instead of Hamilton's longtime nemesis Aaron Burr. Jeffersonian Republicans feared the authority of a hyperactive national government, and Federalist policies not only confirmed their suspicions but also grew the Republican political base. Jefferson envisioned the future of the United States as an agrarian republic, one built on the civic virtue of yeoman farmers and craftsmen instead

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<sup>19</sup> William Thornton to John Marshall M.H.R., January 2, 1800, box 3, reel 2, *The Papers of William Thornton*, Library of Congress; William Thornton to Colonel Lane, April \_\_ 1820, box 5, reel 3, *The Papers of William Thornton*, Library of Congress; Diary of Mrs. Anna Thornton 1800-1863, January 3, 1800, William Thornton, Office of the Architect of the United States Capitol. Thornton's wife, Anna Maria Brodeau, recorded that Tobias Lear informed Thornton of Martha's consent to give up the body on January 3, 1800; Faye Flam, "Better Dead in Lead," *Science* 253, no. 5015 (July 1991): 28. Flam argues that lead coffins were transplanted from Europe, as very notable British individuals often received such a treatment. This case study is over the discovery of three leaden coffins at St. Mary City Cemetery in Maryland; Charles O. Jackson, "American Attitudes to Death," *Journal of American Studies* 11, no. 3 (December 1977): 299-303; Pamela Scott, *Temple of Liberty: Building the Capitol for a New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 52-56. According to Tobias Lear's journal, Thornton arrived on Sunday December 15. While Lear does not mention if Thornton suggested placing Washington in a leaden coffin, he does say Thornton advised that they bury the body quickly, as it was "not safe to keep the body so long." See Reproduction, *Tobias Lear's Journal, 1799-1801*, December 15, 1799, Fred W. Smith Library.

of the monied interests of bankers, speculators, and businessmen. Jeffersonians also valued the protection of individual rights, and quickly dismantled measures taken by the Federalists to curtail civil liberties during the Quasi War with France. The election of 1800 signified the rise of a new people, one that not only rejected the tyranny, corruption, and aristocracy of the Old World but also the fading Federalist order.<sup>20</sup>

Within this shifting political ethos the idea of hero worship became extremely contentious, as Federalists clung to Washington's image while Republicans tried to subvert it. On days of remembrance, politicians of both parties praised Washington but Republicans gave more attention to the masses, the unknown peoples who fought and died for America's independence. These soldiers and sailors, many of whom were small landowners, apprentices, tradesmen, artisans, and laborers, welcomed the acclaim and gravitated towards Republican ideology and its more democratic means of

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<sup>20</sup> Historians reinterpreted the election of 1800 as one of revolution in the 1970s and 1980s. See Daniel Sisson, *The American Revolution of 1800: How Jefferson Rescued Democracy from Tyranny and Faction—and What This Means Today* (New York: Knopf Press, 1975); Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). McCoy argued that economic policies and behaviors were a better way to understand how Republican thought penetrated the consciousness of citizens; Robert E. Wright, "Artisans, Banks, Credit, and the Election of 1800," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History* 122, no. 3 (July 1998): 211-239. Wright argues that the availability of credit to urban artisans shifted their vote from Federalist to Republican because there was little credit available; for the most recent definitive account, see John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 210. While Jefferson's election did not bring political revolution to the functions of the national government, Ferling argues that Jefferson did more to strip away the monarchical and aristocratic tendencies of officeholders, furthering the egalitarian spirit of the American Revolution and placing government on the eventual path to democracy; Peter S. Onuf and Leonard V. Sadosky, *Jeffersonian America* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Press, 2001), 124-155; *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*, eds. Peter Onuf, James Horn, and Jan Ellen Lewis (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002). This collection of essays picks up the debate in the wake of the contested presidential election of 2000, and scholars continue to argue over whether the election of 1800 was truly revolutionary. Other scholarship has challenged that idea that the Jeffersonian tradition was anti-capitalist, arguing that it favored certain capitalist measures to further the agrarian Republic; see Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984).



commemoration. Even so, Republicans had to carefully undermine Federalist efforts to channel the memory of Washington without insulting the symbol or appearing ungrateful for his contributions to the nation.<sup>21</sup>

Federalists were determined to entomb Washington in the national capital, or at the very least pass legislation to do so before they lost control of Congress. Henry Lee, a Federalist representative of Virginia and author of the famous eulogy line “First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of his Countrymen,” presented a bill in early December 1800 that called for the “erection of a Mausoleum to George Washington.” This mausoleum was to be constructed of “American granite and marble, in pyramidal form one hundred feet square at the base, and of a proportionate height.” John Nicholas, a Republican from Virginia, questioned the need for such a grandiose monument, as a mausoleum was just “a huge ugly mass of stones heaped upon one another.” His colleague, Nathaniel Macon from North Carolina, agreed with Nicholas arguing that, “[i]f the nation wished to show its gratitude, let them do it by making a history of the life of Washington a school-book... This will be rendering the highest tribute to his fame, by making it the instrument of enlightening the mind and improving the heart.” Republicans reasoned that this Federalist mausoleum smacked of European regality and decadence, the very evils repudiated by the Revolution and scorned by their political convictions.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Sarah Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 133-170; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 288-293.

<sup>22</sup> *National Intelligencer*, 8 December 1800; *Federal Gazette*, 9 December 1800; *Alexander Advertiser*, 11 December 1800. Lee’s oration was printed in newspapers across the country. See *Commercial Advertiser*, 11 January 1800; *Mercantile Advertiser*, 11 January 1800; *Connecticut Gazette*, 15 January 1800; *Maryland Herald and Hager’s-Town Weekly Advertiser*, 16 January 1800; *Columbian Courier*, 24 January 1800; *Federal Observer*, 24 January 1800.

Republican representatives justified their opposition by criticizing the Federalists' willingness to use public funding for the mausoleum. William Claiborne, a Republican from Tennessee, called upon Congress to fulfill a previous act passed in 1783 for an equestrian statue instead of a mausoleum, arguing that it "would inspire the beholder with more lively emotions than a mass of stones formed into a pyramid." Christopher Champlin, a Federalist from Rhode Island, countered that a mausoleum was more suited for the memory of Washington because it celebrated "all the virtues of the statesman as well as the hero, while [a statue] would be limited to his military exploits." Mindful of payments owed to foreign governments and veteran pensions, representatives haggled over using public money for Washington's tomb, but the larger issue of a mausoleum also instigated debate over the meaning of the Revolution and the rejection of Old World political culture.<sup>23</sup>

The amended bill finally passed the House 45-37 a month later, and specified building an elaborate pyramid tomb for Washington and placing an equestrian statue of him in the future Capitol Rotunda. The Federalists passed the resolution with party support, receiving 43 of the 45 yeas from their own ranks. Democratic-Republicans dissented heavily, casting 36 of the 37 nays against a mausoleum for General Washington. The Senate modified the bill, proposing to finance the statue out of the Treasury with funds "not otherwise appropriated." The bill passed 20-9 in the Senate,

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<sup>23</sup> *Alexandria Gazette*, 1 January 1801; *House Journal*, 6<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 2 December 1800 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1826), 3, 733-35; *Senate Journal*, 6<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 4 February 1801 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1821); 3, 120. The first proposal for a Washington mausoleum actually began back in May 1800, but it was postponed until the next Congressional session that fall.

receiving support from both parties before the Congressional turnover, but the changes required a confirmation vote in the House of Representatives.<sup>24</sup>

Critics of the mausoleum objected for a number of reasons but the most common included the pyramid's political roots and the cost. One editorial disagreed with such a tomb and reminded readers that grandiose mausoleums were present in many "despotic governments in the Eastern World," especially in the Indian, Egyptian, and Roman Empires. America needed only a humble monument with Washington's "remains deposited under it," and it should be "plain and simple, of no great expence, emblematic of the character of this great and illustrious man, who was wise and prudent, and on all occasions, careful of the public money." Another columnist wondered aloud if the money for a mausoleum could be better spent, perhaps for "the education of the poor," who then could speak to Washington's virtues and live by his noble example. Another writer suggested following the 1799 resolution, burying Washington beneath the Capitol instead of under a pyramid. The columnist wondered if this would be more appropriate than a "diminutive imitation of Egyptian Pyramids." While Federalists use these disagreements as further proof of Republican disdain for Washington, the idea of a pyramid for one man seemed antithetical to the very ideals upon which America was founded. Republican supporters instead offered alternate ways to commemorate Washington without further deifying him in the process.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Alexandria Gazette*, 1 January 1801; *Alexandria Gazette*, 1 January 1801; *House Journal*, 6<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 2 December 1800 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1826), 3, 749-50; The only votes that broke party lines were the Democratic-Republicans Samuel Good and John Smith who voted in favor and Federalist Benjamin Taliaferro who voted against; *Senate Journal*, 6<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 4 February 1801 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1821); 3, 120.

<sup>25</sup> *National Intelligencer*, 31 December 1800; *Kline's Carlisle Weekly Gazette*, 31 December 1800; *Ostego Herald*, 15 January 1801.

If Washington merited such a lavish spot of repose, what about the rest of the Founders? One columnist pointed out this discrepancy, calling for a more inclusive means of commemoration that might praise the many individuals that contributed to independence. “It seems not to be considered that General Washington was not the man who first unfolded the principles, penetrated the views, and discussed the tendency of the claims of the Parliament of Great Britain. That was done in Massachusetts, by the ablest statesmen this country has produced” wrote one John Adams supporter. The columnist concluded that if a mausoleum were raised, it must commemorate “all the original authors and conductors of the revolution.” With public opinion turning against them Federalists tried to negate the first section of the bill, specifically the provision for a mausoleum for Washington’s remains. They alternatively proposed a monument and suggested that “John Marshall, Bushrod Washington, John E. Howard, and Tobias Lear,” all prominent Federalists and the last Washington’s former personal secretary, preside over its construction.<sup>26</sup>

The bill eventually made its way back to the House of Representatives where it failed to pass 34-49 before the start of the new Congressional session. The unpopularity of a grandiose monument dedicated to a single man coalesced into more opposition, and Washington’s edifice failed to materialize. With the influx of Republican representatives in both the House and the Senate in 1801, any possibility that Washington might be entombed in an elaborate Federalist sepulcher disappeared. The failure to procure the necessary funds for such a plan prompted newspaper editors and political commentators

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<sup>26</sup> *Commercial Advertiser*, 30 January 1801; *Columbian Centinel*, 4 February 1801; *The Bee*, 4 February 1801; *Connecticut Journal*, 5 February 1801; *Columbian Courier*, 20 February 1801; *American Citizen*, 20 February 1801. The new bill also set a funding limit of \$50,000 for this particular Washington monument.

to call upon their readers to fill the coffers for such a project. One columnist suggested volunteerism as the solution, but specified that, “none but citizens be allowed to subscribe.” Any additional funds would be used to build a national university, one of Washington’s expressed wishes in his will. Another writer named “Republican” supported the idea of building a national university but was “unwilling, from principle, to waste even [his] mite, entirely on a Mausoleum, a huge pyramid of useless stone.” The writer concluded that Washington would have never wanted “friends to protect his ashes, while virtue, patriotism, or pure republican principles are dear to the American people.” Republicans turned the memory of Washington against the Federalists, arguing that a mausoleum betrayed everything Washington had fought for in the Revolution.<sup>27</sup>

As politics became more divisive during Jefferson’s Presidency, Republicans successfully prevented Washington’s remains from receiving royal treatment. They paid homage to his military achievements in speeches and orations, but minimized his political accomplishments, focusing more on the revolutionary generation as a whole and touting their own political contributions. In one celebration of the anniversary of Jefferson’s inauguration, Republicans toasted themselves first, the Republic second, Thomas Jefferson third, Vice-President George Clinton fourth, and “George Washington, and the heroes of the revolution” fifth. The oration continued, “Those who have established the liberty of their country, need no splendid Mausoleum to immortalize their memory.” In a Fourth of July commemoration in 1805, Washington was delegated to the sixth toast, and the speaker hoped “[h]is virtues be engraven on our hearts, more durable than a

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<sup>27</sup> *House Journal*, 6<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 2 March 1801 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1826), 3, 838-839; *The Carolina Gazette*, 26 March 1801; *The Connecticut Centinel*, 22 June 1802; *The Albany Centinel*, 22 June 1802; *The Independent Chronicle*, 28 June 1802; *Carolina Gazette*, 22 July 1802.

mausoleum pile, or an Egyptian Pyramid.” By making political commemorations and days of celebration more inclusive and democratic, Republicans transformed how Americans remembered the Revolution. They also praised Jefferson’s statesmanship and his authorship of the Declaration of Independence, a civic undertaking that created the foundations of a similar cult-like following for Jefferson that grew rapidly after his death in 1826.<sup>28</sup>

Federalists regained some power in both the House and the Senate after Jefferson’s exit from office, but Republicans still maintained a clear majority in Congress during President James Madison’s tenure. Federalists criticized Jefferson and his party for their betrayal of small-government principles and rejection of Washington hero worship. One critic, reflecting on the failure to build Washington’s mausoleum, accused Republicans of sabotaging the project in hopes that “the first honors in that department [would be] for their idol Mr. Jefferson.” This noble attempt for a national monument “was defeated by his *democratic* friends, who have since fallen so desperately in love with his character.” The anniversary of Washington’s death also became a Federalist occasion to voice political outrage, as one commentator rambled, “[t]he dominant party in this country, instead of erecting a mausoleum to the memory of Washington, has steadily

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<sup>28</sup> *Carolina Gazette*, 20 July 1804; *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 22 March 1805; *Farmers’ Register*, 9 July 1805; *Commercial Advertiser*, 22 November 1805; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*, 192-244; Merrill Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); Robert E. McGlone, “Deciphering Memory: John Adams and the Authorship of the Declaration of Independence,” *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 2 (September 1998): 412-438. McGlone explores the process of authorship for the Declaration, and the memories of both Adams and Jefferson, who had very different versions of how Jefferson came to draft the declaration; Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 69-106. Jefferson became more popular as a Southern nationalist figure as the Civil War approached, but afterwards he disappeared until the Populist Movement of the late nineteenth century.

and industriously endeavored to blast his fame and asperse his character.” Washington and his followers were responsible for “commerce and prosperity and happiness, of all which we have been plundered by Democracy.” This writer reminded readers that Washington had prophetically “foretold that the democratic party would be ‘the CURSE of this country!’” Federalists and merchants of the Northeast, still feeling the effects of Jefferson’s embargo, accused Republicans of disrupting the American economy and betraying Washington’s “maxims and principles” by pursuing war with Great Britain.<sup>29</sup>

The crisis of war pushed the issue of Washington’s remains out of the papers and into the recesses of American minds. Two invasions into Canada confirmed British suspicions that the United States wished to annex British territory, but these expeditions failed to achieve any real territorial gains or deliver decisive military victories. American forces burned York, the capital of the province of Upper Canada in April 1813. Appalled by the American looting and arson at York and across Canada, British soldiers sought retribution for the capital and savored the opportunity to return the favor in August 1814. Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane ordered Rear Admiral George Cockburn to take his Chesapeake fleet and attack Washington D.C. in unison with the land forces of Major General Robert Ross. American politicians fled the city as British soldiers burned the United States Capitol, the President’s House, the Library of Congress, and the Treasury

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<sup>29</sup> *The Newport Mercury*, 25 May 1811; *New-England Palladium*, 28 May 1811; *Rhode Island American*, 31 May 1811; *Franklin Herald*, 3 April 1813; *Salem Gazette*, 13 December 1814; Richard Loss, “The Political Thought of President George Washington,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 471-490. Loss offers an overview of Washington’s political philosophy, arguing he mixed elements of classical and modern republicanism with an emphasis on education to improve civic virtue. Washington feared democracy along Aristotelian lines that it was unstable and promoted the rule of ignorance. The reign of terror in Revolutionary France only furthered convinced Washington of the dangers of democracy; Brian Schoen, “Calculating the Price of Union: Republican Economic Nationalism and the Origins of Southern Sectionalism,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 180-196.

Building in retaliation. One newspaper columnist lamented: “We are invaded in earnest. Our capitol is taken—it is now smoking in ruins!” The British had brought James Madison’s war to his doorstep, forcing the President to abandon his home and the seat of national government.<sup>30</sup>

With the national capital in ruins, Republicans, aware of the power of the memory of Washington, attempted to use it to encourage enlistment in the fight against the British. One columnist named “Oscar” urged Americans to resist supporting the Federalist cry for peace and accused them of lauding English benevolence. He suggested that the “[y]outh of America...go to the tomb of Mount Vernon. There call on the name of Washington, and seek if perchance his spirit may invigorate you.” The Federalists, however, were much more effective in channeling Washington to denigrate the war and Republican leadership. *The Federal Republican* called upon readers to “ask yourselves if such men any longer deserve your confidence,” as the “neglect of the administration to provide a

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<sup>30</sup> *Senate Journal*, 12<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 17 June 1812 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1821), 5, 154; *Columbian*, 21 June 1812. The Senate vote was recorded, 19-31, but the clerks in the House were either not present or told not to record the proceedings. See *House Journal*, 12<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 18 June 1812 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1826), 8, 375; *Trenton Federalist*, 22 June 1812; *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*, 22 June 1812; *Public Advertiser*, 22 June 1812; *Commercial Advertiser*, 22 June 1812; *Hagers-town Gazette*, 23 June 1812; *The Bee*, 23 June 1812; *Centinel of Freedom*, 23 June 1812; *New Jersey Journal*, 23 June 1812; *American Watchman*, 23 June 1812; *National Aegis*, 24 June 1812; *American Mercury*, 24 June 1812; *Boston Patriot*, 24 June 1812; *Rhode Island Republican*, 24 June 1812; *Native American*, 24 June 1812; *Courier*, 24 June 1812; *Connecticut Journal*, 25 June 1812; *Hampshire Federalist*, 25 June 1812; *Farmers’ Repository*, 26 June 1812; *Salem Gazette*, 26 June 1812; Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969), 1-24, 194-214; Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012, 1989), 134-136, 206-208; Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2010), 6-12. Taylor uses borderlands theory to explore the relationships between civilians and troops fighting along the American-Canadian borders, finding that it was less a national endeavor and framed more in terms of empire and republic. *The Columbian*, 27 August 1814; *Centinel of Freedom*, 30 August 1814; *Independent Chronicle*, 1 September 1814; *New-Jersey Journal*, 6 September 1814; J.C.A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison’s War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).



defence [sic] for the capital of the nation, and the district of Columbia generally, is...of loud complaint among all parties.” Another Federalist contributor called Madison a “pitiful President!” and believed that “other nations” should pity such a people “for being cursed by such a foolish and wicked administration.” The widespread printing of Vice Admiral Cochrane’s letter to Secretary of State James Monroe, informing him of the British plan to “destroy and lay waste such towns and districts upon the coast,” did little to inspire confidence in the administration.<sup>31</sup>

George Washington, the Federalists maintained, would never have put the United States in such a position and he certainly would not have fled the national capital. In the aftermath of the burning of Washington D.C., Federalists continuously circulated a famous story about Washington during the American Revolution and his resolve to deter the enemy at all costs. In the spring of 1781, the British ship H.M.S. *Savage* traveled up the Potomac River and destroyed several homes, eventually reaching Mount Vernon. Lund Washington, the General’s cousin and property overseer, complied with the British commander’s request for provisions in exchange for sparing the mansion from destruction. In a heated letter to Lund, General Washington excoriated his judgment, stating: “I would rather it had been left to the enemy to take what he pleased by force, though at the risk of burning my house and property.” Washington would have rather lost his home than surrender anything to the enemy, and Federalist pundits reminded Madison of this lesson in civic virtue. The British occupation of the national capital and the President’s surrender of the city to the enemy, they argued, reflected poor leadership

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<sup>31</sup> *Broome County Patriot*, 29 December 1812; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 28 July 1814; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 10 September 1814, reprint of *The Federal Republican*; *Northern Whig*, 13 September 1814; *The Enquirer*, 14 September 1814; *Connecticut Journal*, 19 September 1814; Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 209-210.

by Madison and his administration. “The Spirit of Federalism rises from the Tomb of Mount Vernon” in response to the “evils resulting from the mad, impolitic measures of the administration,” wrote one Federalist supporter. Strong opposition to the war, along with fiscal and militia shortages, brought Federalists to Hartford, Connecticut in December 1814 to discuss strategies that might end the war, but for more ardent separatists they advocated for the dissolution of the Union and the creation of a new confederacy of New England states.<sup>32</sup>

While the Treaty of Ghent was signed on December 24, 1814, fighting continued across the Atlantic for several months. The most important victory for the Americans, at least in terms of fostering a greater sense of American nationalism, came in January 1815 at New Orleans. Major General Andrew Jackson’s ragtag army of militia, Indian allies, blacks, and pardoned Baratarian pirates defended the city and repelled a British invasion of 8,000 regulars. The outnumbered Americans inflicted heavy casualties on the British troops and their officers; among the dead were British Generals Edward Pakenham and Samuel Gibbs. British commanders ceased hostilities on New Orleans, and as news spread across the country, the battle became a rallying cry for American unity. The Battle of New Orleans made Andrew Jackson a national hero and fostered nationalist sentiment across the country. In due time, this battle was mythologized by his supporters

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<sup>32</sup> *The Shamrock*, 8 October 1814; *Vermont Mirror*, 14 September 1814. Washington’s version of events can be found in his wartime papers. See George Washington to Lund Washington, April 30, 1781, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1937), 22, 14-15; Horsman, *The War of 1812*, 211-214; Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 274-283; J.C.A. Stagg, *The War of 1812: Conflict for a Continent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 147-150; Elizabeth Varon, *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 36-39. Varon’s study of disunion traces the roots of such political thinking all the way back to the 1790s, when disunion was used frequently by different parties and regions to further political aims.

and transformed into politic capital when Jackson set his sights on the presidency in the 1820s.<sup>33</sup>

In such a transformative period, and on the heels of “defeating” the British again, Americans reflected more on the Revolution and its heroes. In the state of Virginia, no one was more significant than George Washington. State politicians prepared a resolution to request the bodily remains of Washington from his nephew, Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington. They asked to remove the body to Richmond and inter it “near the Capitol of Virginia, beneath a Monument to be erected at the public expense, to serve as a memorial to future ages of the love of a grateful people.” While little is known as to why exactly Virginians decided that this was the moment to seek Washington’s remains, it is quite possible that the recent attacks on Washington D.C. and Alexandria convinced them that Washington’s body was not safe at Mount Vernon. After the war, Virginia Congressional representative John Randolph reminisced over the British attacks in his home state: “When I heard the fleet was passing to the Potomac, the first thought that struck me was that the enemy would land at Mount Vernon; that they would take the body of Washington...and transport it to Westminster Abbey.” While this is only one Virginian’s memory, it suggests a real fear of losing Washington’s remains—the nation’s

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<sup>33</sup> *Newport Mercury*, 28 January 1815; *Providence Patriot*, 28 January 1815; *Repertory*, 28 January 1815; *Columbian Centinel*, 11 February 1815; *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 16 February 1815; *Rutland Vermont Herald*, 22 February 1815; *Baltimore Patriot*, 2 March 1815; *Daily National Intelligencer*, 25 February 1815; *New England Palladium*, 3 March 1815; Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969), 244-248; J.C.A. Stagg, *The War of 1812: Conflict for a Continent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 152-154; Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 316; William Nester, *The Age of Jackson and the Art of American Power, 1815-1848* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013), 28-51.

symbol of unity—to the enemy, and thus might partially explain the Virginia state government’s proactive pursuit of the body after the war.<sup>34</sup>

The call for Washington’s body at the state level spurred discussion over the failures of the national government to properly entomb Washington in the capital. Benjamin Huger, a South Carolina Federalist who voted in favor of the original 1799 resolution to move Washington’s body, put forward a motion to create a committee of commemoration on February 16, 1816. It is safe to assume that Congress knew of Virginia’s intent to inter Washington in Richmond, as representatives shifted erratically from discussing veteran pensions, commerce between the states, and territories in the West to claiming Washington’s body for the national government. In the *Virginia Argus*, one writer criticized Congress for its inaction to properly memorialize the man, and lauded the Virginia General Assembly for its efforts. The Assembly’s unanimously adopted measure “will redeem, in the eyes of the world, the neglect of former Legislatures. May that resolution be promptly carried into effect!” While Virginians sought the President’s body for their own political purposes, national politicians responded by taking up the subject in Congress.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Evening Post*, 17 February 1816; Bushrod Washington to unknown, November 29, 1814, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library. Bushrod returned a letter of inquiry about whether the British tried to land at Mount Vernon during the War of 1812, which Bushrod states they did not; *Evening Post*, 15 March 1815; *The Western Monitor*, 31 March 1815; Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 208-209; Douglas Egerton, *Charles Fenton Mercer and the Trial of National Conservatism* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1989), x-xi; During the war British Commodore James Alexander Gordon was ordered to sail up the Potomac River and attack Fort Warburton both as a military measure and as a distraction from the main attack on Washington D.C. The fort, situated on the Maryland coast, was less than two miles from Mount Vernon.

<sup>35</sup> *House Journal*, 14<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 16-17 February 1816 (Washington D.C.: William A. Davis, 1816), 10, 354-56; *Rhode Island American*, 28 February 1816, reprint of *Virginia Argus*.

With two distinct political institutions competing for control of Washington's body, newspaper columnists mirrored the divide. One editorial hoped "that Judge Washington will never suffer the sanctity of THE TOMB OF MOUNT VERNON to be violated, either by that state, or the United States." He hoped that Washington would remain in peace, "undisturbed by the unhallowed footsteps or hands of democracy, or demagogues." The editor of the *Baltimore Federal Republican*, Alexander Contee Hanson, recommended that Congress purchase Mount Vernon and raise a monument over the tomb where it lies. "The Mount, rendered so dear by the life, the death, and by the burial of Washington," he wrote, "ought to be the property of the nation." Another writer agreed with Contee's reasoning arguing that, "[t]he ashes of Washington should be the property of the nation...that country ought to guard his consecrated remains." By purchasing Mount Vernon, Congress could avoid disturbing his grave while taking possession of the body. It would also allow Congress to avoid political confrontation with Virginia while undermining the plan to entomb him in Richmond.<sup>36</sup>

Bushrod Washington, George Washington's nephew, had inherited Mount Vernon after Martha's death in 1802. Bushrod received his education at the College of William and Mary, training for a career in law. His rise in state politics, coupled with his lineage, elevated Bushrod to the Supreme Court in 1799. Bushrod's court decisions reflected his Federalist belief in the power of the national government, but as a wealthy slave-owner he also advocated for the protection of individual rights. He was well versed in the law, and thus used his knowledge to determine whether or not he had the authority to approve

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<sup>36</sup> *Albany Daily Advertiser*, 22 February 1816; *Burlington Gazette*, 1 March 1816; *Salem Gazette*, 19 March 1816; *New York Daily Advertiser*, 11 November 1817, reprint of the *Baltimore Federal Republican*; *American Beacon*, 14 November 1817; *Newburyport Herald*, 18 November 1817; *Massachusetts Spy*, 19 November 1817; *Salem Gazette*, 21 November 1817; *Berkshire Star*, 4 December 1817.

disinterring his uncle's body. In his response to Virginia Governor Wilson Cary Nicholas, Bushrod was impressed with such "feelings of gratitude" for his uncle. He however reasoned that, "obligations more sacred than any thing which concerns myself...command me to retain the mortal remains of my venerated Uncle, in the family vault where they are deposited." Washington had clearly stated that he wished to be buried at Mount Vernon, and although the Virginia General Assembly's intent seemed honorable, Bushrod did not consent to their request, defusing the situation before Congress could intervene in any meaningful way.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile Benjamin Huger's committee sought "the erection of a monument to commemorate the virtues of George Washington" in the national capital, with the intent to place Washington underneath it. The resolution was eventually tabled, and when Bushrod's refusal to Virginia became public, it no longer drew the interest of national politicians. Huger continued to lobby for a mausoleum to fulfill the pledge made by Congress to Martha Washington. New York Republican representative Erastus Root argued against such a monument, reminding fellow representatives that, "[i]t had once been attempted to erect a mausoleum, an Egyptian pyramid to him...such an enterprize he was unwilling to second." Huger replied that, "he could not...reconcile it to his mind, as a citizen of this country, longer to neglect those sacred remains." He called on his peers to act, arguing that the federal government ought to possess "the venerated remains of Washington." Unable to convince his colleagues Huger resigned his efforts, hoping

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<sup>37</sup> *The Reporter*, 24 April 1816; Bushrod Washington to Wilson Cary Nicholas, March 18, 1816, *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts*, ed. H.W. Flournoy, (Richmond: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1968), 436-437; *Alexandria Herald*, 18 March 1816; David Leslie Annis, "Mr. Bushrod Washington, Supreme Court Justice on the Marshall Court," (Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1974), 20-22; Elswyth Thane, *Mount Vernon is Ours: The Story of the Preservation and Restoration of Washington's Home* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1966), 6-7.

that Virginia would “do them honor.” While Congress failed to act, Bushrod’s rejection of Virginia’s application ensured that Washington’s body would remain undisturbed at Mount Vernon. Huger’s efforts were merely reactionary, as nationalist politicians feared that losing the remains of Washington to Virginia meant losing the ability to control his iconic status.<sup>38</sup>

Bushrod affirmed the last wishes of his uncle, and in doing so, prevented both the state of Virginia and the national government from acquiring his bodily remains. This, however, did not stop Congressional politicians from suggesting another solution: placing a monument at Mount Vernon over the tomb of Washington. Federalist Senator Robert Henry Goldsborough of Maryland submitted a resolution to do just that, along with commissioning a Washington statue for the Capitol. His fellow senator and editor of the *Baltimore Federal Republican* Alexander Contee Hanson circulated this idea with the wider public. One columnist applauded Goldsborough’s efforts and hoped that “if Congress shall ever think it expedient to testify their sense of the obligation the nation is under him, they will do it by placing a suitable monument over his tomb at Mount Vernon.” With such strong Republican contingents though, these resolutions took much longer to even see a vote. While the Senate eventually approved the statue, Republicans struck out any provision for a monument on top of Washington’s grave and instead offered to place the statue in the Capitol Square.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *New-Bedford Mercury*, 1 March 1816; *Newburyport Herald*, 1 March 1816; *Rhode Island American*, 1 March 1816; *Concord Gazette*, 5 March 1816; *Reporter*, 6 March 1816; *Berkshire Star*, 7 March 1816; *Burlington Gazette*, 8 March 1816; *Western American*, 9 March 1816.

<sup>39</sup> *House Journal*, 14<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 14 March 1816 (Washington D.C.: William A. Davis, 1816), 10, 487-488; *Senate Journal*, 15<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 30 November 1818 (Washington D.C.: E. de Krafft, 1818), 8, 41; *Senate Journal*, 15<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 8 January 1819 (Washington D.C.: E. de Krafft, 1818), 8, 134; *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*, 4

One writer for the *National Intelligencer* proposed cutting costs, suggesting that Congress “purchase an acre of ground round the tomb of Washington, on Mount Vernon, on which to erect a Pyramid of Granite, with a base 100 square feet, and an elevation of 150 feet.” Another Federalist correspondent echoed this idea, stating that “the materials of the monument be secured and bound by lead and iron...it will be seen from the windows of the Capitol, from all parts of the City of Washington, and by all who in future ages sail on the majestic Potomac.” While these authors pleaded for simplicity in such a monument, a massive granite pyramid fifteen stories high was hardly austere. If constructed by these dimensions, the mausoleum would have been the tallest structure in the United States, dwarfing government buildings, lighthouses, and even church steeples.<sup>40</sup>

After the celebrated return of the Marquis de Lafayette in 1824, calls rang out again to properly commemorate the memory of Washington. This time the Freemasons joined the political fray to control the memory of Washington by proposing to build a monument over his grave. The Masons had not only survived the American Revolution as an organization but also thrived afterwards. In fact, a number of the Founding

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December 1818, reprint of *New York Daily Advertiser*; *Connecticut Journal*, 22 December 1818; Senate Journal, 15<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 12 February 1819 (Washington D.C.: E. de Krafft, 1818), 8, 252-253; *Alexandria Herald*, 15 February 1819; *Alexandria Gazette*, 15 February 1819.

<sup>40</sup> *Boston Commercial Gazette*, 18 February 1819, reprint of *National Intelligencer*; *Newbern Sentinel*, 20 February 1819; *Essex Patriot*, 20 February 1819; *Connecticut Journal*, 23 February 1819; *Camden Gazette*, 4 March 1819; an acre is approximately 43,560 square feet, so a lot measuring 208.71 feet by 208.71 feet. The only structure that would have come close was actually being constructed at the same time: the Washington Monument in Baltimore. This column, funded by a series of lotteries in the state of Maryland, eventually stood at 178 feet tall and was completed in 1829. See *The Architecture of Baltimore*, eds. Mary Ellen Hayward and Frank R. Shivers Jr., (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 82-83. For more on the lotteries see *Hagers-town Gazette*, 31 July 1810; *National Intelligencer*, 17 August 1810; *Independent American*, 25 August 1810; *Federal Republican*, 13 September 1810; *Spirit of Seventy-Six*, 27 November 1810; *Portsmouth Oracle*, 5 January 1811; *New York Evening Post*, 26 February 1811; *Providence Gazette*, 11 May 1811.



Fathers—Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Joseph Warren, and George Washington—were all members of the fraternity, as well as the nation’s honorary guest, Lafayette.

After the Revolution Freemasons labored to promote Masonic principles of virtue, moral training, and proper education with the growth and stabilization of the new Republic.

They envisioned themselves as protectors of the new social order and models of virtue for the wider American populace. As Americans moved westward, Masonic lodges sprouted up in the interior lands of the Republic, capturing more middling members and offering those who possessed merit the opportunity to join an organization of benevolence and self-improvement. The Masons grew in size and influence during the early nineteenth century, so much so that even a national grand lodge was proposed in 1822 to oversee the activities of the state lodges.<sup>41</sup>

At his funeral, five of Washington’s six pallbearers were Freemasons, and both local clergy and Masonic Masters conducted his last rites before he was entombed in the

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<sup>41</sup> *National Gazette*, 18 August 1792; *New-Hampshire Gazette*, 30 July 1793; *Columbian Mirror*, 25 September 1793; *Alexandria Gazette*, 25 September 1793; *Essex Journal*, 9 October 1793; John Kerwood, “Laying the Capitol’s Cornerstone,” *The Capitol Dome* 3, no. 1 (January 1970): 2-6, Office of the Architect of the United States Capitol; Steven Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1739-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 138-139; 188, 371. Bullock cites an estimate of 80,000 Masons in the United States by 1822, about 4.85% of the 1,650,000 eligible white male voting population of the 1820 census; *The Watch-Tower*, 3 June 1822, reprint of the *Pittsburg Gazette*; *Providence Gazette*, 8 June 1822; *Rhode-Island Republican*, 12 June 1822; *New Hampshire Gazette*, 18 June 1822; *North Star*, 4 July 1822; Mark Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 56-57. This idea of a National Grand Lodge never came to fruition, as state lodges were weary of a national authority governing or dictating Masonic policy from afar; Andrew Burstein, “Immortalizing the Founding Fathers: The Excess of Public Eulogy,” in *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America*, eds. Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 94-95. Washington was a member of the Freemason Alexandria Lodge No. 22 and served as its Charter Master for six years. Washington and the Masons were very active in supporting local schools and congregations in Alexandria. The fraternity also participated in national commemorative events, such as the laying of cornerstones for the Federal District, the United States Capitol, and the President’s House. See William Moseley Brown, *George Washington: Freemason* (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, Inc., 1952).

family vault. He was certainly the most iconic member of the brotherhood, and after his death the Freemasons frequently reminded the American public of their relationship with Washington, even changing the name of their local chapter to the Washington Alexandria Lodge. In the spring of 1812, the Masons established a museum in Alexandria and elected Colonel Timothy Mountford to manage the collections, which included objects that formerly belonged to George Washington. The museum quickly grew in size, and by 1818, the Masons applied to move their collections to a new space that could accommodate visitors above the new market-house. While they accepted a variety of curiosities, they prominently displayed Washington artifacts to remind visitors of Washington's past as a Freemason. According to the English traveler James Silk Buckingham, the museum possessed George Washington's infant baptismal robe, a penknife from his childhood, a button from his inauguration coat, his masonic apron and gloves, and a fragment of the last stick of sealing wax that he used to seal his letters. Touting both a devotion to charity and their deceased brother, the Masons made Washington their business.<sup>42</sup>

By the 1820s, however, many Americans began to fear the power and secrecy of the Freemasons. The disappearance of William Morgan in 1826, a disgruntled New York

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<sup>42</sup> *Alexandria Herald*, 22 April 1812; *Alexandria Gazette*, 23 April 1812; *Alexandria Gazette*, 25 April 1812; *Mercantile Advertiser*, 21 July 1812; *Alexandria Gazette*, 30 September 1812; *Alexandria Gazette*, 9 February 1813; *Alexandria Gazette*, 20 November 1818; James Silk Buckingham, *America: Historical, Statistic, and Descriptive* (London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1840), 1, 377-378. The robe and penknife seem apocryphal to a modern skeptic. Washington was baptized as an infant in the Anglican Church, but there is no explanation as to how the Alexandria Masons came to possess the robe. In the late nineteenth century, a story circulated about Washington being baptized at Valley Forge by John Gano, a chaplain for the Continental Army, but scholars have not found any historical documentation to verify the story. According to Benjamin Hallowell, Mountford provided the live eagle for Lafayette's procession in Alexandria. See *The Autobiography of Benjamin Hallowell* (Philadelphia: Friends' Book Association, 1884), 100-101.

Mason who planned to publish a book exposing Freemason traditions and initiation rites, sparked the grassroots Anti-Masonic Movement and the creation of a third political party. Opposition to the Masons branded the group as elitist and potent, and charged the organization with conspiracy and corruption in business, government, and law. More damning to the Freemasons were the accusations that their organization undermined Christianity and the Republic, charges that grew out of the fires of popular evangelical ministries and lingered well into the 1830s, prompting thousands of brothers to flee the fraternity. While the Anti-Masonic Movement was short-lived, these years were especially turbulent for the brotherhood, and in a democratizing political order they sought refuge from persecution by affirming their association with George Washington.<sup>43</sup>

Not to be outdone by Congress or the Virginia General Assembly, Masonic lodges began fundraising “for the erection of a suitable monument over the grave of our deceased Brother, GEORGE WASHINGTON, at Mount Vernon.” This effort began at a meeting of the Grand Lodge of the State of Tennessee, and members charged their leadership with the task of coordinating “aid and cooperation” with other Grand Lodges. The Grand Lodge of Maine responded by unanimously passing a resolution “to appropriate the sum of one thousand dollars” towards the monument. The Grand Lodge of New Hampshire allocated two hundred dollars; the Grand Lodge of North Carolina

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<sup>43</sup> Franklin L. Brockett, *The Lodge of Washington: A History of the Alexandria Washington Lodge, No. 22, A.F. and A.M. of Alexandria, Virginia* (Washington D.C.: Sherman & Co., 1871), 23-24; Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1739-1840*, 273-280; Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 4-7; Dorothy Ann Lipson, *Freemasonry in Federalist Connecticut, 1789-1835* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 1-45; Ronald Forisano and Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, “Antimasonry and Masonry: The Genesis of Protest, 1826-1827,” *American Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1977): 139-165; Richard A. Rutyna and Peter Stewart, *The History of Freemasonry in Virginia* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998), 9-10; Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities*, 51-58.

five hundred dollars; and the Grand Lodge of Ohio set aside two hundred dollars for the Masonic monument. While opinions towards the brotherhood varied from hatred to indifference, one columnist was “glad to find that those who were, on earth, in a peculiar sense, his brethren, have resolved, from their limited resources, to prepare a visible monument of the affection and esteem in which they hold his memory and his manly principles.” Another correspondent felt that the “Masonic Fraternity, never behind in good works...have undertaken an object worthy of their general co-operation—the erection of a Tomb over the grave of Washington at Mount Vernon.” Emboldened by their extensive participation in Lafayette’s return to the states, Masons seized the moment to give Washington a proper, Masonic monument and become the official guardians of his legacy.<sup>44</sup>

The Freemasons also traveled to Mount Vernon to directly pay homage at Washington’s tomb and used his memory to fight criticism of their fraternal organization. These occasions offered a public platform to remind others that Washington was a Freemason, and that the accusations against his fellow Masons should be considered as absurd as insults against the Father of his Country. During an visit of Washington D.C. and Alexandria Masons, along with spectators to the tomb in March 1830, Samuel Jenks informed the audience that “Masonry was instituted for noble and wise purposes: it was to expand our benevolence to the limits of society: to open, enlighten, and purify the heart of man.” While the “fanatical tyrants in Europe” targeted Freemasonry it had also received the “adjurations of the American demagogue,” whose “ignorant and insidious

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<sup>44</sup> *Eastern Argus*, 16 December 1824; *Weekly Eastern Argus*, 1 February 1825; *Masonic Mirror and Mechanics’ Intelligencer*, 22 January 1825; 1,5; *Masonic Casket*, May 1825; 2,6; *New Hampshire Gazette*, 8 February 1825; *Pittsfield Sun*, 21 July 1825; Mark Tabbert, *American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities*, 57-58.

assailants will quail before the scepter of omnipotent truth.” Jenks spoke of the “miserable crusades and paltry persecution” intended to destroy the order, but reminded his fellow Masons of their “pledges of fraternal fidelity” and called upon them to emulate the example “we have been taught to revere.” By venerating Washington at the tomb, the Masons publically solidified their relationship to their deceased brother and used his memory as a shield from political persecution.<sup>45</sup>

As the Freemasons commandeered Washington’s image and highlighted his bond with the fraternal order, commentators began to suspect that Masons were using Washington for petty political reasons or economic gain. One critic lambasted the Masonic procession at Mount Vernon advocating that, “it is time the name of Washington was disabused of the fraternal hug of Freemasonry.” This particular writer recalled that, “Washington was a gentleman who treated *all men* with courtesy,” not some elitist Freemason who reveled in secrecy and social exclusiveness. The column concluded, “We have a right to demand of the Masons, proof of their relationship to Washington, more substantial than his civil replies to their formal compliments.” While it was well known that Washington was a Freemason, the Anti-Masonic Movement attempted to undermine that part of Washington’s life and recast him as a man of the people, above factions in government and free of elitist organizations.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Masonic Mirror*, 24 April 1830; 1,43; *Boston Masonic Mirror*, 1 May 1830; *Vermont Gazette*, 25 May 1830.

<sup>46</sup> *Saturday Evening Post*, 16 June 1827; *The Anti-Masonic Review and Magazine*, 1 May 1830, 2, 5. Washington was also a member and at one point President of the Society of Cincinnati, a military fraternal organization based on hereditary membership, which Washington later distanced himself from during the Constitutional Convention and into his Presidency. He remained respectful of the organization but was well aware of the criticisms of it as American nobility. See Minor Myers, *Liberty Without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983), 58-61.

While the Freemasons coordinated fundraising for a Masonic monument at Mount Vernon, Bushrod Washington's death spurred new conversations in legislature halls about the possession of Washington's remains. The Supreme Court Justice had denied Virginia the right in 1816, but his passing brought a new owner to Mount Vernon and another opportunity for these governments to pursue Washington's body. Bushrod's illness prompted his wife Julia Ann Blackburn to leave Mount Vernon immediately for Philadelphia in November 1829, but she did not make it in time to see him before he died. On her journey back to Mount Vernon Julia succumbed to "an apoplectic attack," but in the minds of family members she died of a broken heart. Bushrod and Julia were childless, and as a result, Mount Vernon and the tomb passed down to Bushrod's nephew, John Augustine Washington Jr.<sup>47</sup>

As Washington's Birthday centennial approached politicians again took up the cause of commemorating Washington, but things were much different than in 1799 or 1816. Sectionalism had fostered political division and hardened regional partisanship, and the nationalism of the early Republic seemed a distant memory for most Americans. One columnist recalled the 1799 resolution and hoped that with the Capitol finished, Congress would act on the deeds of their predecessors. "The Capitol which he founded," wrote the editorial, "would become his monument and the hearts of his countrymen would be directed to the spot where he reposed with feelings of veneration and reverence, and this forms an additional cement to the bond of union that already exists." Not only

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<sup>47</sup> *Baltimore Patriot*, 28 November 1829; *Salem Gazette*, 4 December 1829; *Connecticut Mirror*, 5 December 1829; *Farmer's Cabinet*, 5 December 1829; *Newport Mercury*, 5 December 1829; *Baltimore Patriot*, 7 December 1829; *Norwich Courier*, 9 December 1829; *Rhode Island Republican* 10 December 1829; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 11 December 1829; *Berkshire Journal*, 17 December 1829; David Leslie Annis, "Mr. Bushrod Washington, Supreme Court Justice on the Marshall Court," (Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1974), 249-250.

would Washington's body encourage patriotism amongst politicians, but also it would make the city "the Mecca of the nation," a holy space that would foster national spirit amongst the people.<sup>48</sup>

On Washington's Birthday February 22, 1830, Alabama Democrat Clement Clay asked Congress to revisit the failure of the government to entomb Washington. A special committee of twenty-four members, consisting of one representative from each state, was given the task of fulfilling the 1799 resolution, which was read, along with the letters of John Adams and Martha Washington. This committee, composed of seventeen Jackson Democrats and seven Anti-Jacksonians, produced a report that not only recommended moving George and Martha Washington to the crypt in the Capitol, but also "that a Marble Monument be erected" over the very spot of repose in the form of a "pedestrian statue." The report recommended that the procession and entombment should take place December 14, the anniversary of Washington's death. Within the Washington family, Martha Washington's grandson George Washington Parke Custis discussed the Congressional proceedings with Lawrence Lewis, his sister's husband and one of the executors of Washington's estate. He forwarded their correspondence to Maryland representative George Mitchell, the chairman of the committee, asking that this duty be carried out in accordance with Martha's wishes "to rest at his side in whatever tomb he [Washington] has pleased."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *New Bedford Mercury*, 4 December 1829; *Newport Mercury*, 5 December 1829; *Republican Star*, 10 February 1829.

<sup>49</sup> *House Journal*, 21<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 22 February 1830 (Washington D.C.: Duff Green, 1829) 23, 327-328; *Weekly Eastern Argus*, 2 March 1830; *Norwich Courier*, 3 March 1830; *Eastern Argus*, 5 March 1830; *Weekly Eastern Argus*, 9 March 1830; *Norwich Courier*, 24 March 1830; *House Journal*, 21<sup>st</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 19 March 1830 (Washington D.C.: Duff Green, 1829), 23, 441; *Rhode Island Republican*, 25 March 1830; *Connecticut Mirror*, 27 March 1830; *Watch-Tower*, 29 March 1830; *Connecticut Courant*, 30 March 1830; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 2 April

The renewed interest to dig up the dead produced varied opinions among Americans. One writer for the *Connecticut Mirror* lamented that there was no national monument dedicated to Washington, but the idea of removing his remains seemed disrespectful to his final wishes. The writer reminded readers that Washington “chose to have his mortal remains deposited” in his family’s vault, and for the past thirty years, “his admirers from all parts of the world, have gathered together, to shed their tears over the spot consecrated as his burial place.” The writer argued that “our associations of Washington are intimately connected with the spot where he now lies,” and to take him from Mount Vernon would “destroy its sacred character” and “annihilate a shrine at which the votaries of freedom have worshipped ever since his death.” To take Washington from his simple repose would not only violate his last will and testament but also sever the connection between Washington and the people. A contributor for the *Vermont Gazette*, however, disagreed arguing that, “[t]he Capitol would then be his monument, where all that is left of him would be enshrined, as his memory is enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen.” The “countless throngs” would descend upon the national capital “to lay their hands on the tomb of Washington,” an experience that would allow visitors to “feel his virtues” in the moment and beyond.<sup>50</sup>

As commentators and politicians debated the merits of removal, visitors to Mount Vernon advocated for disinterment because of the old tomb’s poor appearance. British Lieutenant Francis Hall described it as “a kind of cellar in the bank, which seemed to be

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1830; *Vermont Gazette*, 6 April 1830; George Washington Parke Custis to Lawrence Lewis, February 27, 1830, Correspondence and Tomb Notebook, Fred W. Smith Library. Jackson supporter George Mitchell of Maryland was appointed the leader of the committee; *Weekly Eastern Argus*, 2 March 1830; *Norwich Courier*, 3 March 1830; *Eastern Argus*, 5 March 1830; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 12 March 1830; *Rhode Island Republican*, 25 March 1830.

<sup>50</sup> *Connecticut Mirror*, 27 March 1830; *Vermont Gazette*, 14 February 1832, reprint of *Washington Globe*.



an ice-house.” William Faux, an English traveler to America in the late 1810s, believed that the tomb “might be mistaken for a dog-kennel, or a mound, much resembling a potatoe grave in England.” These were just two of many published censures of the Washington family’s vault. These condemnations, along with the attempted theft of Washington’s body by a former employee of the family, convinced Lawrence Lewis to build a new family tomb, completing it in the spring of 1831. While many visitors to Mount Vernon lauded the simplicity and republican virtue of such a rustic tomb, others believed it was disgraceful to the memory of Washington. Based on these observations, it is not surprising that these visitors recommended government intervention to entomb Washington and preserve his memory on behalf of the American people.<sup>51</sup>

Built about one hundred yards to the southwest of the old tomb, the new vault received George and Martha along with the remains of twenty some family members. With family, friends, several workmen, and a few slaves in attendance, the remains were deposited into new coffins and transported down the hill to the new vault. The new tomb, however, did not offer the grandeur and opulence that many visitors expected to see. In fact it looked like an enlarged version of the old tomb but with a marble slab that read “WASHINGTON FAMILY.” One woman, Anna Sargent of Boston Massachusetts, claimed to have seen the removal during her visit in May 1831 writing: “We arrived at

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<sup>51</sup> John Harper to Elizabeth Harper, November 29, 1812, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; Francis Hall, *Travels in Canada and the United States 1816-7* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1818), 336; William Faux, *Memorable Days in America: Being a Journal of a Tour to the United States, 1818-1820* (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1823), 469-473; John Augustine Washington to George Corbin Washington, March 4, 1831, Correspondences and Tomb Notebook, FWSL. For Washington’s wishes, see George Washington’s Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbot (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 491. The original tomb was built by George’s older stepbrother Lawrence Washington.

Washington's tomb at a very interesting moment. It was open and the remains were all removing to a New tomb...The grass was strewed with coffins and the male branches of the family had assembled to witness the removal. They and the slaves appeared much solemnized." Anna looked into the vault and saw the coffins of the General and the First Lady, and she wondered why their remains were not "placed under the Capitol at Washington...His remains like his life should belong to the nation." Sargent's opinion echoed the collective belief that Washington belonged to the people and that the government should possess his remains on their behalf.<sup>52</sup>

With the completion of the new tomb, it appeared that Mount Vernon would remain George Washington's final resting place. The centennial of Washington's birth and the completion of the Capitol Rotunda, however, renewed discussion over the government's pledge to entomb George and Martha Washington in the Capitol. Politicians debated whether or not Washington's body was the property of the country or an individual state, and in the year 1832 all sectional issues revolved around the growing tensions between the federal and state governments. While sectionalism was not a new phenomenon to American politics, it had drastically increased and solidified into political and geographical factions after the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Economic policies—

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<sup>52</sup> *The Rhetorical Reader*, 1838, 11, 159-162. Also in Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library; *Alexandria Gazette*, date unknown 1831, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; Edward Thomas Coke, *A Subaltern's Furlough: Descriptive of Scenes in Various Parts of the United States, Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1833), 1, 99-101; *The Diary of Anna Sargent*, May 18, 1831, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL. Mount Vernon records indicate that the bodies were moved in March 1831, so it seems unlikely that Anna Sargent, who was not related to the family and not from the area, would have been present during the disinterment. Richard Washington, the son of Jane Charlotte and John Augustine Washington Jr., maintained that, "there was no publicity...of the intention to remove the remains," and that only Lawrence Lewis, family friend James Brown, his mother Jane Charlotte Washington, and his brother John Augustine Washington III were present for the disinterment. See Richard B. Washington to Lawrence Washington, December 1, 1908, Correspondences and Tomb Notebook, FWSL.

such as internal improvements, a tariff to protect American manufacturing, and the centralization of commerce through a national bank—stimulated sectional rivalries, as these measures benefited the commercial Northeast more than the agrarian South. The Tariff of 1828, designed to make American manufacturing more competitive with foreign producers, drew ire from southern representatives. It protected and promoted northern industries while the South felt the effects directly and indirectly, as American and foreign-made goods imported to southern ports were taxed on arrival. The biggest buyer of southern cotton, Great Britain, responded to these tariffs by reducing their imports and driving the price of cotton downwards.<sup>53</sup>

In between the debates on lowering tariff rates in early February 1832, Congress took up the occasion to discuss the upcoming centennial celebration. On Monday February 13, the chairman of the Senate Committee Henry Clay presented a report that called for an oration to Washington performed by Supreme Court Justice John Marshall, memorial services by both chaplains of the House and Senate, and “the removal of the body of George Washington” to the Capitol to fulfill the 1799 resolution. The proposal

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<sup>53</sup> Maurice Baxter, *Henry Clay and the American System* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1995); John R. Van Alta, “Western Lands and the Political Economy of Henry Clay’s American System, 1819-1832,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 21, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 633-638; William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina 1816-1836* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 89-133; Richard Ellis, *The Union at Risk: Jacksonian Democracy, States’ Rights, and the Nullification Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 13-40. Ellis argued that there was much more complexity in political thinking than the standard national versus states’ rights narrative, as politicians redefined their own ideological understanding of the Constitution to meet their needs; Elizabeth Varon, *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 39-50; Peter Knupfer, *The Union As Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 131-132; as a solution to sectionalism, 149; David Potter, *The South and Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1968), 78-83. Potter argued that it was individual and communal interests that drove the development of sectionalism in both the North and the South; Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The South and Three Sectional Crises* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 10-23.

also authorized the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House to open correspondence with John Augustine Washington II in order to obtain the remains of his ancestor. Clay explained that Martha Washington had consented to the removal, and that it was his opinion that “the unredeemed pledge of Congress should be fulfilled.” He asked the Senate to approve the measure and sat down to hear the arguments of its opponents.<sup>54</sup>

Virginia Senator Littleton Tazewell, a Jacksonian Democrat and future President pro tempore of the Senate, stood up to challenge Clay’s resolution. Tazewell cited Washington’s wish to be buried at Mount Vernon noting that, “the language quoted... was plain and distinct.” Tazewell reminded those present that the state of Virginia had asked Bushrod Washington in the past for removal and he denied such a request. There was also the issue of separating George and Martha, a dishonorable act, and Tazewell promised he would never “consent to divide them in death.” His most forceful argument came at the end of his rebuttal, branding the resolution a violation of the sovereignty of the state of Virginia, striking the sectional nerves of southern representatives. Washington belonged to Virginia, and those in favor of the measure were seriously mistaken if they thought the state would “consent to the violation of the tomb of her dearest child.” According to Tazewell, only Virginia had a legitimate claim to Washington, and any action to remove his remains would “outrage the feelings of the whole State.” Fellow Virginia Senator John Tyler concurred, hoping that this effort

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<sup>54</sup> *Register of Debates in the U.S. Senate*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton’s Register, 1833), 8, 367-369. The report also included the letter sent to John Marshall and his declining the invitation. Henry Clay and Philemon Thomas to John Marshall, February 9, 1832, *The Papers of John Marshall*, ed. Charles Hobson et al (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 12, 145-146. Marshall declined the invitation because of his health issues in a response dated February 10, 1832; *Republican Star*, 28 February 1832.

would dissipate and that Congress would “Let the great dead sleep the sleep of death” without disturbance.<sup>55</sup>

Maine Senator John Holmes identified the conflict on the Senate floor as “a noble struggle between the State of Virginia and the United States.” Opposition began to coalesce not around party membership but region, as southern senators came to the defense of their Virginian colleagues. Holmes hoped that his counterparts would “remember and strive to imitate [Washington’s] virtues,” and reminded them that it was their duty to fulfill the pledge of the 1799 Congress. Clay then rose to offer his thoughts on Tazewell’s opinions, and while he sympathized with the Senator, he rebuffed all of Tazewell’s arguments. Clay challenged Virginia’s exclusive claim to Washington, arguing that “[n]o such claim had been made,” and even if Virginia maintained such a right, he assured others that Virginia would withdraw it “in behalf of the common country of the whole Union.” He acknowledged that the committee had not mentioned moving Martha’s remains but could certainly accommodate the desire to keep husband and wife together. He hoped that his Virginia colleagues would reconsider their position, and called for a vote on the resolution. The recommendation passed the Senate 29-15, but a closer examination of the vote shows a distinctly sectional split between northern and southern senators, and those who favored a strong central government versus states’ rights.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Register of Debates in the U.S. Senate*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., December 5, 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton’s Register, 1833), 8, 372-373; Norma Lois Peterson, *Littleton Waller Tazewell* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983), 212-213.

<sup>56</sup> *Register of Debates in the U.S. Senate*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton’s Register, 1833), 8, 377-378; *Salem Gazette*, 21 February 1832; *Senate Journal*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Duff Green, 1831), 21, 131. For a clarification of the vote see Appendix A.

*Senate Vote on the Removal of George Washington's Remains, February 13, 1832*

	<u>By Section</u>		<u>By Party</u>			
Senate Votes	Northern/Border	Southern	Senate Votes	Anti- Jackson (AJ)	Jackson (J)	Nullifier (N)
Yeas (29)	25	4	Yeas (29)	25	4	0
Nays (15)	4	11	Nays (15)	4	9	2

Democrat representative Philemon Thomas of Louisiana presented the committee's recommendations to the House of Representatives the same day, and after he finished speaking opened the floor for debate. The Virginia delegation of Jacksonian Democrats vehemently condemned the proposal. William McCoy, who served on the committee, reiterated his objections to both the committee's findings and the very idea of disinterring George Washington. William Gordon seconded that stance, arguing that Virginia first and foremost had the right to Washington's remains. The only way to "cement the Union was to imitate the virtues of Washington; to remove not his body, but, if possible, to transfer his spirit to these Halls." Gordon concluded, "Congress had no right to remove that dust. Washington had given his life to the United States, and Virginia rejoiced to remember it. But his bones belonged to her soil." Richard Coke Jr.

charged Congress with conspiring to violate the wishes of both Washington and the state of Virginia, whose dearest son may have devoted his services “to the common cause of country” but requested his bodily remains stay in his native soil. Virginians believed that they were the true guardians of his memory, and they vowed to defend Washington’s remains.<sup>57</sup>

Representative Henry Dearborn of Massachusetts rose to counter the Virginia delegates, arguing that the United States owed so much more to Washington than his native state. He understood their reluctance, but believed that Washington belonged to all citizens of the nation, and as a result his remains should lay in “common ground, which equally belong to the whole United States.” Edward Everett of Massachusetts, who later became instrumental to the fundraising efforts of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, thought it was a disgrace that the “solemn pledge which was given by the people of America, through their representatives” was still unfinished. He reminded Virginians that while Washington was born a citizen of the colony of Virginia, he “died a citizen of the United States of America,” quoting the first line of Washington’s will. His remains were a national treasure “which every part of this blood-cemented Union has a right to claim its share.” As factions began to form, Georgia Democrat Wiley Thompson offered a solution that might appeal to both sides. He advocated that the United States government purchase Mount Vernon, “an act worthy [of] the magnanimity of the United States.” This would allow both the country and Virginia to possess the contents of the tomb without rewriting the definitive narrative of the memory of Washington.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Register of Debates in the House of Representatives*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton’s Register, 1833), 8, 1782-1785.

<sup>58</sup> *Register of Debates in the House of Representatives*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton’s Register, 1833), 8, 1786-1790; George Washington’s

Led by Nullifier George McDuffie, the South Carolinian contingent rallied to the Virginians' cause, arguing that a removal of a corpse was blasphemous and an insult to both the Washington family and the state of Virginia. Since some politicians previously argued that there was a possibility that the Union might dissolve in the future, it seemed improper, in McDuffie's opinion, that Washington be moved to territory that could become foreign to Virginians. Democrat James Wayne of Georgia disagreed with McDuffie, arguing that, "[t]he remains of Washington belong to this nation, by all those associations which identify him with its existence as a united people—they belong to it." After several more remarks, the resolution was put to a vote, and approved 109-76. Support for the removal was more sectional, but resistance to the resolution was more factional as Jackson Democrats and Nullifiers united under the underlying issue at hand: the encroachment of the federal government on the sovereignty of Virginia.<sup>59</sup>

***House Vote on the Removal of George Washington's Remains, February 13, 1832***

<u>By Section</u>			<u>By Party</u>				
House Votes	Northern/ Border	Southern	House Votes	Anti- Jackson (AJ)	Jackson (J)	Nullifier (N)	Anti- Mason (AM)
Yeas (109)	90	19	Yeas (109)	53	43	0	13

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Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbot (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 480.

<sup>59</sup> *Register of Debates in the House of Representatives*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton's Register, 1833), 8, 1794-1809; *House Journal*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Duff Green, 1831), 25, 340-342. For a clarification of the voting breakdown, see Appendix B.



Nays (76)	33	43	Nays (76)	5	64	4	3
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Representatives agreed that the proposal needed to include the remains of both the first President and the First Lady. They authorized “[t]he President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives...to make application to John A. Washington, of Mount Vernon, and to George W.P. Custis, grandson of Mrs. Washington, for the remains of Martha Washington, to be removed...at the same time with those of her late consort George Washington.” Despite widespread sectional and factional opposition, Congress succeeded in reviving the 1799 resolution to move Washington’s body to the nation’s capital. The centennial offered the federal government the chance to promote unity and a shared historical past, but it also gave way to the possibility that Washington’s memory in the form of his body could be wholly defined as a national hero.<sup>60</sup>

As news traveled from Washington D.C. to Richmond, Virginia state representatives denounced the committee’s plan. Governor John Floyd wrote a scathing letter to the Virginia House of Delegates informing them of the federal government’s intentions. Floyd maintained that “the sacred duty of guarding and honoring” Washington remains belonged solely to Virginia. Another representative, Archibald Bryce, asked the residing delegates to imagine Washington’s “honored bones...in the hands of strangers,” and the indignation of moving “their shrine” to another soil. The only way to stop the motion without violence would be to convince Washington’s heirs to

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<sup>60</sup> *Register of Debates in the House of Representatives*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 14 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton’s Register, 1833), 8, 1811-1813.

decline or convincing Congress to withdraw the action before the anniversary of Washington's birth on February 22.<sup>61</sup>

The Virginia General Assembly appointed fourteen members to draw up a response to the Congressional recommendation. The committee emerged during the afternoon session to read their report to the delegates:

The General Assembly of Virginia, view with painful solitude the efforts now making by the congress of the United States, to remove from Mount Vernon, the remains of George Washington. Connected with Virginia in his life, he should not be separated after death: a native of the state, the companion, friend and commander of our fathers when they poured their mingling blood to seal the charter of our liberties, presented to the first grasp of infant affection in every nursery, consecrated under a growing knowledge of his character and deeds in the more ardent sympathies of our youth and our manhood, revered in our memories with the images of our fathers, the tomb that enshrines him is sacred to Virginia. It is more especially sacred as the spot of final repose selected by the dying patriot himself. In the name of the good people of this commonwealth, we solemnly protest against the contemplated removal of his remains from our territory.<sup>62</sup>

Passing this unanimous resolution, the Virginia legislature firmly professed its opposition. Congress, Vice-President John C. Calhoun, Supreme Court Justice John Marshall, and Washington's family all received copies of this declaration, referred to as the "Virginia Manifesto" by the *Rhode Island American*, along with copies of Floyd's letter. Washington's descendants found themselves in a rather precarious position

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<sup>61</sup> *Richmond Enquirer*, 18 February 1832; Charles Pinnegar, *Virginia and State Rights, 1750-1861: The Genesis of a Doctrine* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2009), 210-215; *Salem Gazette*, 28 February 1832, reprint of *Boston Centinel*; *Connecticut Courant*, 28 February 1832; *Newport Mercury*, 3 March 1832.

<sup>62</sup> *The Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1831-2*, 17 February 1832 (Richmond: Thomas Ritchie, Printer of the Commonwealth, 1831), 163.

between two political authorities that both believed Washington wholly belonged to them.<sup>63</sup>

John Augustine Washington Jr., the nephew of Bushrod Washington, had inherited the estate and tomb in 1829 from his deceased uncle. He was a member of the Virginia gentry, and owned a substantial number of slaves, most of whom resided at Blakeley plantation in Jefferson County. John Augustine enjoyed a rather quiet life on his estates, but the centennial and its resolution brought him into the national spotlight. By taking possession of Mount Vernon, the bodies of all deceased Washington family members also became his property, and therefore he had the ultimate say in whether Washington's body could be moved. On February 15, 1832, John Augustine penned his response to the President of the Senate John C. Calhoun and Speaker of the House Andrew Stevenson, thanking them for such a grand gesture of respect for his uncle. He decided, however, to deny the request on the grounds that "his [Washington's] will, in

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<sup>63</sup> *Richmond Enquirer*, 21 February 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, 18 February 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, 21 February 1832; John Floyd to John C. Calhoun, February 20, 1832, *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, ed. Clyde N. Wilson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 9, 556; *Pittsfield Sun*, 1 March 1832; *Rhode Island American*, 2 March 1832; *Eastern Argus*, 2 March 1832; *Republican Star*, 6 March 1832; *Register of Debates in the House of Representatives*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 25 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton's Register, 1833), 8, 1857; *Senate Journal*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 24 February 1832 (Washington DC: Duff Green, 1831), 21, 150-151; *House Journal*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 24 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Duff Green, 1831), 25, 404-405. The unanimous support opposing the federal government's involvement is intriguing, as Virginia's recent 1830 constitution did little to appease the tensions between landless or small landowning whites in western Virginia and the entrenched elite of the east. While some requirements of suffrage were lifted, most white West Virginians rejected the compromised constitution of 1830. See Alison Freehling, *Drift Towards Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); John Floyd to John Marshall, February 20, 1832, *The Papers of John Marshall*, ed. Charles Hobson et al (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 12, 148-149. Floyd hoped that Marshall would use his influence to ensure that Washington's body stayed in Virginia. Marshall had already declined speaking at the centennial, and he informed Floyd that he would not involve himself since he "always thought that our Government has too long delayed to give [the resolution] effect." See John Marshall to John Floyd, February 23, 1832, *The Papers of John Marshall*, ed. Charles Hobson et al (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 12, 149.

respect to the disposition of his remains, has been recently carried into full effect, and now they repose in perfect tranquility, surrounded by those of other endeared members of the family.” While Martha Washington’s grandson George Washington Parke Custis gave his “most hearty consent to the removal of the remains,” his support mattered little in terms of moving the bodies. As Martha’s oldest living relative, he was asked more out of courtesy than anything else. But as the owner of Mount Vernon, it was ultimately John Augustine’s decision, and he followed the precedent set by his uncle Bushrod in 1816.<sup>64</sup>

Virginian and southern responses proclaimed victory through state and regional solidarity. The *Richmond Enquirer* reprinted the replies of John Augustine Washington II, the Virginia General Assembly and Senate, and Governor Floyd several times, reiterating the success of the resistance. The General Assembly recorded the following: “The recent decision of John A. Washington...is approved by every Virginian. It is the duty of Virginia to guard and protect the sacred remains of the father of his country.” North Carolina Senator and Jacksonian Democrat William Mangum rejoiced in the rejection writing, “I cannot well describe my feelings on the occasion.” More disturbing was Mangum’s confession that “many gentlemen wrote immediately to the Governor of Virginia wishing him to prevent it, if he had to march his militia and do it by force.” Another newspaper columnist chided, “[n]othing would be easier than for Gov. Floyd to

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<sup>64</sup> *Register of Debates in the House of Representatives*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 16 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Gales & Seaton’s Register, 1833), 8, 1819-20; *Pittsfield Sun*, 23 February 1832; *Rhode Island American*, 24 February 1832; *Newport Mercury*, 25 February 1832; *Connecticut Courant*, 28 February 1832; *New Hampshire Gazette*, 28 February 1832; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 2 March 1832; John Augustine Washington also wrote to Lawrence Lewis, Washington’s nephew by marriage and the executor who carried out Washington’s wish to build a new tomb to ask his opinion on the removal. John Augustine shares his idea and eventual decision, but Lewis’ reply is lost. See John Augustine Washington to Lawrence Lewis, February 14, 1832, Fred W. Smith Library.

call out the militia of the neighborhood and...repel this flagrant invasion of the rights of the State by the General Government.” While no such means were necessary, this statement does illuminate how Virginians and southerners perceived this proposal as a serious threat to their sovereignty.<sup>65</sup>

Political commentators varied in their opinions of John Augustine Washington’s decision. One contributor for the *Salem Gazette* applauded his refusal, as it was a sign of “good taste and judgment” to protect the remains of Washington “from the profane hands of body-snatchers.” A columnist for the *New Hampshire Gazette* noted that “A great majority of the delegation of Virginia were decidedly opposed to the resolutions, and we think with good reason. For ourselves, we decidedly disapprove of it” and favored the idea that “the United States ought to purchase Mount Vernon” instead. A correspondent for the *National Intelligencer* believed that the “majority of our readers” would be filled “with sincere regret” because of the refusal, and while the newspaper approved “much more the spirit in which Mr. Custis met the offer of Congress,” they still respected John Augustine’s scruples, hoping that “Congress will purchase Mount Vernon, and there honor the memory of the great and good, whose ashes there repose.” Reactions in the press were similar to those in Congress, as they reflected a wide mixture of sentiments

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<sup>65</sup> *The Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1831-2*, 21 February 1832 (Richmond: Thomas Ritchie, Printer of the Commonwealth, 1831), 172; *New York Mercury*, 29 February 1832; Willie P. Mangum to Charity A. Mangum, February 18, 1832, box 3, Personal Papers, *The Willie Person Mangum Papers*, Library of Congress; *Richmond Enquirer*, 18 February 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, 21 February; *Richmond Enquirer*, 24 February 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, 1 March 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, 2 September 1831; John Floyd to John C. Calhoun, January 2, 1832, *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, ed. Clyde N. Wilson (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 536; *Rhode Island American*, 28 February 1832; *Vermont Gazette*, 29 February 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, 3 March 1832.

over the proper means to honor George Washington and the perceived overextension of federal authority.<sup>66</sup>

Washington's centennial birthday, celebrated across the country with dances, orations, and parades, came and went without incident. Revolutionary veterans, politicians, fraternal organizations, women, and children participated in the public rituals of devotion in their own ways. While Congress failed to claim Washington's remains for the day, they did attend festivities for Washington. In the Capitol, former President John Quincy Adams attended a ceremony for Washington, brooding over John Augustine's refusal: "I wish that this resolution might have been carried into execution, but this wish was connected with an imagination that this federative Union was to last for ages." While his prediction was rather haunting, many did not associate the occasion with the collapse of the Union; in fact, the day was wrought with expressions of patriotism and love for Washington, the national symbol.<sup>67</sup>

In Virginia the celebrations were similar to those in other states, but several weeks later representatives in the House of Delegates took their devotion to another level. A bill was introduced for the erection of a monument over Washington's sarcophagus, in order to "protect the remains of Washington on the soil of Virginia." An added amendment to the bill called for the construction of a wall around the tomb to prevent intrusion or removal of the hero. Nonetheless delegates disagreed over the original purposes of the monument fund and that a wall was a waste of that money; the act was eventually

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<sup>66</sup> *Salem Gazette*, 21 February 1832; *Connecticut Courant*, 21 February 1832; *New Hampshire Gazette*, 21 February 1832; *National Intelligencer*, 17 February 1832, reprint *Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, 25 February 1832; *The Farmer's Cabinet*, 25 February 1832.

<sup>67</sup> *New England Magazine*, April 1832; *The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams, (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 8, 473.

rejected 40-60. Nelly Custis, the wife of Lawrence Lewis and granddaughter of Martha Washington, confided in her friend Elizabeth Gibson, “I am ashamed in Virginia. She is too pompous, too parading, too full of words rather than deeds—she demands that the “remains” should not be removed from the State, and denies anything like a shelter or security for them.” While the actual decision was beyond their control, Virginian representatives appeared to succeed in ensuring the body of Washington stayed within the jurisdiction of the state. This conflict over the remains became intertwined with the ongoing sectional crisis, and groups asserted ownership of Washington by employing polarizing rhetoric. Once John Augustine Washington Jr. refused, the national government ceased its pursuit of Washington’s body, and representatives turned their attention back towards the tariff.<sup>68</sup>

A modification of the tariff in late 1832 lessened the tax burden on southern states but South Carolina rejected the compromise, declaring nullification of the federal law justified by the sovereignty of their state. With Congressional support of the Force Bill, President Andrew Jackson vowed to use military force to enforce the law, but the fear of insurrection and violence prompted representatives to further adjust the tariff in the South’s favor. In March 1833 Henry Clay and John Calhoun engineered the passing of the amended tariff, which gave South Carolina enough incentive to withdraw its claim of nullification. While the crisis was averted, these battle lines never truly receded. The Force Bill convinced many southerners that the federal government was not only hostile to their interests but also willing to use violence to assert its authority over the states.

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<sup>68</sup> *Richmond Enquirer*, 3 March 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, 6 March 1832; *The Episcopal Watchman*, 6 March 1832; 5,43; *Richmond Enquirer*, 10 March 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, 13 March 1832; Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis to Elizabeth Gibson, March 19, 1832, *Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis Manuscripts*, Fred W. Smith Library.

Disagreements over constitutional authority were fundamental to American political discourse, but the threat of war became very real for Americans in 1832-3. As sectionalism continued to grow and evolve, compromise became the best political strategy to ensure the survival of the Union. No grand agreement, however, was ever struck in regards to the memory of George Washington.<sup>69</sup>

The failures of these governments and organizations to secure Washington's remains reinforced the idea that Washington belonged to the American people. By denying the federal government and the state of Virginia the right to Washington's body, along with the proposed Masonic monument over his grave, his family fostered the growing relationship between Washington and the people. The decision to keep his remains at Mount Vernon transformed the site from a private estate into a public space. Travelers often labeled it as a national shrine, and much like Washington's body, they believed that it too belonged to the nation. Since Washington's family ensured that he stayed at Mount Vernon, governments interested in acquiring his body and memory would now have to purchase the property. This became the next strategy for the federal government and the state of Virginia, a struggle that lasted well into the 1850s until a private organization of women bested both of them. These debates over the right to possess Washington reveal the growing belief that all states and citizens had the right to claim his memory for themselves. As the growth of democracy transcended local and national politics in the 1820s, and as the last members of the revolutionary generation

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<sup>69</sup> Varon, *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859*, 89-91; Knupfer, *The Union As Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861*, 102-118; Robert Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 396-397, 433-435; John Niven, *John C. Calhoun and the Price of Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 179-199.



disappeared, Americans competed for control of the Revolution's spirit through the body of its most prominent figure.

## Chapter 2

### There's Money in Old George's Bones:

#### John Augustine Washington III and the Advent of Historical Tourism

There is a report that Mr. John A. Washington designs to remove the remains of the "Father of his Country" from Mount Vernon, previous to the transfer of the property to the ladies of the Mount Vernon Association. We are prepared for any manifestation of meanness upon the part of that individual. After the cane speculation, and the exorbitant demands he has made upon a patriotic association, we are ready to believe that he would even sell the bones of his illustrious ancestor to some curious anatomist. The chief object of the proposed purchase is to secure the tomb of Washington from injury. Mount Vernon is of little interest to the Association without it.

-*Charleston Mercury*, August 2, 1858

Even after he agreed to sell Mount Vernon to a historical preservation organization, newspaper editors and columnists criticized Mount Vernon's last private owner John Augustine Washington III. This particular commentator in the *Charleston Mercury* questioned his motives, mentioning his "cane speculation" with Mr. James Crutchett to mass-produce George Washington memorabilia, and his "exorbitant demands," referencing his recently doubled asking price for the Mount Vernon estate. John Augustine certainly benefitted from George Washington's possessions and name, but most importantly he profited from the latter's cherished place in the heart of Americans. Another columnist identified John Augustine as a man who conspired to profit from his great-grand uncle's memory. The writer encouraged John Augustine to "[s]top rattling these bones in public, figuratively speaking, lest they turn over in their very coffin through immortal indignation." The author then called upon Americans to pay the requested \$200,000 for Mount Vernon to "relieve the necessities of Mr.

Washington, and protect the memory of his revolutionary ancestor.” With such insinuations circulating, it seemed reasonable to believe that John Augustine might just sell George Washington’s remains to the highest bidder right out from under the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association.<sup>1</sup>

While no such “designs” ever existed, these rumors reveal the tensions between memory, democracy, and the advent of American capitalism. These intersections, forged by the market and transportation revolutions, produced a new American historical tourism that not only made the past more accessible to Americans but also increasingly allowed individuals to profit directly from the memory of George Washington. The growth and development of capitalism in the nineteenth century drove the tourism industry and fostered passionate discourse over the ownership of the American past. Americans were willing to pay for excursions and souvenirs because it connected them to a collective and glorified history, and savvy entrepreneurs exploited these patriotic compulsions. Their financial successes demonstrated that, if done properly, American history could be marketed, packaged, and sold to citizen consumers.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter explores how Mount Vernon became one of America’s favorite nineteenth-century tourist destinations. As demand grew for such excursions, businesses and entrepreneurs capitalized on opportunities to benefit from the memory of Washington. While the Washington family initially resisted taking part in expeditions and the creation of material mementoes, the last proprietor of Mount Vernon, John

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<sup>1</sup> *Charleston Mercury*, 2 August 1858; *Douglass’ Monthly*, February 1859.

<sup>2</sup> *Charleston Mercury*, 2 August 1858, reprint of *Philadelphia Journal; Weekly Patriot and Union*, 5 August 1858; *Douglass’ Monthly*, February 1859; George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1951); John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 7-11.

Augustine Washington III, embraced them in several ways. He negotiated with the Washington and Alexandria Steamboat Company to allow it to land passengers directly at Mount Vernon; he invested in internal improvement projects to bring more tourists to Alexandria and Mount Vernon; and he sold timber directly from the estate for a Washington-inspired memorabilia business in Washington D.C. Travelers insisted on seeing Washington's tomb, so much so that Washington's remains became one of the most valuable possessions that John Augustine owned. The attempted theft of Washington's body in 1830 spurred calls for new tomb construction or moving it to the national capital, but even these debates mentioned the monetary value of Washington's remains, a reflection of how capitalism continuously shaped American values. In addition, the transportation revolution—the shift from small, private means of passage to larger public conveyances such as omnibuses, steamboats, and railroads—transformed all facets of American life. It also allowed more people to experience Washington's tomb than ever before, furthering the notion that Washington belonged to all Americans. As the estate crumbled into disrepair, visitors clamored for government intervention to save Mount Vernon and prevent the monopolization and exploitation of the memory of George Washington.

Historians continue to debate the origins and relationship between American democracy and capitalism in the nineteenth century. Traditional studies argue that capitalism and democracy worked in a complimentary fashion, creating a more egalitarian society and competitive markets that benefited the individual. Charles Sellers' *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* challenged these interpretations, arguing that tensions between market and democratic forces solidified

class identities and imposed a new economic hierarchy on American society. While Andrew Jackson's presidency sought to reclaim capitalism for the common man, the emerging bourgeoisie class seized control of the government and the markets, and in doing so levied their capitalist vision on the American economy and westward expansion.<sup>3</sup>

While Sellars' provocative thesis asked new questions about the emergence of capitalism in America, some scholars questioned his conclusions. Historian Daniel Walker Howe argued the opposite, maintaining that capitalism did not necessarily infringe upon democracy, but in fact enhanced its effectiveness. Universal white male suffrage forced those in political power to reconsider their positions, as elections offered male voters a form of reprisal for a representative who refused to listen to their concerns. John Lauritz Larson disagreed with Sellars' contention that Jackson Democrats lost the fight with the market but won the battle for political democracy. Larson argued that neither Whigs nor Democrats truly wanted a return to classical republicanism, as Jackson Democrats preferred laissez-faire capitalism, and Whigs government-supported economic development for the collective good. In short, Jacksonians won on both fronts,

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<sup>3</sup> Historians of the Progressive School maintained that although small landowners, laborers, and artisans resisted the shift to a capitalist economy, they were relatively powerless to fight these greater economic changes. See Carl Becker, *History of the Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1909); Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1913); Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1927); later revisionist historians challenged these interpretations by arguing that capitalist designs were present before the American Revolution. See Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Alfred Knopf Inc., 1948); Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World Inc., 1955); Charles Sellars, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 5-33.

encouraging the growth of mass political parties and free enterprise throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars on both sides of this debate agree that after the War of 1812 there were major transformations of personal relationships, community ties, and economic networks. Americans became more fixated on the opening of markets, material consumption, and facilitating economic development at both local and national levels. In the past, an individual's economic choices rested heavily on their position in society, geographic location, and web of interpersonal networks. After the war more Americans were preoccupied with commerce as a means to ascend the social ladder. These desires eclipsed many traditional cultural norms and redefined individual and collective economic decisions. While America's capitalist transition was felt differently in various regions, cities, and communities, aspirations for prosperity—economic, political, and social—came to the forefront of the American collective consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

Historian Paul Gilje identified the early Republic as fundamental for the development of modern capitalism. While historians have often restricted themselves by their own definitions of capitalism, Gilje argued that the creation of the American banking system, the growth of corporations as tools of capital investment, technological advances in transportation, the expansion into the American West, and changes in domestic modes of production all fostered a nascent form of capitalism after the

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 849-850; John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America: Liberty, Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); John Lauritz Larson, "The Market Revolution in Early America: An Introduction," *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 3, (May: 2005): 4-7.

<sup>5</sup> Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 46 no. 1 (January 1989): 120-144; Michael Merrill, "Putting 'Capitalism' in Its Place: A Review of Recent Literature," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52 no. 2 (April, 1995): 315-326.

American Revolution. These characteristics, however, leave out the most important signifier of a capitalist society—the public’s general attitude towards commerce and consumption. Gilje contended that the Revolution shifted how Americans conceptualized the individual’s relationship to the political state, and over time, these ideas spread beyond politics and reshaped societal hierarchies and economic relationships. By 1848 capitalism had reshaped the social, political, religious, and economic landscapes of America, and while these changes influenced the present and future concerns of citizens, producers, and consumers, they also transformed the imagined bonds to the past.<sup>6</sup>

While many historians previously organized Federalists and Democratic-Republicans into two opposing polarities based on their economic policies, historian Joyce Appleby challenged this interpretation, arguing that Thomas Jefferson and his supporters were not enemies of capitalism but in fact promoters of it. By adhering to a

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Gilje, “The Rise of Capitalism in the Early Republic,” *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early Republic*, ed. Paul Gilje (Madison, WI: Madison House Publishers, 1997), 1-12. Other historians have questioned Sellars’ use of the word “Revolution,” arguing that gradual changes led to the shifting of economic interests and means of production. See *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); others have criticized the lack of cultural analysis, arguing that American consumption and production was first and foremost defined by various facets of culture—family, community, language, ethnicity, gender, race and the arts—instead of economic markets. See *Cultural Change in the Market Revolution in America, 1789-1860*, ed. Scott C. Martin (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005). As the historiography has expanded, so too have opinions on exactly what constitutes capitalist or non-capitalist behaviors and decisions. There have been hundreds of microhistories that have offered different conclusions on how middling Americans navigated these economic waters. See Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Allan Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992); Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995); for a better understanding of how political thought transformed commercialism and the growth of liberalism, see Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992), 360-365; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983), 5-6, 37-65.

new form of liberal republicanism, Democratic-Republicans became vocal proponents of commerce, individualism, and greater opportunity for all Americans. Jefferson envisioned the American economy “as a natural and orderly system invisibly producing social harmony,” a belief that challenged Federalist ideology that economic policies were best left to political elites and the national government. As more Americans gravitated towards Democratic-Republican ideology, ordinary men and women formed political clubs, attended demonstrations, filled newspaper columns, and eventually elected Jefferson to the Presidency. Jefferson’s message of liberal individualism resonated with the masses, and by electing him President the people empowered the Democratic-Republican vision “of a social order of free and independent men.” This concept of “classlessness” fused with the economic changes of the 1790s, as economic and political participation went hand in hand. As capitalism flourished under Democratic-Republicans, consumers and producers operated under the notion that individual opportunity and national prosperity were conceptually intertwined. This individualism also filtered into discussions of the American past, as Americans laid claim to the Revolution, its heroes, and its myths.<sup>7</sup>

In the first half of the nineteenth century, destination travelers were typically wealthy northerners, members of the southern planter class, or individuals seeking some form of health or spiritual healing. Thomas Chambers’ study of mineral springs resorts in western Virginia and Saratoga Springs, New York found that these locations were filled with peoples of different backgrounds and sectional loyalties, all vying for membership in a mid-nineteenth century leisurely elite class. Jon Sterngass expanded on

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<sup>7</sup> Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s*, 95, 104.



these findings by including Newport and Coney Island, arguing that after the Civil War more Americans were drawn to resort towns as part of a larger cultural shift in American society, one that valued holiday and public recreation over work and domestic privacy. Catherine Cocks' examination of urban tourism at the turn of the twentieth century contended that American tastes were once again changing, opting for new experiences in cities that offered exclusivity in restaurants, museums, entertainment, and local landmarks. Hotels and railroads democratized leisure space, offering more tourists the means to visit urban places and develop new social relations within a cosmopolitan environment. While the field in tourism studies continues to grow, most historians agree that such drastic changes in individual and popular consumption were the result of the market economy, class-consciousness, the commercialization of vacation, and the fluid construction of an American identity over the course of the nineteenth century. Elites were certainly the first to exercise the right to visit Mount Vernon, but as transportation improved, more middling Americans found themselves journeying to George Washington's tomb. The growing fascination with Washington also created a new market for historical trinkets, compelling businesses to target the hearts of patriotic Americans while simultaneously emptying their pockets.<sup>8</sup>

In the immediate years after Washington's death, most travelers to Mount Vernon were social and economic elites. These citizens could afford the trip because of their

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<sup>8</sup> Cindy Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 32-33; Thomas Chambers, *Drinking the Waters: Creating an American Leisure Class at Nineteenth-Century Mineral Springs* (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution, 2000), xiii-xxi; Jon Sterngass, *First Resorts: Pursuing Pleasure at Saratoga Springs, Newport & Coney Island* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 1-6; Charlene Boyer Lewis, *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 2-8, 45-48, 73-76.

affluence and leisure time, and they typically relied on expensive horse-drawn carriages to reach Mount Vernon. Dr. William Thornton traveled by carriage with his wife and peers from Washington D.C. to Mount Vernon in August 1800. After rising early and preparing for the journey, this group had some difficulty with one of their horses, as it ran “with such violence that it broke the pole and swingletree.” After fixing the broken parts, the group set out again at “about eleven O’clock,” and reached Mount Vernon at “about two O’clock.” The Thorntons, friends of the Washingtons, stayed with Martha Washington for five nights, departing on Wednesday, August 6 after breakfast, and they “got to town about 1 O’clock.” While the Thorntons’ half-day travel time was exceptional, many of these trips took longer depending on the time of year, weather, and road conditions.<sup>9</sup>

Family friends, political associates, and distinguished foreign guests who visited Mount Vernon received similar hospitality. If Martha Washington invited you to Mount Vernon, republican etiquette required a visit. “I return’d from Mount Vernon where at the pressing invitation of Mrs. Washington I had been to pass a couple of days,” wrote First Lady Abigail Adams. On this particular visit Abigail brought a small entourage of friends and divided the trip over two days. She stayed in Alexandria “where [she] past one night, and the next day reached Mount Vernon.” The roads were particularly bad that December, but Adams and her acquaintances were not deterred from visiting

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<sup>9</sup> *The Diary of Mrs. Anna Thornton*, August 2-6, 1800 (Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington D.C., 1907), 10, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; James Hillhouse to Rebecca Hillhouse, January 4, 1800, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; Thornton and Washington shared a friendship that dated back to the early 1790s. In addition to designing the Capitol and building some of Washington’s homes in the Federal City, Thornton also designed Woodlawn, the plantation home of Nelly Parke Custis, Martha’s granddaughter, and her husband Lawrence Lewis. See George W. Paulson, *William Thornton, M.D. Gentleman of the Enlightenment* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), 147-148.

Washington's widow. After conversing with her, Abigail described Martha as "distressed" over her husband's wishes to free his slaves upon her death, as "she did not feel as tho her Life was safe in their [the slaves'] Hands, many of whom would be told that it was there [sic] interest to get rid of her." This stipulation in George's will terrified Martha and she feared that his slaves might attempt to kill her to expedite their freedom. Her generosity with guests stemmed from her own benevolence and maintaining the aura of her husband's public service, but the presence of visitors also gave Martha some peace of mind.<sup>10</sup>

Like many of his Federalist colleagues, Connecticut representative Roger Griswold felt compelled to pay homage to the Father of His Country and his party's symbolic figurehead. "We dined with the Widow of General Washington—we were received by this venerable Lady with the most friendly attention, and I believe she felt sincerely gratified with a visit," Griswold wrote to his wife Fanny. "We viewed the tomb, which contained the bones of the great man...I have seen all that is important in the City of Washington, & its vicinity, and I assure your that I am perfectly satisfied." In January 1802 Massachusetts congressman Manasseh Cutler also made the journey. He took the "ferry boat and lodged at Gadsby's Hotel" in Alexandria for the night. Cutler arranged for two coaches "to be ready at 6 in the morning" so his party would arrive by 8 o'clock for breakfast with Martha. Not only were the coaches late, but the "road proved amazingly bad, and our horses still worse." Cutler and his party did not arrive at Mount

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<sup>10</sup> *Centinel of Liberty*, 10 June 1800; *Philadelphia Gazette*, 13 June 1800; *The Maryland Herald*, 19 June 1800; Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, December 21, 1800, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; George Washington's Last Will and Testament, 9 July 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. William Abbot et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 480. Washington's will stipulated that all slaves owned in his own right would be freed upon Martha's death. While a noble gesture, it also put Martha's life at risk, as Washington's slaves were not nearly as benevolent as he believed.

Vernon “until after 10,” an eight-mile journey that took over three hours to complete. Martha appeared very grateful for the visit, so much so that she was “pressing in her invitation to make her another visit before the close of the session.” Considering the political climate after the elections of 1800, Mount Vernon gave Federalists some momentary sanctuary from the political present.<sup>11</sup>

While many travelers thought they could find their own way to Mount Vernon, the Virginia countryside made this task nearly impossible. In January 1801, Sally Foster Otis, accompanied by “Mr. Mason, Bayard, Francis, Mr. A Betsy” in two coaches, stopped in Alexandria for the evening and joined the company of “Soderstrom, Thornton, Morton...who were embarked in the same expedition.” The enlarged party knew that Mrs. Washington only had “ten spare beds,” so they spent the night in Alexandria and planned to leave early in the morning for Mount Vernon. At nine o’clock they departed and after the “first mile out of the city lost [their] way.” Even once they passed the entrance gate, they were “twice led astray” by the winding paths and dense woods of the vast Washington property. “A lad” informed the group that they were actually heading towards the Dogue Run Mill, but there was a road to the House, “a very bad one,” that could bring Otis and her companions to their desired destination. They spent the night with Martha and enjoyed her company the next day until it was time to leave. At least this time, the carriage drivers knew the route back to Alexandria, and the parties returned late that evening.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Roger Griswold to Fanny Griswold, December 1, 1800, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; *The Diary of Manasseh Cutler*, January 1-2, 1802, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL.

<sup>12</sup> Sally Foster Otis to Mrs. Charles W. Apthorp, January 13, 1801, Massachusetts Historical Society, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; \$10

Early visitors to Mount Vernon typically divided the journey up over twenty-four hours, stopping in Alexandria to eat and rest before finishing their travels the next day. Many accounts specifically mention spending the night at Gadsby's Tavern, a local Alexandria establishment leased and managed by an Englishman named John Gadsby. The tavern and hotel attracted many prominent guests over the years, including John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and George Washington. Washington attended the last two public celebrations of his birthday at Gadsby's, and was even invited to a dancing ball in November 1799, but he declined because his and Martha's "dancing days" were "no more." Gadsby's offered accommodations and dining to its guests and was often used as a venue for commemorative dinners, dances, and meetings for prominent citizens of Alexandria. It also became the resort of choice for wealthy Mount Vernon travelers. One carriage company began offering a daily "accommodation coachee" service that left "Mr. Gadsby's city tavern every morning at half past 4 o'clock for Baltimore, to accommodate our Alexandria friends." Its sister carriage left "Mr. Evan's Indian queen at 6 o'clock" in Baltimore and arrived in Alexandria the same evening, bringing more potential Mount Vernon visitors from as far away as Maryland.<sup>13</sup>

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for a coach in 1801 would be the approximate equivalent of six to eight weeks of wages for a laborer.

<sup>13</sup> George Washington to the Alexandria General Assemblies Managers, November 12, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbot (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 402-403; *Alexandria Times*, 30 January 1800; *Alexandria Times*, 13 June 1800; *Philadelphia Gazette*, 16 June 1800; *The Bee*, 1 April 1801; *Alexandria Times*, 6 July 1802; *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, 25 November 1803; *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, 2 December 1807; Judy Colbert, *Virginia Off the Beaten Path* (Kearney, NE: Morris Publishing LLC, 2012), 12; Debbie Nunley, Karen Jane Elliott, *A Taste of Virginia History: A Guide to Historic Eateries and Their Recipes* (Winston, NC: John F. Blair, Publisher, 2004), 19; A "coachee" is the American version of a traditional coach but longer and with an open front for the driver. See Thomas Kinney, *The Carriage Trade: Making Horse-Drawn Vehicles in America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004). In April 1800, John Gadsby sent Martha

Evan's Indian Queen Hotel sat at the southeast corner of Hanover and Baltimore Streets. This tavern became the primary location for mail stagecoaches and accommodation coaches in Baltimore, and by May 1800 an agreement was struck between three proprietors: William Evans of the Indian Queen, Charles McLaughlin of City Tavern in George-Town, and John Wise (owner of Gadsby's) in Alexandria. These proprietors agreed to provide transportation for the citizens of Baltimore, Washington D.C., and Alexandria, and used their businesses as rendezvous points. The coaches left the Indian Queen every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, and Gadsby's Tavern every Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday. These journeys left at six in the morning and promised to arrive by 6 in the evening. The fare was not cheap—four dollars per passenger, and “all baggage to be at the risk of the owners.” William Evans had come into possession of the Indian Queen in 1796 and ran it until his death on June 28, 1807. In October 1808, Gadsby, the man who ran Wise's tavern in Alexandria, took out an advertisement to sell his lease. He mentioned the quality of the establishment, its abundant guests, and “the two lines of states between George Town and Alexandria,” all to entice someone to buy him out of his contract. Gadsby planned to leave Alexandria and take over the Indian Queen Hotel in Baltimore, which in his estimation was a more profitable venture. But this line brought more visitors to Alexandria, and their desire to visit Mount Vernon drove business for local coach drivers.<sup>14</sup>

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Washington a receipt for beef procured for Mount Vernon, suggesting that there was a relationship of exchange between the tavern owner and the Washington family. See John Gadsby to Martha Washington, April 18, 1800, *Martha Washington Letters*, box 2, Fred W. Smith Library; Gretchen Sullivan Sorin and Ellen Kirven Donald, *Gadsby's Tavern Museum: Historic Furnishing Plan* (Alexandria: City of Alexandria Publishing, 1980), 74-75.

<sup>14</sup> *Federal Gazette*, 3 May 1800; *Federal Gazette*, 19 May 1800; *Federal Gazette* 24, May 1800; *Federal Gazette* 4 June 1800; *Federal Gazette* 11 June 1800; *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 1 July 1807; *Alexandria Gazette*, 15 September 1808; John Thomas Scharf,

Similar lines sprung up in the national capital, as carriage drivers labored to meet customer demand for comfortable travel to Mount Vernon. John Pintard, an American Revolutionary War veteran and merchant, set out for Mount Vernon on July 30, 1801. He “hired a coachee for \$10 & to defray all charges to go to Mt. Vernon,” leaving Washington at noon and arriving in Alexandria in time for dinner. Him and a “Mr. Allyn” stayed at Gadsby’s Tavern, and set out in the morning for Mount Vernon. “About half way you leave the postroad & turn to the left. 3 miles from the Mansion you enter the domains of the immortal Washington,” he wrote. Martha welcomed these gentlemen, and they later enjoyed dinner and conversation with the extended Washington kin, including the future owner of Mount Vernon, Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington. As Martha’s health began to fail, she could no longer accommodate guests and share stories like she once did. Cornelia Lee noted in March 1802, “[t]he poor old Lady looks badly and has a wretched cold. I fear she will not be long here.” Martha’s inability to entertain guests did not stop visitors from trying to obtain a private audience with her. During the visit of Thomas Pim Cope he found Martha “confined to her bed & from the account given of her by Doctor Craik, the family physician, has not many days to survive.” While Martha’s illness prevented Cope from speaking with her, he fixed his attention on the “venerable physician” who “was with the General in his dying moments.” Death ended Martha’s obligations to the public in 1801, but visitors simply

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*History of Baltimore City and County, from the Earliest Period to the Present Day* (Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 514; \$4 fare seems to only cover passengers for one-way transportation, so round trip would have been \$8. This expense would have been weeks if not months of work for a nineteenth-century laborer; Sorin and Donald, *Gadsby’s Tavern Museum: Historic Furnishing Plan*, 74-81; William Seale, *A Guide to Historic Alexandria* (Alexandria: City of Alexandria 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 2000), 34-35.

assumed that the Washington family would continue to open their doors to curious travelers.<sup>15</sup>

Bushrod Washington's social graces and hospitality did not extend nearly as far as Martha's. Unlike his famous uncle and aunt, he was not bound by the republican etiquette that previously opened Mount Vernon's doors to all. He requested formal letters of introduction upon arrival to determine who was worthy of entry to the mansion. General James Taylor of Newport, Kentucky visited Mount Vernon in the spring of 1805. A friend told him ahead of time to give Bushrod a "letter of introduction" upon his arrival. Bushrod read his letter and invited Taylor to spend the night at his home, even taking him into the family vault so Taylor could see the coffin of General George Washington. In 1805, Sir Augustus John Foster, Secretary of the British Legation, visited Mount Vernon on an invitation from "the worthy Judge, nephew of General Washington." While Bushrod often required a letter of introduction for admittance to his home, he sometimes let strangers in out of sympathy. Traveling in December 1808, Edward Hooker decided to stop at Mount Vernon without a letter or any acquaintance "to Judge Washington." Bushrod welcomed the tutor out of the cold, offered him dinner and drink, and "behaved very prettily and very genteelly" towards Hooker. Bushrod's patience with strangers, along with his funds for entertaining, soon dissipated and forced

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<sup>15</sup> *Diary of John Pintard*, July 29-31, 1801, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library. Pintard's trip from Washington to Alexandria, about eight miles, took six hours or so. They then left early the next day to finish the seven miles between Alexandria and Mount Vernon, another example of how time-consuming these trips could be. Pintard had previously procured wine for General Washington. See Tobias Lear to John Pintard, November 20, 1799, Manuscript Collection, FWSL; for more on John Pintard, see Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 49-50; Cornelia Lee to Mrs. Elizabeth Lee, March 14, 1802, *Eliza Collins Lee Collection*, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; *The Diary of Thomas Pim Cope 1800-1851*, May 20, 1802, ed. Eliza Cope Harrison (South Bend, IN: Gateway Editions, 1978), 111, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL.



him to be more judicious with his hospitality. His own perceptions of social respectability and class differentiation also helped him decide whether or not to entertain guests.<sup>16</sup>

Bushrod began to limit visits to those who either knew him or the family, individuals who were significant to national or international politics, and the Judge's circle of associates. By regulating the flow of travelers, Bushrod made the experience a more exclusive privilege for respectable members of society. He did this both by formal invitation but also by using his own coaches to transport guests from Alexandria to Mount Vernon. In 1809 Bushrod invited Horace Binney, a lawyer and future Pennsylvanian congressman, to join him on the Sabbath along with "six or eight of the Bench & Bar." On Saturday this party traveled to Alexandria and spent the night in the city. "On Sunday the Judge's Coach & four [horses] came for us," Binney wrote, and "[t]he Coach looked as if it might have been an heirloom of the Estate, antique, capacious, and showy." The carriage featured "[a] black Coachman, with rather incomplete garments, a shabby hat, and his feet wrapped up in a piece of old green braise," and he "held the reins of four of the most raw-boned & ill groomed horses" Binney had ever seen. After about a mile, it was obvious the horses could not handle the extra weight, and some of Binney's "party got out, & footed it to Alexandria for another outfit." Binney's coach then got stuck in the mud, but eventually all members of the

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<sup>16</sup> *The Narrative of General James Taylor*, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A Fred W. Smith Library; Sir Augustus John Foster, *Jeffersonian America Notes on the United States of America Collection in the Years 1805-7 and 1811-12*, ed. Richard Beale Davis (Los Angeles: The Huntington Library, 1954), 113-116, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; *Edward Hooker's Diary*, December 8, 1808; 9, 31-33, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; Gerald Johnson, *Mount Vernon: The Story of a Shrine: An Account of the Rescue and Continuing Restoration of George Washington's Home by The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association* (Mount Vernon, VA: Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 1991), 20-21.

group made it to Mount Vernon. The appearance of Bushrod's coach and slave coachmen notwithstanding, Bushrod preferred to control the flow of guests to Mount Vernon himself. His drivers knew the roads well, and by providing the coaches himself, Bushrod could still balance his social expectations with manageable numbers.<sup>17</sup>

Caleb Cresson Jr., a successful Philadelphia merchant, set out for Mount Vernon with seven other gentlemen, "mostly New Yorkers," in November 1812. Leaving at eight o'clock they stopped in Alexandria for breakfast finding "this place so respectable." Armed with a letter of introduction, Cresson and his party traveled to Mount Vernon and were "politely received" by Bushrod Washington, who chatted with the group until they asked for a tour of the grounds. Bushrod then "requested a young man who was present," most likely one of his house slaves, to entertain the visitors' questions and show them the sites. Charles Bagot, the first British diplomat to the United States after the War of 1812, and his wife Mary received the same cordial treatment as their respected peers. On August 28, 1816, they set out and stopped "at the Inn at Alexandria where Judge Washington's nephew met us to escort us to Mount Vernon." While Bushrod sent his nephew as a courtesy for the Bagots, it also kept the best route to Mount Vernon a secret.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Manuscript Autobiography of Horace Binney*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1809, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; Horace Binney, 1809, *The Horace Binney Papers*, Manuscript Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Horace Binney also later wrote a short recollection dedicated to the memory of Bushrod Washington. See Horace Binney, *Bushrod Washington* (Philadelphia: C. Sherman & Son, 1858).

<sup>18</sup> Caleb Cresson Jr. to Sally Cresson, November 21, 1812, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; *The Journal of Mary Bagot, 1816-1819*, August 28-29, 1816, *Records of the Columbia History Society, Washington D.C.* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984), 38-39; Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL.

Although Bushrod controlled the flow of visitors with letters, his own carriages, and porter lodges—he had these built at the western edge of the property in the early 1810s—the steamboat circumvented his barriers. This technology not only made travel easier and more affordable but it also allowed people and commodities to travel upstream, a major breakthrough for American transportation and economic growth. The first steamboats to traverse the Potomac River were integral for the development of Washington D.C., and these vessels offered passengers an impressive view of Mount Vernon from afar. Baron de Montlezun, a French expatriate, detailed his experience on board one of these ships in 1816: “At nine-thirty we went on board the steamboat going from Aquia Creek to Washington City...At four o’clock we passed in front of Mount Vernon, the former residence of the great Washington.” Montlezun spotted his tomb and described the structure as “a sensible vault,” noting that the tomb lacked any type of marker or inscription. The Potomac became the water expressway to Mount Vernon, and there was little Bushrod could do to stop enterprises that capitalized on the estate’s proximity to the river.<sup>19</sup>

Steamboat company proprietors and captains quickly realized that Washington’s tomb attracted paying customers. As early as 1815, these vessels began service that included stops near Mount Vernon, much to the aggravation of Bushrod Washington and his family. A correspondent for the *Richmond Enquirer* described one of these excursions for readers, and it sounded more like a jovial parade than a solemn pilgrimage.

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<sup>19</sup> Baron de Montlezun, September 27, 1816, *Voyage fait dans les années 1816 et 1817, de New-Yorck à la Nouvelle-Orléans, et de l’Orénoque au Mississipi* (Paris: Librairie de Gide Fils, 1818), 1, 112-116, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A FWSL. The original text is as follows: “A neuf heures et demie, nous nous sommes embarqués sur le steam-boat, allant d’Acquia-Creek à Washington-City...A quatre heures, nous passons devant Mount-Vernon, ancienne residence du célèbre Washington.” He described the tomb as a “caveau pratiqué.”

“On yesterday morning we went on board of the steam boat Washington with about forty or fifty ladies and gentleman,” along with a “band of marine music” that played “Washington’s march” upon their departure. After stopping at Fort Washington, the party proceeded to Mount Vernon but with no wharf for landing passengers, people were “conveyed in a small boat” to the shore. Steamboats started to bring larger parties of visitors to the estate, more than the family could possibly entertain. A “Frenchman” gardener told William Mercer Green that recently “parties of 40 or 50 strangers together called to visit the tomb.” While earlier excursions were privately arranged, the demand for passage convinced steamboat companies to offer regular service to Mount Vernon. It was their patriotic duty to honor Washington by bringing Americans to the tomb of Washington; at the same time, they had no qualms about making money in the process. Steamboats democratized access to Washington’s tomb, making the experience more affordable for the common American.<sup>20</sup>

As Congressional sessions were winding down in the 1820s, representatives often traveled to Mount Vernon before returning to their respective states or before the start of a new session. Georgia Senator John Elliot decided to take a steamboat during a visit in May 1820. Traveling with his wife and “a select party of about seventy-five persons,” Elliot enjoyed the “delicious notes of the Marine Band” while they played “Hail Columbia.” These distinguished guests received the fullest extension of southern hospitality, as the “venerable mansion house and gardens were thrown open at our approach.” After visiting with the Washington family, the party “marched in solemn procession to the vault...while...the band played one of Pleyel’s solemn hymns.” The

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<sup>20</sup> *Richmond Enquirer*, 5 December 1818, reprinted in the *National Intelligencer*, 19 December 1818; *The Diary of William Mercer Green* 1818, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library.

convenience of the steamboat and carriage lines that ran from the Capitol to the wharfs attracted groups of national politicians who believed a visit to Mount Vernon was a political rite of passage. As a federally appointed official and Supreme Court Justice, Bushrod begrudgingly accommodated them and their acquaintances.<sup>21</sup>

The growth of steamboat travel, however, did not immediately stop visitors from using more traditional methods of conveyance. The poor condition of Virginia roads made coaches more vulnerable to accidents, but coaches were typically reserved for people of wealth and status. For men of the South, proper equestrianism reflected affluence, but those from more moderate means relied on the horse for transportation. Horses were readily available for rent or purchase in Alexandria and Washington D.C., but many who traveled to these cities for business simply rode their own. These individuals were often strangers to the Washington family, and Bushrod treated them as nuisances rather than respected guests. William Plumer Jr., a representative from New Hampshire, and his associates arrived on horseback and were only given the courtesy of a visit when they identified themselves as congressmen. Bushrod permitted their intrusion but “did not show himself.” Bushrod had a similar reaction to William Faux and his party, who, despite a letter of introduction from Ferdinand Fairfax, “an English Lord,” they were received “coldly and reluctantly.” Bushrod read the letter, and said, “I do not like to see people on this day, but you may walk around.” Bushrod’s frustration with unannounced visitations culminated on this particular day because it was the Sabbath.

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<sup>21</sup> John Elliott to unknown, 6 May 1820, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library.

Shortly thereafter he adopted another policy that prohibited visitors on Sundays out of respect for the Lord's Day.<sup>22</sup>

After Bushrod came into possession of Mount Vernon, he quickly learned that his uncle's vast plantation was more of a collection of faltering farms. The land produced sporadic results and the denigration of the soil limited the production and profitability of the estate. With tremendous tracts of land and little cash, Bushrod inherited, purchased, and sold slaves to make ends meet. In poor harvest years he could not even feed his hired laborers and slaves, buying corn and meat for them out of pocket. As a business, Mount Vernon plantation slowly failed as the nineteenth century wore on. In addition to these limitations visitors distracted the Mount Vernon workforce, as strangers prevented gardeners, slaves, and free blacks from completing their work on a regular basis. Visitors also accelerated the physical ravages of time, as they performed acts of devotion by damaging the grounds or tomb in some manner. Many carved their initials into buildings or the door of the Washington family tomb. Even more removed tree branches and stripped plants of their flowers as keepsakes. In Bushrod's mind the excess of people interrupted his family's privacy, prevented his workers and slaves from making Mount Vernon profitable, and threatened the total ruin of the estate and grounds.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> William Plumer Jr. to William Plumer Sr., May 7, 1820, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; William Faux, July 16, 1820, *Memorable days in America: being a journal of a tour to the United States, principally undertaken to ascertain, by positive evidence, the condition and probable prospects of British emigrants; including accounts of Mr. Birkbeck's settlement in the Illinois* (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1823), 2, 123. Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Accounts 2A, FWSL.

<sup>23</sup> *New York Evening Post*, 4 October 1821; "Description of an Early Visit to Mount Vernon," *The Times and Hartford Advertiser*, 14 January 1823, reprint in a New York newspaper in December 1822, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library.

Bushrod identified the steamboat as the culprit responsible for challenging his economic livelihood. As transportation improved, Bushrod's control of the estate waned, giving more Americans the opportunity to experience Mount Vernon. While he could prevent their entry into the mansion, he could not stop them from walking the grounds or visiting the tomb. Only respectable and notable individuals were admitted to the house, but for the remaining travelers they found solace near the grave of George Washington. Bushrod directed his resentment at the steamboat captains, taking out notices in newspapers and declaring that, "permission will not, in the future, be granted to steam boat parties to enter the gardens, or to walk over the grounds." While uninvited visitors were technically trespassing, many people like New York representative Charles Ruggles felt that Washington was "the property of the nation," and therefore his home, gardens, and even bodily remains belonged to the American people. This, in Ruggle's opinion, seemed to "entitle [visitors] to run thru them and round them without regard to the convenience of the present proprietor." In order to curtail this problem, Bushrod began posting signs around the perimeter of the estate, threatening legal prosecution for those found intruding on private property.<sup>24</sup>

Bushrod demanded that strangers acknowledge his home as "the residence of a private gentleman" and not a place of "eating, drinking, and dancing parties." As more strangers found their way to Mount Vernon, it had become a place of consumption, where travelers could not only take in the nostalgia of Washington's life but also engage in socially distasteful behavior. On July 4, 1822, Bushrod published a declaration of

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<sup>24</sup> "Description of an Early Visit to Mount Vernon," *The Times and Hartford Advertiser*, 14 January 1823, reprint in a New York newspaper in December 1822, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Accounts Volume 2A Fred W. Smith Library; Charles Ruggles to Sarah Ruggles, April 28, 1822, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Accounts Volume 2A FWSL.

independence from outside intrusion, promising that “[r]espectable strangers and others” would “receive the same attentions which have been uniformly and cheerfully shown to such characters.” His use of the word “respectable” suggests that Bushrod perceived many of these unwanted strangers as his social inferiors. In his mind, these unwanted guests were surely the ones drinking, dancing, and picnicking on the Mount Vernon greens in front of the mansion.<sup>25</sup>

Steamboat captains ignored Bushrod’s request and continued to bring large parties to the estate in the later half of the 1820s, as demand for excursions reinforced the idea that Americans had the right to pay homage to Washington beside his grave. One columnist hinted that these crowds were filled with less upstanding individuals, labeling Mount Vernon “the repository of thieves and pickpockets.” Bushrod again appealed to the public, republishing his request for privacy along with a warning for the disobedient captains. “Parties have been brought to this place by some Steam Boats, particularly during my absence from home” he wrote. “My object...is to apprise you of my determination to sue the commanders of those Steam Boats, in which parties may hereafter be conveyed to Mount Vernon.” This notice was addressed to the “Master of the Steam boat” and threatened legal recourse against the captains for any future failures to abide by the Judge’s ruling.<sup>26</sup>

Bushrod’s policy of barring steamboat visitors faced the ultimate test in May 1826. A party “of about thirty members of Congress of both Houses” wished to visit the “tomb of Washington” and hired the steamboat *Enterprise* to take them on Sunday, May 14. After the fares were collected and the party had “gone some distance,” the captain

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<sup>25</sup> *National Intelligencer*, 4 July 1822; *Independent Chronicle*, 10 July 1822.

<sup>26</sup> *Providence Gazette*, 5 March 1823; *Richmond Enquirer*, 30 May 1826; *Norwich Courier*, 18 May 1826.



*suddenly* remembered that Judge Washington “had forbid persons from landing from on board of a steam-boat, at Mount Vernon.” These representatives believed that “a refusal could not be given,” so they sent three delegates to wait on Bushrod and request permission to “pay their respects to the seat of the deceased Father of their Independence.” Bushrod refused their request and the men were “not treated with common politeness, and the refusal was accompanied by threats of instituting suits.” Newspapers published the unflattering story repeatedly, compelling Bushrod to tell his version of the story to the American public. While Bushrod labored to maintain control over his property, Americans considered Washington the property of the nation. As a result, questions lingered over the public’s right to visit Mount Vernon, see Washington’s tomb, and experience the nostalgia of his world.<sup>27</sup>

Addressed to the editors of the *Alexandria Gazette*, Bushrod offered to “correct two misrepresentations” in their account of the incident at Mount Vernon. First, the allegation that he treated the delegates with contempt was completely false. “I had no intention, to treat them otherwise than with respect, after being assured by them that they were ignorant of the prohibition to visit Mount Vernon on that day,” he wrote. His anger was directed at the “captain of the boat, who with the subjoined letter, perhaps, in his pocket at the time, could, from sordid motives expose his passengers to disappointment, and me the unpleasant dilemma of either refusing them permission to visit the place, or by making an exception in the particular case.” In regards to lawsuits, Bushrod maintained that he had no interest in suing naive passengers, only the incorrigible captains: “The commanders of all the steamboats on the river had been long since

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<sup>27</sup> *Baltimore Patriot*, 17 May 1826; *American Mercury*, 23 May 1826; *Eastern Argus*, 23 May 1826; *Haverhill Gazette*, 27 May 1826; *Watch-Tower*, 29 May 1826.

warned not to bring parties to Mount Vernon. I stated that I should certainly sue the captain of this boat for his present conduct.” Bushrod concluded, “[t]he threat against the captain I am determined to execute, whenever I have the opportunity; although I can scarcely hope, that a resort to legal proceedings against the commanders of these boats, will contribute to protect my rights.” While this event happened on a Sunday and Bushrod had previously asked visitors to respect the Sabbath as a day of rest, he never faulted the party for coming on that day but for arriving in a steamboat. In Bushrod’s mind the vessels and their captains were the true offenders in violating his rights as a private property-owner.<sup>28</sup>

Contributors rallied to support Bushrod’s denial of entry, politicizing it to promote evangelical morality. One writer for the *Middlesex Gazette* remarked that “these pious and patriotic gentlemen made this request on the Sabbath, the only day in the week, on which visitors are excluded...it is not singular that men who violate the Sabbath, should be guilty of falsehood.” The *Christian Watchman* praised Bushrod for his “unequivocal...regard for the Christian Sabbath.” In this writer’s opinion, his uncle would have done the same, and hoped that the Judge might “receive the heartiest thanks of the moral and religious part of the community.” The congressmen in question should learn from Bushrod’s example that, “[t]he Sabbath is a day to be kept holy unto the Lord.” Another columnist told readers to, “rejoice...that there are men in our country, who, not making their public stations an excuse for disobeying the commandments of God...Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” While Bushrod and the Congressional representatives never discussed violating the Sabbath, religious periodicals

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<sup>28</sup> *Baltimore Patriot*, 17 May 1826; *American Mercury*, 23 May 1826; *Eastern Argus*, 23 May 1826; *Haverhill Gazette*, 27 May 1826; *Watch-Tower*, 29 May 1826; *Republican Star*, 30 May 1826; *Norwich Courier*, 31 May 1826.

lauded him for his loyalty to God's law instead of those responsible for the laws of man.<sup>29</sup>

In the article, "Violations of the Sabbath," one contributor denounced what historians have called the transportation and market revolutions for their godlessness and destruction of America's religious character. Steamboats, coaches, chaises, and gigs all operated on Sundays to "accommodate those who must ride for business or amusement on the Lord's day." Steamboats were filled with "profaners of the Lord's day" and "parties of pleasure," and local governments abused the Sabbath for political commemorations and to pass legislation. There were few examples for the devout to emulate, but Bushrod's refusal of Congressmen on the Sabbath was one of them. The editorial concluded that, "the evil of Sabbath-breaking is rapidly increasing every year. Among the causes of this increase, are the facilities of communication both by land and water, from one part of the country to another; and the increase of a commercial enterprising spirit among our citizens." From the evangelical perspective, steamboats were tools of depravity that encouraged greed and ignored holy days. This episode represented how evolving social and economic dynamics transformed attitudes towards commerce and communication, changes that altered relationships and redefined communities. In this author's opinion this mentality challenged the religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening, reflecting the growing tensions between society, religion, and capitalism.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Middlesex Gazette*, 31 May 1826; *Christian Watchman*, 26 May 1826; 7, 25; *The Religious Intelligencer*, 3 June 1826; 11, 1; *The Christian Secretary*, 5 June 1826; 3, 19; *Zion's Herald*, 7 June, 1826; 4, 23; *Western Luminary*, 14 June 1826; 2, 49; *Philadelphia Recorder*, 17 June 1826; 4, 12.

<sup>30</sup> "Violations of the Sabbath," *The Religious Intelligencer*, 3 February 1827, 11, 36; *The Religious Intelligencer* was published in New Haven, Connecticut, which experienced the impact

In light of his lifelong struggle to deny the steamboats and sue their captains, it seems quite ironic that Bushrod eventually, if involuntarily, rode one back to Mount Vernon. On November 26, 1829, Bushrod passed away in Philadelphia, 150 miles from his estate and desired resting place. He informed those around him that he wanted his body wrapped in a “winding sheet” and placed in a “plain coffin with a flat top and a sufficient number of holes bored through the lid and sides—particularly about the face and head to allow respiration if resuscitation should take place.” After death, his steward was to accompany the departed “to Virginia in the Steam boat, by way of Baltimore and landed directly at Mount Vernon, to be buried there.” Only in death did Bushrod lift his ban on steamboat landings at Mount Vernon.<sup>31</sup>

For entrepreneurs, businesses, and ordinary Americans, the passing of the estate to John Augustine Washington Jr. signified a new opportunity to both profit from Washington tourism and further democratize access to Washington’s tomb. Much to their chagrin, John Augustine Washington adopted many of Bushrod’s rules regarding visitors. The National Republican Convention of Young Men, consisting of “about three hundred” members, embarked for Mount Vernon on a steamboat in May 1832. Their convention, held in Washington D.C., brought young politicians and political agents together from across the country to discuss political issues and solidify support for Henry Clay’s upcoming presidential campaign. Before the convention came to a close,

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of the Second Great Awakening much more than rural Virginia; Bryan LeBeau, *Religion in America to 1865* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 109-136; William McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religious and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

<sup>31</sup> *Connecticut Courant*, 1 December 1829; “Bushrod Washington’s burial request as communicated to David Calwell,” November 14, 1829, Thom Collection, Mount Vernon Archives Tomb Correspondences Notebook, Fred W. Smith Library; David Leslie Annis, “Mr. Bushrod Washington, Supreme Court Justice on the Marshall Court,” (Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1974), 249-250.

organizers asked John Augustine for permission to visit Washington's tomb. In his reply, Augustine appreciated the "respect paid the memory of General Washington," but reminded the convention that, "No objection has ever been made to any one's visiting the tomb...except on the Sabbath, or in steam-boat parties." He approved their visit but also reaffirmed his uncle's policies of refusing steamboats the right to land and denying visitors on the Sabbath. While John Augustine Washington's tenure as proprietor lasted less than three years, he shared his uncle's conviction that Mount Vernon and Washington's tomb were private property.<sup>32</sup>

John Augustine Washington Jr.'s death in June 1832 passed the estate to his wife, Jane Charlotte Blackburn Washington, who oversaw the plantation for the next decade. She, like Bushrod and her husband, barred steamboats from landing passengers directly at Mount Vernon. For those that took the steamboat from Washington D.C. to Alexandria, hiring a coach to travel through the Virginia countryside became the next best option. One visitor's party took this approach, hiring "horses and carriages" for the journey. As was the standing tradition, they "sent cards to the present occupant, Lady Washington, the niece of Judge Washington," and were guided by "an intelligent servant" about the grounds. As traffic increased to Alexandria, so did the business for hacks and coach lines. One visitor told readers that a "steam ferry boat" goes between these places every hour, and that on this particular outing, some "dozen or fifteen of the steamboat passengers were bound to the tomb of Washington." They searched for transportation

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<sup>32</sup> *Newport Mercury*, 19 May 1832; *Richmond Enquirer*, 18 May 1832; *Rhode Island American*, 23 May 1832; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 1 June 1832; *Proceedings of the National Republican Convention of Young Men: Assembled in the City of Washington, May 7, 1832* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832), 13-14; *Rhode Island American*, 23 May 1832; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 1 June 1832; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 15 June 1832; Johnson, *Mount Vernon: The Story of a Shrine: An Account of the Rescue and Continuing Restoration of George Washington's Home by The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association*, 20-21.

and “found the people tolerably versed in the business of fitting out horses and carriages for that destination.” By limiting steamboat excursions to Mount Vernon, business for coach lines in Alexandria boomed.<sup>33</sup>

The presence of more strangers made Mount Vernon an undesirable place to live, and proprietress Jane Charlotte agreed to let her son, John Augustine Washington III, manage the estate on her behalf. She informally ceded the property to him, and he initially followed suit regarding strangers and steamboats. One newspaper account reported that the “Lancaster Fencibles, accompanied by the City Light Infantry...were restricted by the proprietor, Mr. Washington, to walk around the tomb of ‘Pater Patriae’” after they were “denied the privilege of entering the house.” John Augustine parleyed with these companies of militiamen to allow them “to land from the steamboat,” but the terms were “unnecessarily rigid and contracted.” Mr. Washington’s “harsh and dictatorial treatment of strangers...is universal,” concluded the editorial. John Augustine eventually warmed up to the idea of historical tourism, permitting the construction of the wharf in exchange for a monthly payment from one of the steamboat companies. For patriotic and curious Americans, it was “equally gratifying that a public conveyance has at last been established for the accommodation of visitors.”<sup>34</sup>

As steamboats grew in number, so too did the efforts of those guiding Americans to Washington’s tomb to give passengers a more memorable experience. Captain J.W.

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<sup>33</sup> *The Salem Gazette*, 26 June, 1832; *Haverhill Gazette*, 23 April 1836; *Connecticut Courant*, 29 August 1836; *Haverhill Gazette*, 24 April 1841; *Hudson River Chronicle*, 18 May 1841; *The Sun*, 28 October, 1842.

<sup>34</sup> *The Weekly Herald*, 12 July 1842; *The Sun*, 13 September 1850; John A. Washington to Eleanor Love Washington, September 18, 1850, Manuscript Collection, Fred W. Smith Library. In this letter, Washington mentions that the steamboat brought about 500 visitors this past week; Jean B. Lee, “Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001): 281-282.

Rogers of the steamboat *Augusta* notified his passengers of their proximity to Mount Vernon “by a tap of the bell.” This spurred everyone on board—“man, woman and child”—to run to the side of the vessel, “eager to catch a glimpse of...where the illustrious patriot sleeps.” The captain put down his “speaking-trumpet”, and all gazed in silence at Washington’s tomb. The ringing of the bell became the signifier for quiet reflection, but sometimes it sparked spontaneous musical performances. In one account, a group called the “Harmonean singers” sang the melody of “Washington’s Grave” as the boat slowly passed the tomb. Another steamer, the *Columbia*, had a “fine band of the best cotillion music” playing alongside Mount Vernon. Some of these musicians were hired, and others simply played for small gratuities. Even though the journey only took hours now instead of days, music offered travelers much needed amusement along the way and musicians a means to profit from Washington admirers.<sup>35</sup>

In order to stay competitive steamboat lines also began offering more services to passengers en route to Mount Vernon. The steamer *Columbus* of the Maryland and Virginia Steamboat Company offered fares for fifty cents, and cold cuts at twenty-five cents a person. By 1850 the *Thomas Collyer* made four trips a week to Mount Vernon on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, charging \$1 from Washington D.C. and seventy-five cents from Alexandria. Children and servants were half-price, and the steamer sold “refreshments on the boat at city prices.” The *Jewess* of the Baltimore Steam Packet Company offered “meals, confectionary, Ice-Cream, Lemonade, Mineral Waters” to its travelers, but specified that “NO LIQUORS” would be served on board, a

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<sup>35</sup> *The Sun*, 20 November 1843; *The Sun*, 17 April 1846; *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 30 April 1846; *The Sun*, 21 August 1848.

statement intended to deter those who planned to celebrate the day with spirits and inebriation instead of patriotic modesty.<sup>36</sup>

While the steamboat democratized access to Mount Vernon and Washington's tomb, other transportation conveniences supported the belief that all Americans had the right to pay homage to Washington. Omnibuses, the nineteenth-century version of a streetcar, offered regular service to those who preferred to travel on land instead of water. The Adams & Company line ran two omnibuses, the "Alice" and the "Mrs. Ann Chase," twice a day that travelers could take from Washington D.C. to Alexandria, and then onto Mount Vernon for \$1.25 per person round trip. Some stagecoach lines worked in tandem with the railroad and steamboat enterprises as well, offering a means to get to the wharf on the south side of Washington D.C. George and Thomas Baker & Company's "large coaches President and Zachary Taylor" left the Capitol at 9:30 AM four times a week and charged 10-15 cents for one-way travel to the docked *Thomas Collyer*. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad also took out advertisements for bundled transportation, offering Mount Vernon visitors rail, omnibus, and steamboat service for \$3.25 per person. The propensity of these businesses, along with advertisements and visitor accounts, suggest that both producers and consumers were transforming Mount Vernon into a major tourist destination. According to one columnist in 1853, in about two weeks time "upwards of twelve hundred persons...visited the tomb of Washington at Mount Vernon."

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<sup>36</sup> *The Sun*, 4 July 1848; *The Sun*, 11 October 1850; *The Sun*, 23 October 1850; *The Sun*, 22 July 1852; Kenneth Blume, *Historical Dictionary of the U.S. Maritime Industry* (Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2012), 370-371; The increase in traffic on the Potomac was partially because of the growing importance of Washington D.C. as the national capital, but there were other reasons as well such as trade and the transport of agricultural commodities to more northern ports, most notably cotton. Perhaps the most important factor for increasing competition was the refusal of the state of Virginia to grant monopoly or exclusive rights to a single steamboat company on the Potomac River. See David C. Holly, *Chesapeake Steamboats: Vanished Fleet* (Centreville, MY: Tidewater Publishers, 1994), 34, 263.



Steamboats, carriage lines, and railroad companies often competed against one another yet sometimes worked in tandem, offering more affordable transportation that brought thousands of Americans to Mount Vernon every year.<sup>37</sup>

Struggling to make ends meet, John Augustine began courting steamboat companies for the exclusive right to land at Mount Vernon as early as 1842. John had arrived at Mount Vernon in September 1841, and in his first three months of transactions he netted a measly \$82.96 in profit. His most common expenses were livestock, agricultural materials, and household necessities for his family and slaves. In February 1842, John Augustine recorded his travels to Alexandria for business, ending his journal with the note: “Made proposals to steamboat companies to run their boats down.” Unlike his predecessors who viewed visitors as a nuisance, John Augustine saw them as curious tourists; more importantly, he saw them as a potential source of income. He had no reservations about taking the steamboat himself, and often paid passage to ride the vessels between Alexandria and Washington D.C. Steamboat proprietors, however, resisted sharing their profits with John Augustine in any meaningful way. In September 1845 he refused “Capt. F.A. Tucker” from landing a steamboat at Mount Vernon and made a note in the margin of his diary, “(or at any other time).” Until John Augustine reached a favorable agreement, he chose to decline direct steamboat landings. Unlike the previous owners of Mount Vernon, John Augustine identified the power of Washington ethos amongst Americans and decided to embrace their claim to his great-grand uncle.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *The Sun*, 15 April 1850; *The Sun*, 24 August 1850; *The Sun*, 24 September 1850; *The Sun*, 11 October 1850; *The Sun*, 23 October 1850; *The Sun*, 9 August 1858; *The Sun*, 15 March 1853; *The Sun*, 3 July 1858.

<sup>38</sup> “Account of all my receipts and expenditures,” John Augustine Washington III Farm Book 1840s, Manuscript Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; *The Diary of Bushrod and John*

After rumors circulated in the early 1850s that the Washington family wished to sell the property, steamboat owners became more willing to strike an agreement with John Augustine. These companies pursued contracts to grow profits and for the benefit of legal recourse in the event that the property changed ownership in the future. As a result, relations became quite friendly between John Augustine and the Washington and Alexandria Steamboat Company. This enterprise ran the *Thomas Collyer*, a Potomac vessel that transported visitors near Mount Vernon several times a week. On August 15 1850, John Augustine met with Thomas Parker and Joseph Bryan, “representatives of the owners of the Thomas Collyer steamboat” to discuss running “their boat to Mount Vernon.” These men agreed to John Augustine’s terms and he ordered his carpenters and slaves to build a wood plank walkway from the wharf to the new tomb, old tomb, and summerhouse. The “owners of the Collyer,” who “authorized to have it done for them,” paid for the walkways. For the exclusive right to land at Mount Vernon, the owners of *Thomas Collyer* were willing to give John Augustine Washington a share of their profits.<sup>39</sup>

While the exact terms are unknown, evidence suggests that John Augustine received a monthly payment from the Washington and Alexandria Steamboat Company. In October 1850 he purchased fifteen shares the company’s stock for \$1,500, and began using the steamboat as his personal means of conveyance. John Augustine always

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Augustine Washington III, February 28, 1842, Manuscript Collection, FWSL; Ibid, September 2, 1845, Manuscript Collection, FWSL.

<sup>39</sup> John Augustine Washington III Farm Book March 1850-March 1852, August 15 and September 25, 1850, Manuscript Collection, Fred W. Smith Library. John Augustine also recorded paying a workman named “Wedge” \$9.00 for work “for the Steamboat” in September 1850. He paid “Wedge” again on October 14 another \$10.00 “on account of work done on the Steamboat Company’s walk.”; John Augustine Washington III to Eleanor Love Selden Washington September 18, 1850, Manuscript Collection, FWSL; *New York Daily Tribune*, 20 August 1850.

recorded the tolls or passage paid during his business trips, but after this agreement he never mentioned paying to travel on the *Thomas Collyer*. He also used the steamboat as means to transport his personal necessities and cash his checks. He gave “Capt Corson \$15.00 for various small articles brought” to him at Mount Vernon, and later asked Corson to bring him a variety of items such as beef, canvass slacks, fish, ice, and oysters. The proprietors and captains of the *Collyer* did their best to appease John Augustine Washington, who now held more influence as a business partner and regular attendee at stockholders’ meetings in Washington D.C. The landing at Mount Vernon was crucial to the *Collyer*’s success, and the company soon realized that unless it played by his rules, John Augustine could find others willing to negotiate to his liking.<sup>40</sup>

As their contract neared expiration, the company now found itself at the mercy of John’s terms. In August 1851 he bargained with company officials and offered them the proposition “to run their boat to Mount Vernon for two years after the expiration of the present contract.” He now requested “twenty-five percent of their gross receipts to run every week,” a substantial amount considering in that allotted time these vessels brought hundreds of people to the estate. Between April 1853 and July 1854, the company receipts for Mount Vernon excursions totaled \$6,953.04, entitling John Augustine to a generous share of \$1,738.26. John Augustine also purchased an additional fifteen shares in the company that December, making him a larger shareholder and major benefactor of the company’s tourism business. Although John Augustine’s asking price rose, the

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<sup>40</sup> John Augustine Washington III Farm Book March 1850-March 1852, October 23, September 27, November 19, December 21, 1850; February 25, February 28, March 19, 1851, Manuscript Collection, FWSL; John Augustine Washington III Farm Book March 1850-March 1852, October 21 and December 17, 1850; January 6, 1851, Manuscript Collection, FWSL; John Augustine Washington Diary March 29 1852-January 12 1856, May 18 and July 3, 1855, Manuscript Collection, FWSL.

Washington and Alexandria Steamboat Company continued its partnership with him, as a monopoly to land at Mount Vernon was well worth divvying up monthly ticket sales. In order to offset this cost, the company began running a second vessel, *George Washington*, to Mount Vernon in 1853. That same year, the company offered passengers the option of chartering the boat for private excursions.<sup>41</sup>

The wharf landing became extremely valuable real estate, so much so that one George Page, “in company with five or six other persons in a boat,” arrived at Mount Vernon in December 1851 to contest the shoreline on behalf of the state of Maryland. Armed with a “warrant,” Page claimed that he had rights to “three acres of land partly cultivated and part uncultivated in front of Mount Vernon on the Potomac River.” John Augustine countered that there was “no such land in existence,” as this land Page described sat below the navigable waters of the Potomac. Their request to survey this imaginary land infuriated Washington, so much so that he forbid the party from entering his property, and considered their “illegal purpose” as an “outrageous violation” of his rights. While unsuccessful, Page and his party were attempting to claim part of the Potomac shore for landing their own vessels at Mount Vernon, as Page was one of the builders for the Baltimore Steam Packet Company. His boat, *William Seldon*, was completed in 1851 in Washington D.C., and while the company made most of its money

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<sup>41</sup> John Augustine Washington III Farm Book March 1850-March 1852, August 8 and December 9, 1851, Manuscript Collection, FWSL; *The Sun*, 24 September 1850; *The Sun*, 11 October 1850; *The Sun*, 15 March 1853; *The Sun*, 22 June 1855; *The Sun*, 28 June 1855; *The Daily National Intelligencer*, 26 April 1853; John Augustine Washington Diary March 29 1852-January 12 1856, April 15, 1854, Manuscript Collection, FWSL. In a letter to his wife, John Augustine estimated that “The boat had brought down about five hundred persons during the week.” See John Augustine Washington to Eleanor Love Washington, September 18, 1850, Manuscript Collection, Fred W. Smith Library. Even into the late 1850s, *Thomas Collyer* was the only steamboat to regularly advertise service to Mount Vernon. It gave the company a foothold in the booming Washington tourism industry, and it facilitated the relationship to maintain profits for the line. See *The Sun*, 21 April 1853; *The Sun*, 7 June 1853; *The Sun*, 22 June 1855.

from government mail contracts and passenger voyages in the Chesapeake Bay, Page wished to expand operations to include a stop at George Washington's home.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to steamboat travel, John Augustine also invested time and money in other internal improvement projects to bring more travelers to Mount Vernon. He was appointed commissioner for the Manassas Gap Railroad and traveled throughout the Virginia countryside to assess compensation claims for individual landowners who lost land because of the line's construction. While this railroad ran as far west as the Shenandoah Valley, it brought more individuals from the interior to Alexandria, transforming the city into a major hub of state commerce, trade, and potential tourist dollars. In May 1856, John Augustine bought "forty shares at \$25.00 each" in the "Alexandria, Mount Vernon and Accotink Turnpike Road," a company that requested a charter of incorporation from the state of Virginia to build a road that would make travel to Mount Vernon easier by land. The charter was approved March 11, 1856, and permitted construction of a "turnpike road from Alexandria, crossing Little Hunting creek at the intersection of the present road from Alexandria to Mount Vernon; with said creek to the mill race at Accotink mills." While many Virginians rejected national internal improvements on the grounds of states' rights, others supported infrastructure projects so long as it was state sponsored and controlled by its own citizens. John Augustine had much more at stake with these transportation ventures as they offered more convenience

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<sup>42</sup> John Augustine Washington III Farm Book March 1850-March 1852, December 15, 1851, Manuscript Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; Richard E. Prince, *Seaboard Air Line Railway: Steam Boats, Locomotives, and History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 2000, 1966), 32. There is a record of the *William Seldon* outfitting a private excursion to Mount Vernon in August 1859, leaving Saturday night and returning Tuesday morning. It advertised serving its passengers with sheep's head fish, soft and hard crabs, and oysters at reasonable prices. Tickets were listed for \$4, children under 12 and servants \$2. See *The Sun*, 9 August 1858.

for travelers and greater monetary gains for the Washington family. But by embracing and encouraging different modes of travel, John Augustine acknowledged the people's right to claim Mount Vernon and Washington's tomb as the property of the nation.<sup>43</sup>

While the transportation revolution created more affordable and efficient means of travel during the nineteenth century, the market revolution generated producers and consumers of Washington lore. At Mount Vernon, slaves and free blacks sold hand-carved canes, bouquets of flowers, and fruit plucked from the garden to visitors. All of these items were made readily available for purchase, and for memento-crazed Americans, they often bought these items to commemorate their journey. Travelers described the aura that emanated from the objects and viewed them as a direct means to connect to Washington and more nostalgic times. Others, however, were viewed as shameless attempts to profit from the memory of Washington. An artifact from the estate carried far more legitimacy than a mass-produced Washington commodity. The journey, now more accessible than ever before, gave travelers the opportunity to own genuine pieces of Washington's past; or at the very least allowed them the spatial conditions to believe that these were completely authentic pieces of American history.<sup>44</sup>

One of the most common items for purchase at Mount Vernon was the Washington cane. Canes were quite fashionable in nineteenth-century America, and the

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<sup>43</sup> John Augustine Washington III Farm Book December 1853-March 1854, December 27, 1853-March 1854, Manuscript Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; John Augustine Washington III Farm Book January 1856-March 1857, May 19, 1856, Manuscript Collection, FWSL; *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History*, eds. Nan Netherton, Donald Sweig, Janice Artemel, Patricia Hickin, and Patrick Reed (Fairfax, VA: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, 1978) 267; Fairfax County Legislative Petitions, 7 January 1856, 22 January 1858; *Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia: Passed in 1855-56, in the Eightieth Year of the Commonwealth* (Richmond, VA: William F. Ritchie, 1856), 127-128.

<sup>44</sup> William L. Bird Jr., *Souvenir Nation: Relics, Keepsakes, and Curios from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2013), 60-64.

cane reflected its owner's status and wealth. Most canes were crafted from wood, and the more expensive the wood, the more valuable the cane. Canes reflected status. For example, a cane for a casual evening stroll might be made of ash or oak and appear simple in design. A more formal cane with engraving and metal near the top was preferred for gentleman in business or a social call. Canes were also used in ceremonies and served as marks of professional or organizational membership. In short, a cane held both personal and symbolic meanings for its owner, an object that represented status and often some sort of sentimental value. For awestruck travelers at Washington's tomb, the canes embodied the memory of the journey, linked the living with the dead, and allowed visitors to take home a piece of Washington's legacy to share with others.<sup>45</sup>

Travelers invented the cane tradition at Mount Vernon because after Washington's death, they sought some tangible object that represented their journey and their memories of the man. In a letter to his wife Sally, Caleb Cresson Jr. noted, "[e]very one seem'd desirous of having a Twig or a flower to remember Mount Vernon by—for myself I cut a branch of a young oak, which I think when well mounted will make a handsome cane." In 1819, the Russian Minister Chevalier Pierre de Politica acquired, "from a tree, growing over the tomb of Washington; a small branch sufficient to make a walking stick, which he intends sending to Russia, as a present for the Emperor Alexander." During Lafayette's famous return to the United States in 1824, Commodore David Porter gave the revolutionary hero "a cane which was cut, some time ago, from a tree that grew at the tomb of Washington." Lafayette graciously accepted the gift, saying

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<sup>45</sup> Catherine Dike, *Canes in the United States: Illustrated Mementoes of American history 1607-1953* (Ladue, Missouri: Cane Curiosa Press, 1994), 20-30; Jeffrey Snyder, *Canes and Walking Sticks: A Stroll Through Time and Place* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2004), 19-21, 46, 75-78.

that he would “carefully preserve the cane as a precious relic of his departed and revered friend.” Canes symbolized respectability and affluence for nineteenth-century gentlemen, but a cane from Mount Vernon represented both these social attributes and a link to the great Washington. Visitor social status mattered little to John Augustine Washington III or his slaves, who sold canes to anyone and everyone.<sup>46</sup>

As a result of cane harvesting, visitors often commented on the declining appearance of the trees surrounding Washington’s tomb. One visitor noted, “the order forbidding steamers to land their passengers arose in consequence of a gentleman cutting so many walking-sticks from the sacred ground that, upon his return to Boston, he made a good round sum of money by retailing them at a dollar each.” While this rumor is probably untrue, it does suggest that Washington canes were highly prized by visitors. One newspaper columnist, J.S.B., “cut from a tree in front of the tomb, a small branch for a cane...in remembrance of the place...and patriotism of Washington.” Joshua Wells, during the Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington D.C. in 1844, bequeathed a “handsome cane” made from “a piece of a locus tree which stands at the head of the tomb of the illustrious Washington” for Major General Winfield Scott, commander of the United States Army. Scott acknowledged the priceless value of the gift and Washington’s noble example concluding, “I assure you, sir, there is no portion of this world’s goods which I possess, that I shall prize more highly than this cane.” There

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<sup>46</sup> Caleb Cresson Jr. to his wife, Sally Cresson, November 21, 1812, Traveler Account Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; *City of Washington Gazette*, 28 July 1819; *Baltimore Patriot*, 30 July 1819; *Columbian*, 21 July 1819; *Commercial Advertiser*, 31 July 1819; *Northern Whig*, 3 August 1819; *Boston Commercial Gazette*, 5 August 1819; *Illinois Intelligencer*, 1 September 1819; *Rhode Island American*, 22 October 1824; Harlow Giles Unger, *Lafayette* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2002), 349-355.



was a growing market for Washington canes, so much so that even the slaves of Mount Vernon began carving their own and offering them to visitors for purchase on site.<sup>47</sup>

As the estate passed into the possession of John Augustine Washington III, he sought some sort of remedy for the constant stream of visitors that interrupted the daily workings of his plantation. The presence of strangers not only disrupted the Washington family's peace but also the routines and tasks of laborers and slaves. The taking of material objects from the site also contributed to its rapidly declining appearance. One contributor for *Dwight's American Magazine* observed that "[s]ticks are cut from the premises for canes; and the fruit trees are robbed. The names of visitors disfigure the fences and the trees; even the house itself does not escape the cuttings of the pocket knife." By offering souvenirs for sale, John Augustine hoped to exploit Washington tourism while preventing further damage to the deteriorating grounds and buildings.<sup>48</sup>

Slaves and free blacks served as historical tour guides, but they were also engaged in nineteenth-century marketing and sales. "An old colored woman" sold "several canes" to Robert Criswell Jr., maintaining that the walking sticks "were cut near [Washington's] tomb." Another correspondent and his party purchased "some hoe cake and milk" from a female slave, and from her husband "a hickory walking stick which were cut on the estate." In this visitor's opinion, there were "few places upon which a person of wealth and taste could better make an expenditure." Another traveler, standing in a long line that stretched from the wharf to the tomb, saw "[a]n old negro woman...with an arm load

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<sup>47</sup> E.T. Cole, *A Subaltern's Furlough: Descriptive of Scenes in Various Parts of the United States, Upper and Lower Canada, New-Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, During the summer and autumn of 1832* (New York: J. & J. Harper Press, 1833), 1, 99; *Hudson River Chronicle*, 18 May 1841 reprint of *The New York Express*; *The Sun*, 21 March 1844.

<sup>48</sup> *Dwight's American Magazine*, 5 December 1844, 701; Johnson, *Mount Vernon: The Story of a Shrine: An Account of the Rescue and Continuing Restoration of George Washington's Home by The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association*, 19.

of walking sticks of every description, to retail to visitors.” James Williamson visited Mount Vernon in 1856 and after his excursion about the grounds, he “heard the bell ring and hastened down to the boat, stopping on the way to purchase a hickory cane from an old darky.” While John Augustine struggled to extract returns on his farming ventures, canes became a cash commodity harvested at Mount Vernon in the 1850s. Although Washington never specified how much income he collected from slaves, with so many individuals selling objects to visitors, it seems possible that they gave him enough to satisfy his demands and kept some of the profits for themselves.<sup>49</sup>

The success of the Washington cane convinced one Englishman, James Crutchett, to open correspondence with John Augustine about a possible joint business venture. Crutchett, more famously known for manufacturing the gas lanterns that replaced the oil lamps in the Capitol Building, proposed starting a company that could mass-produce Washington canes, along with other Washington wooden trinkets such as bowls, picture frames, Mount-Vernon themed lithographs, ornaments, and wooden coins. John Augustine agreed to his request, selling him timber and the exclusive wood rights for Washington canes. Crutchett “immediately erected a large building, near the Baltimore Railroad station,” hoping to further capitalize on visitors who either had no time to visit Mount Vernon or simply wanted a souvenir without the additional hassle. Named the Mount Vernon Cane Manufactory, Crutchett produced items that were “stamped, numbered, and accompanied with the certificates” signed by John Augustine Washington III, James Crutchett, and the mayor of Washington D.C. William B. Magruder.

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<sup>49</sup> Robert Criswell Jr., *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book*, October 1849; *The Liberator*, 20 July 1849; *Times-Picayune*, 29 April 1855; Journal of James W. Williamson, April 25, 1856, General Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; in the third chapter there is more detail on the garden sales of the slave gardener Phil Smith.

According to one account, “the demand for these pleasing mementos” was so great that “Mr. Crutchett has been unable to supply them to all applicants.” The laying of the cornerstone for the Washington Monument in 1848 inspired Crutchett to offer Americans a certified piece of Washington lore and consumers a piece of American history. It also gave Crutchett an opportunity to exploit Washington’s popularity, which peaked during the 1850s as more Americans claimed the memory of Washington for political, social, and cultural reasons.<sup>50</sup>

John Augustine and James Crutchett agreed in the summer of 1854 to harvest and market Washington canes for American consumers. Crutchett agreed to pay \$250 per acre of timber from “Hellhole,” a swampy forest south of the mansion, and \$200 per acre for trees near Little Hunting Creek. In exchange, John Augustine agreed to pay Crutchett “12 ½ cents per foot for his lot” in Washington D.C., and by contract was forbidden from selling timber to anyone besides Crutchett. John Augustine hired F.E. Johnston to survey the designated areas, allotting thirty-one and twenty-six acres for timber cultivation. In early February 1856 he marked 300 trees to be harvested for the Manufactory. Washington’s slaves cut these trees “at the rate of \$15.00 for 61 trees” for the next eleven days. He hired out three of his laborers to work for Crutchett in transporting the materials at \$1.25 a day, and on February 16 Crutchett arrived with a wagon and a ship to take the wood from Mount Vernon to Washington D.C. Once there, Crutchett set about crafting Washington canes and an assortment of other Washington mementoes for

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<sup>50</sup> *The Farmer’s Cabinet*, 5 January 1858; *The Independent*, 29 January 1857.

American consumers, and to ensure that these objects were viewed as legitimate he gave each item a corresponding certificate of authenticity.<sup>51</sup>

These certificates, labeled “Gems of Mount Vernon,” authenticated the materials as genuine pieces of Washington’s world. They included some poetry on Washington’s character, an engraving of the man, and the official decrees of John Augustine Washington III and Mayor Magruder. The certificate stated:

A portion of this Timber was growing upon the same hill on which the Mansion and Tomb at Mount Vernon stand, and the whole of it on the original Mount Vernon Estate. Timber was of various kinds and adapted to almost every purpose to which it is commonly applied. During the continuance of my contract with Mr. Crutchett, I am positively prohibited from selling any wood or timber, grown on Mount Vernon, to any other person, so that no other than Mr. Crutchett can have any timber grown on Mount Vernon, to dispose of.

Magruder verified the good character of both Crutchett and Washington, stating that, “both parties are well known to me” and that their venture entirely proper. Some critics, however, did not see this as a proper means to commemorate Washington, but instead as a brazen attempt to exploit the patriotic nature of Americans. Upon hearing that Washington had sold “several thousand trees” to Crutchett, one commentator retorted through poetry:

The grows of England’s Windsor/No weedman’s ax invades; They stand  
as when the Tudors/Chased deer beneath their shades; But the forest of  
Mount Vernon/Guarding Washington’s remains/Are sold on  
speculation/To be peddled out in canes.

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<sup>51</sup> John Augustine Washington Diary March 29 1852-January 12 1856, July 13-24, 1854, Manuscript Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; John Augustine Washington III Farm Book January 1856-March 1857, February 2 and February 9, 1856, Manuscript Collection, FWSL. “Hellhole” was near the original wharf, and Washington referred to that area as such because it had no productive use. July 19-20, 1763, *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. Donald Jackson et. al (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 1, 312. Washington also mentions a “Pine Grove” near Hellhole, which is probably where John Augustine and Crutchett selected trees. See January 20, 1785, *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. Donald Jackson et. al (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 4, 78-79.

The article concluded, “Who says Republics are ungrateful?” Another correspondent noted, “John A. Washington, who seems to be determined to make the most of his ownership of Mount Vernon,” both violated his great uncle’s memory and directly profited from it. The author criticized Washington’s asking price of \$200,000 for the estate, arguing that, “he gets a thousand dollars per acre for land not intrinsically worth twenty...If this is not trafficking in the sacred dust of his ancestors, I know not what else to call it.”<sup>52</sup>

While Crutchett owned the right to produce Washington canes and memorabilia from the timber, this did not stop the selling of similar objects at Mount Vernon. In fact, many visitors seemed comfortable with purchasing items on site, but after the creation of the Mount Vernon Cane Manufactory, travelers began to view these objects in a more pejorative way. “J.A.H”, a correspondent for *The Liberator*, identified a “general slovenly thriftlessness” on the Mount Vernon grounds. Visitors were charged “twenty-five cents a head” and that “walking-sticks and bouquets” were sold for the same price. During a visit by the DeMolay Knights Templar in 1859, one correspondent observed that “the garden gate was closed, and inside it stood a venerable Negro peddling Mount

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<sup>52</sup> “The Mount Vernon Gem,” John Augustine Washington III, James Crutchett, and William Magruder, November 12, 1856, Broadside, Virginia Historical Society; Advertisement for “Mount Vernon Gem,” John Augustine Washington III, James Crutchett, and William Magruder, November 12, 1856, Manuscript Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; *The National Magazine*, April 1857; 10, 375; *Trenton State Gazette*, 29 April 1858. John Augustine’s negotiated offer to the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association was \$200,000 for 200 acres, the buildings, and the tomb. See “An Agreement between John A. Washington and the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association of the Union for the sale and purchase of the Estate of Mount Vernon, VA, April 6, 1858,” FWSL. See also Johnson, *Mount Vernon: The Story of a Shrine: An Account of the Rescue and Continuing Restoration of George Washington’s Home by The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association*, 20-21; Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 6-7. While Crutchett’s certificates claimed that the wood came from the “same hill” where Washington’s tomb laid, this was not true. The wood came from the southern side of the estate and along the eastern edge near Little Hunting Creek.

Vernon canes, flowers, etc.” In March 1859, a reporter for *Harper’s Magazine* was approached by “a well-dressed and intelligent little colored boy with canes cut from the forests on Mount Vernon for sale.” While Washington exclusively sold timber to Crutchett for his Mount Vernon business, there were no restrictions in their agreement regarding his *own* production and sale of Washington canes at Mount Vernon. These mementoes not only embodied the traveler’s experience visiting Mount Vernon, but they also linked the individual’s memory of Washington with a physical object. Canes, along with the other items sold at Mount Vernon, reinforced the idea that Washington’s tomb belonged to the people, but by the 1850s, that claim came with a price.<sup>53</sup>

The effort to democratize the memory of Washington for profit expanded beyond Mount Vernon for those who could not afford the time or money to travel. In the 1850s, the development of stereoscopy allowed more Americans to view Washington’s tomb without actually visiting it. This cultural craze spread across the country as viewers were baffled by the three-dimensional images that, with the help of specialized glasses, rose off the pages. Stereoscopic businesses ran advertisements for collections of images, many of which featured prints of Washington’s tomb and Mount Vernon. D. Appleton &

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<sup>53</sup> “A Visit to the Tomb of Washington,” JAH, 17 September 1858; 28, 38; reprint *The Ladies Repository*, February 1860; 20, 117; *Delaware State Reporter*, 10 June 1859, reprint of the *Boston Journal*; *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, March 1859, Vol. 18, 438; *The Sun*, 7 July 1858; West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums*, 6-7; John Augustine eventually sold Mount Vernon for a substantial amount, but Crutchett’s fate was not nearly as successful. The United States government seized his property during the Civil War and turned his factory into barracks for Union troops arriving on the Ohio and Baltimore Railroad. For the remainder of his life, he filed lawsuits and grievances against the federal government, but he neither recovered the property’s value nor the lost potential income from his business; Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, “Objects and the Museum,” *Isis* 96, no. 4 (December 2005): 559-571. Alberti contends that objects “prompted, changed, and acted as a medium for relationships,” and while he discusses more the associations between people and objects in a museum setting, this principle also appears to apply to Washington’s tomb and Mount Vernon. Visitors treated the grounds as an outdoor museum, and all objects were considered historically significant and noteworthy in their accounts.

Company sold illustrations of famous buildings, statues, and landscapes; among these images were waterfalls, natural landmarks, and Washington's final resting place. Dealers were instructed to sell these landscapes first as "they are very salable, and offer a larger margin for profit than any others." These boxes of stereoscopic images ranged from \$12 to \$40 per dozen and were sold in large commodities in major cities to smaller dealers, who then could sell smaller sets for a larger profit to consumers. Imagery offered ordinary Americans the opportunity to experience Washington's tomb at home, furthering their connection to the Father of his Country.<sup>54</sup>

Daguerreotypes, the early form of portrait photography, also took place at Washington's tomb, allowing individuals to capture their presence at the tomb in perpetuity. This new technology allowed individuals to capture an image and infuse it onto glass with a fine silver surface. While the first daguerreotypes took minutes to capture and required absolute stillness, improvements in photo-development shortened this process. Visitors could now remember their journey with pictures instead of canes, flowers, or fruit. The American Pharmaceutical Association had their picture taken at the tomb during their visit in 1858. Writing under the alias "Raconteur," or "storyteller" in French, one visitor encountered an "enterprising daguerreotypist" who offered his services "for a dollar" at Washington's tomb. Ranconteur believed that many people wished "to be coupled with the shrine," and their desire "enables the 'artist'" to transact an extensive business." The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association later adopted taking daguerreotypes and photographs of visitors as a means for additional income on site, as photographs became the new media sensation of the later half of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>54</sup> *American Publishers' Circular and Literary Gazette*, 18 June 1859; 5, 25; *American Publishers' Circular and Literary Gazette*, 23 July 1859; 5, 30.

No longer would travelers have to rely solely on their memory of their visit, as the daguerreotype provided an illustration for the sights and sounds of Mount Vernon.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to imagery of Washington's tomb and home, writers and publishers also capitalized on the transportation revolution's gains by churning out travel guidebooks for sightseers. Gideo Davison's *The Fashionable Tour* recommended that travelers visit both Mount Vernon and "[t]he Tomb of Washington," as it sat on "consecrated ground." Nathaniel Willis' *American Scenery* included descriptions and imagery of significant places to visit in the country. Not only did he recommend visiting Washington's tomb, but he also suggested that Mount Vernon be purchased by the government, the roads leading to the estate be improved, and persons employed "to conduct strangers" around the sacred place. James Hamilton Young published a series of small travel books that included demographic and geographic information for Virginia, along with colored maps of the state with labeled steamboat and railroad routes for travelers who had no familiarity with the state of Virginia. All of these travel guides gave tourists some contextualization for their visit, and with Young's multiple publications of travel routes, information on the easiest and most cost-efficient way to reach Mount Vernon.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *American Journal of Pharmacy*, January 1859; 31; 84; *Commercial Advertiser*, 10 July 1860; *Hartford Daily Courant*, 28 May 1863; daguerreotypes would later become crucial to the memory processes of both the North and South during and after the American Civil War. See Reiko Hillyer, "Relics of Reconciliation: The Confederate Museum and Civil War Memory in the New South," *The Public Historian* 33, no. 4 (November 2011): 35-62. These prints became the visual stills for the war, and former-Confederates used them to emphasize the honor, sacrifice, and human loss associated with Lost Cause Ideology.

<sup>56</sup> Gideo Davison, *The Fashionable Tour: An Excursion to the Springs, Niagara, Quebec, and through the New England States* (Saratoga Springs: G.M. Davison, 1828), 25; Nathaniel P. Willis, *American Scenery; or Land, Lake, and River Illustrations of Transatlantic Nature* (London: George Virtue, 1839), 113-114; James Hamilton Young, *The Tourist's Pocket Map of the State of Virginia* (Washington D.C.: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1835, 1839, 1847), University of Virginia Library Special Collections.



As interest grew for both travel books and excursions, authors offered more detailed accounts to entice buyers and guide visitors to Washington's tomb. J.M. Hensel and C.H. DeWolfe produced a small reader on Washington and his life at Mount Vernon, giving readers a comprehensive history of the family, the tombs, and a full-sized map of the grounds with labeled buildings. Competing with this guidebook was James Wineberger's *Home of Washington at Mount Vernon*, a concise travel book that offered readers a pocket-sized guide to everything Washington, including familial genealogy, Washington's life at Mount Vernon, and short entries on the major sites to see at the estate. It also included specific details on the old tomb, the efforts to build a new family vault, and the process of entombing Washington in his marble sarcophagus. These authors offered travelers vital information for their journey to Mount Vernon, and the multitude of editions also suggests that these were not only popular but also successfully marketed to tourists. Travel guides and transportation made Washington's tomb more readily available for Americans, but the production of Washington regalia and imagery allowed more consumers to own a tangible piece of Washington's legacy.<sup>57</sup>

While the growth of transportation methods and products of Washington lore brought more Americans into contact with the American past, the tomb remained the most significant nexus of interaction between visitors and George Washington. It was always considered the most important spot at Mount Vernon with its sacred citizen. The tomb drew tourists to Mount Vernon, making Washington's grave a source of potential income that John Augustine Washington refused to ignore. As such, fears over the

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<sup>57</sup> C.M. Hensel and C.H. DeWolfe, *Pedigree of Washington, and a History of Mount Vernon, From 1743 to 1859, Embracing a Description of the Tombs, Monuments, and Mansion of Washington* (Philadelphia: Harris, Printer, 1859); James Albert Wineberger, *Home of Washington at Mount Vernon and its Associations* (Washington: McGill & Witherow Printers and Stereotypes, 1858), 56-72.

possible exploitation of this site incited debate over Washington's burial place and the need for government intervention to save it from speculation. Calls for preserving Mount Vernon and securing Washington's remains were often patriotic in nature, but they also played on greater societal anxieties that Washington could be sold or partitioned to the highest bidder. Some of these concerns were rooted in the fear that the public could lose Washington to a capitalistic enterprise, severing the connection between the man and the people. Other commentators, influenced by the first major wave of immigration to the United States and nativism, employed fiery rhetoric to encourage Americans to save Mount Vernon from possible foreign control. Even Washington's body had tremendous economic value, and as capitalism transformed Americans and their outlook on daily life, these changes also created apprehensions that his body would be exploited for monetary gain. It also frequently entered the social and political discourse over who was considered "American".<sup>58</sup>

The origins of these fears began with the rumors in 1829 that someone attempted to steal George Washington's body. As Congress debated purchasing the estate, one correspondent for the *New-Bedford Mercury* called for government action, fearing that "the property shall be divided and sold to the highest bidder, and every precious relique of the Father of our Country made the object of mercenary speculation." The article also referenced an attempted grave robbing "by an English gardener, employed at Mount

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<sup>58</sup> Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), 121-184; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955). This is still considered one of the best surveys of the rise of Nativism. For a more recent history on immigration and its impact into the twentieth century, see John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). For more on the historical processes of "forgetting" that American was a nation of immigrants, see Ali Behdad, *A Forgetful Nation: On Immigration and Cultural Identity in the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 3-22.

Vernon” who intended to take the bones to Europe for an exhibition. This miscreant “stole the bones of Lawrence Washington...mistaking them for those of the General, and secreted them on the margin of the river, whence he was to take them with him on his departure for England.” This fear that Washington’s body might be stolen and transported abroad was not a new one, and throughout the nineteenth century commentators often dramatized theft as a catalyst to encourage politicians to purchase Mount Vernon and guard the precious remains of Washington under lock and key. The story of the grave robbing and the memory of it, however, merit further examination to understand how Americans perceived the pecuniary value of George Washington’s remains.<sup>59</sup>

The first rumored attempt to steal Washington’s remains came about in 1824. One contributor for the *Eastern Argus* informed readers that, “the neglected remains of Washington lately came near being dragged from the place of their quiet and humble repose in Mount Vernon, and carried across the Atlantic to be exhibited to the populace of England, and perhaps other countries of Europe, as a Public Show!” The very thought of “the bones of Washington, travelling through the cities of Europe” was enough to infuriate even the most passive American, and this writer encouraged Congress to give Washington a proper tomb. Within this tract the writer quoted the rumored theft from another newspaper, *The New-York American*, which told its readers that “the corpse of Lund Washington taken out by mistake for the coffin of the General.” This statement raises doubts on the credibility of such a story since Lund Washington, George Washington’s distant cousin who had managed the estate for the General during the

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<sup>59</sup> *New-Bedford Mercury*, 4 December 1829.

American Revolution, was not entombed at Mount Vernon. Thus, this story featuring the removal of Lund's coffin appears dubious at best.<sup>60</sup>

The rumored account identified the man responsible for such heinous misconduct as “the gardener of Judge Washington, an Englishman,” who “broke into the vault for the purpose of carrying the body of the General to England as a show.” The writer asked his audience to imagine the indignation Americans would feel if they “heard that the body of Washington was exposed as a shilling show to the British people,” and advocated that Congress ought to purchase Mount Vernon from the Washington family as a “possession of the nation.” Even the Masonic brotherhood circulated the story as a means to bring awareness to their own political agenda: “Indeed it has been said that a person was detected the past winter, who had purloined some of the bones, for the purpose of conveying them to England to exhibit as a curiosity.” The Masons used the rumor to open dialogue between lodges and raise funds for a new, Masonic tomb at Mount Vernon. Again, there is little evidence to suggest that these reports were true, but it did facilitate discourse over the condition of Washington's tomb and the need for a new vault. It also identified the vandal as an “Englishman,” furthering anti-British sentiments and reinforcing pejorative attitudes towards immigrant laborers.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Eastern Argus*, 20 April, 1824; *North Star*, 22 June 1824 reprinted from *Claremont Spectator*; George Washington to Lund Washington, March 28, 1781, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1937): 21, 385-387. Even during the Revolution, Washington frequently wrote Lund, asking him about the year's harvest, the status of contracts for rented land, and what livestock were born in his absence. He also asked a plethora of questions and gave “suggestions,” which from Lund's perspective seemed more like a list of demands.

<sup>61</sup> *Eastern Argus*, 20 April, 1824; *North Star*, 22 June 1824 reprinted from *Claremont Spectator*; This rumor was repeated again after Bushrod Washington's death in November 1829. See *New-Bedford Mercury*, 4 December 1829. It is interesting that the gardener was labeled as an “Englishman,” but in terms of the wider historical context, it makes sense since Britons (English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish) were the largest transplanted group until the 1830s. While Great Britain was not yet an ally, the memory of the War of 1812 and the American Revolution lingered in

A correspondent for the *New-Bedford Mercury* repeated this story of the attempted theft, but noted that Bushrod's passing in 1829 offered a new opportunity for discussion over the purchase of the estate. If the government failed to act, the writer imagined that Mount Vernon, "in the hands of some future proprietor," would be turned "into a public house" where it shall "become the resort of convivial parties, from the neighboring country, and be daily profaned by the presence, the sports and the quarrels of the drunken and riotous." Although this writer ignored the fact that the Washington family retained ownership, prophesizing Mount Vernon and Washington's tomb as places of debauchery and excess encouraged conversation over the role of the government in preserving his tomb and memory. It also spoke to the fears of a growing capitalist order, one that would permit an individual to monopolize Mount Vernon and profit from the memory of Washington at the expense of patriotic citizens.<sup>62</sup>

While these earlier tales appear specious in nature, a real theft did take place in late 1830. A columnist in the *Portland Evening Advertiser* published a conversation with an elderly slave guide's version of the attempted theft of Washington's body. "It seems from his account, that Fisher, the person who attempted this outrage, was one of the servants of the family, and of a daring and abandoned character. In the words of our attendant, he was 'a might bad puppy.'" This visitor assumed that "Fisher" intended to flee the country "with his prey" and make some sort of "speculation with it." Fisher however did not succeed because the coffin was too well secured. Instead, he took the

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American minds, and until the first major wave of immigration arrived in the 1830s, British activities in the Oregon territory made Americans suspicious of British arrivals. These fears would dissipate as German, Irish, Scandinavian, and Polish immigrants were identified as a greater threat to nativist designs in the mid-nineteenth century; Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 182-184.

<sup>62</sup> *New-Bedford Mercury*, 4 December 1829.

skulls of a male relative of Washington and a female child. He then tried to set the mansion on fire, but was prevented from doing so. The guide later mentioned that, “the skulls were found sewed up in his bed clothes.” While there were several children of the Washington kin buried in the old tomb, one wonders if the removal of a child’s skull was added to sensationalize the story.<sup>63</sup>

The surviving records tell us very little about this disgruntled former employee of Mount Vernon. If the slave’s version of the story is accurate, it seems that Fisher could have very well been an English gardener who was terminated sometime in 1830. The surname does have English origins, but this does not necessarily mean the culprit hailed from England. The Washington family often hired foreigner gardeners dating back to George Washington’s ownership of the estate, but the account’s use of the word “servant” also suggests that this individual could have possibly been a slave. Nineteenth-century writers frequently used the word servant instead of slave, and in this account the writer referred to the aged slave guide as “an old black, a servant of the family, and formerly a slave of Washington.” Slave was only used in this context to establish the connection between the guide and George Washington, but “servant” was the preferred nomenclature for “slave.” There are also no records indicating that anyone attempted to

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<sup>63</sup> The records in the Fred W. Smith Library acknowledge that a former employee broke into the old tomb and made off with a skull, though it belonged to a relative of Bushrod Washington’s wife. There is also another version that maintains that the thief successfully disembarked from Mount Vernon but was later captured in an Alexandria boarding house. He was found drunk with the skull beside him. This story seems to be mostly legend, and gives more credibility to the aged slave’s version of the story, published in the *Portland Evening Advertiser*, reprinted in the *New York Mercury*, 25 April 1832. See also Tomb Notebook, FWSL. Mount Vernon records indicate that an attempted theft took place in 1830 by a “disgruntled former employee,” but that individual was caught before he could abscond with the skull. Nineteenth century historian Benson Lossing repeated this story in his monograph on Mount Vernon. See Benson Lossing, *George Washington’s Mount Vernon* (Fairfax, VA: The Fairfax Press, 1859), 344-345.

start a fire, and the Washington family remained silent on this episode. While the documentation is scant, it appears that someone did try to steal Washington's body from the old vault. Their identity and legal status, however, remain lost to history. The decision to fulfill one of Washington's final wishes in building a new family vault came shortly thereafter, and the new tomb was completed in the spring of 1831.<sup>64</sup>

This obsession with Washington's body, and the fear that someone might confiscate it for some grand economic scheme, resonated with more contemporary issues in nineteenth-century America. The influx of immigrants in the 1830s onward sparked nativist backlash against those considered "un-American," namely the Irish, Germans, Polish, and especially Roman Catholics. Racial and ethnic prejudice towards foreigners even found its way into the discourse over the memory of Washington. In February 1832, as Congress debated possibly moving Washington's body to the Capitol, one newspaper reminded readers that, "the remains...where they now rest, rendered an attempt to rob it of its contents almost certain of success. It was asserted that such a robbery had been contemplated by certain foreigners, and that in fact, some years ago, a gardener, in the employment of Judge Washington, did enter and rob the tomb." This foreign villain intended "to exhibit them in England," but accidentally dragged Lawrence Washington's coffin out of the tomb. When the perpetrator realized his mistake, "he left it on the bank of the river, concealed in the brush-wood, where it was discovered some

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<sup>64</sup> *New York Mercury*, 25 April 1832. While later documentation from Mount Vernon suggests that there was a theft attempted to remove Washington's body, there are no records indicating who committed the act or what happened to the thief. It is believed that the attempt, along with the tomb's crumbling appearance, finally convinced Washington's last living executor, Lawrence Lewis, to build a new tomb as Washington desired in his will.

days after.” The theft became another justification for government intervention to save Washington’s remains from possible foreign exploitation.<sup>65</sup>

After John Augustine Washington Jr. refused both the federal government and the state of Virginia the right to Washington’s body in 1832, only the purchase of the Mount Vernon estate would allow one of these authorities to possess and guard Washington’s physical remains. Editors and columnists called upon their representatives, initiated small fundraising campaigns, and pleaded with the wider populace to save Mount Vernon and Washington’s tomb. If they failed to do so, what would stop the Washington family from privately selling to an individual? One correspondent for the *New Hampshire Patriot* advocated for government ownership to prevent the sale of Mount Vernon “to the highest bidder, who might be an agent of some Turk or other foreigner, who would then have the power to exact tribute from, or levy a tax in the shape of admission fees, on all persons visiting these consecrated grounds.” Another rumor insinuated that “a gentleman” interested in purchasing the estate wished to build a “colony of foreigners, German or Swiss,” who could “establish a garden and nursery” and give “free admission and access” to all who sought out Washington’s tomb. American commentators fretted that Mount Vernon might become a “gaudy show case, and the whole spot outlandishly vandalized by some poor devil of an Italian or Bohemian Jew.” One editorial for the *Gleason’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* warned that the property was vulnerable to the free market, reporting a rumor that a company was conspiring to build a “spacious

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<sup>65</sup> “Attempt to Steal the Remains of Washington,” *The Portsmouth Journal of Literature and Politics*, 25 February 1832; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 2 March 1832. Lawrence Washington is entombed at Mount Vernon, so this article is correct in that regard; Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 121-184; Dale Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 21-38.



hotel upon the grounds” and make it a summer resort. “It should be the nation’s property, when it passes from the hands of the Washington family,” the writer concluded. These critics perpetuated fears that final resting place of Washington might fall into the hands of ruthless capitalists or immoral foreigners. They also promoted the idea that the government needed to preserve Mount Vernon for the American people and protect it from speculation and outsiders.<sup>66</sup>

As the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association (MVLA) and John Augustine Washington III discussed the sale of the estate, observers still suspected some type of foul play regarding Washington’s body and the transfer of the property. One columnist for the *New York Monthly Magazine* commented that John Augustine “evidently knows now the market value of bones; and has only taken scant care of his illustrious kinsman’s remains, because he could not foresee their present importance.” This writer suggested that the MVLA demand “a perfect and entire skeleton,” and that if the American people contributed to funding the purchase, they deserved the right to inspect the human remains to ensure that the tomb “has not been violated,” or that “some enterprising Yankee has not carried off the revered tibia of *Pater Patriae*, or is not now in possession of his false teeth.” All Americans wanted, according to this piece, was the “bones, all the bones, and nothing but the bones!” Again, their patriotism was infused with nativist sentiment, as “all manner of Jewry will be in the market, with a glut of celebrated skeletons, until the heroic bones of the age will become merchandise as dubious as Mr. [Phineas] Barnum’s

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<sup>66</sup> *New Hampshire Patriot*, 21 October 1847; *Dwight’s American Magazine and Family Newspaper*, 1 March 1848; *The Sun*, 12 May 1847; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 28 May 1857; *Gleason’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, 29 October 1853; 5, 18, 273; Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 121-184; Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 90-101.

mastodons and megatheriums.” Another contributor echoed these sentiments, calling upon readers to “[b]ring forward your dimes, and rescue the bones of Washington lest this collateral but degenerate descendant sell them to be exhibited in Barnum’s Museum.” One writer for the *Trenton State Gazette* callously referred to John Augustine as the “Shylock of Mount Vernon,” demeaning his negotiations as nothing more than Jewish trickery. While Washington memorabilia, imagery, and Mount Vernon excursions facilitated the democratization of his memory, the ownership of his remains sparked fears that his memory could be exploited by capitalism.<sup>67</sup>

By the time the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association took possession of the estate, tens of thousands of Americans had visited Washington’s tomb. Even more were regaled with the experiences of these journeys in newspapers, magazines, periodicals, and letters. The accessibility of the site, aided by carriages, omnibuses, railroads, and steamboats, grew exponentially from the 1830s onward. More and more Americans traveled to see the final resting place of Washington, and in doing so, democratized his memory both individually and collectively. At the same time, businessmen, tavern and hotel owners, travel agents and coach drivers, steamboat captains, travel guide writers, artists, and even Washington’s family profited from the journeys to Mount Vernon and the consumption of Washington memorabilia. Competing carriage and steamboat lines forced these

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<sup>67</sup> *The Knickerbocker or New York Monthly Magazine*, February 1859; 53,2; *The Independent*, 30 December 1858; 5, 526; *Trenton State Gazette*, 11 May 1858; A.H. Saxon, *P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 96-100; Blueford Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman & the Making of U.S. Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 77-78; This comparison of John Augustine Washington III with a Jewish money trader might have been a veiled insult to United States Commodore Uriah Levy. Levy purchased Monticello from the Jefferson family in the 1830s, and owned it until the Confederate United States seized the estate during the American Civil War. See Marc Leepson, *Saving Monticello: The Levy Family’s Epic Quest to Rescue the House that Jefferson Built* (New York: Free Press, 2001).

businesses to be extremely competitive with one another, offering travelers more value for their money. Many of these excursions were two dollars or less, the equivalent of a few days' wages for the common laborer in the nineteenth century. The transformation of travel, along with the rise of wages leading up to the Civil War, brought many different Americans to Washington's tomb.<sup>68</sup>

For those who could not afford such a trip, businesses offered other ways that they could experience Washington's grave. Stereographs and daguerreotypes allowed Americans to take in the scenery of Mount Vernon without the time or expense of travel. These were very profitable ventures but more importantly they transported viewers directly to the simple tomb, connecting Washington to more Americans. Without fully realizing it, these attempts to benefit from the memory of Washington actually gave more Americans the right to claim him as one of their own, regardless of their class, political views, gender, or social status. While many historians have correctly identified the inequalities and exploitation related to America's shift towards capitalism, the memory of Washington resisted such monopolization, allowing producers the opportunity to recast him and consumers the freedom to connect with him either in person or, for the right price, from afar.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *The Sun*, 15 March 1853; this article mentions that in about two weeks time, about "twelve hundred persons have visited the tomb of Washington." It is entirely plausible that by the time of the Civil War, tens of thousands had visited Washington's tomb and Mount Vernon. See Johnson, *Mount Vernon: The Story of a Shrine: An Account of the Rescue and Continuing Restoration of George Washington's Home by The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association*, 20-21.

<sup>69</sup> West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, 6-7; David Glassberg, "Public History and the Study of Memory," *The Public Historian* 18, no. 2 (Spring, 1996): 7-23; Philip Burnham, *How the Other Half Lived: A People's Guide to American Historic Sites* (Winchester, MA: Faber and Faber Inc., 1995), 213. Glassberg and Burnham's assessment of the resistance of historic sites to incorporate social history perspectives represents a wider problem in public history, but it also echoes the issues facing Americans in the nineteenth century at Mount Vernon.

## Chapter 3

## Cultivators of Legend: Washington

## Storytellers and the Slave Communities at Mount Vernon

## POOR OLD ALTAMONT !

Died in this city, on the 22d instant, Altamont, a colored man, in the 94th year of his age. During the old man's long life, his character was proverbial for stern integrity and fidelity; and there is something romantic in his history. He was originally the property of Lawrence Washington, of King George county, Virginia, nephew of General Washington. When the Revolution broke out, Altamont was given to Colonel George Washington, and was with his young master in all the leading battles in the South, ending with the siege of Yorktown.

-*The North Star*, 5 May 1848

In a country fixated on politics, economic policy, and social ascendancy, the death of a former slave rarely made headlines. Originally reported by the *Washington Saturday News* and reprinted in the African-American newspapers *The National Era* and *The North Star*, this obituary told the story of Altamont, a former slave of General George Washington's family. According to his obituary, Altamont was sold to one "Dr. Barry, and went with that gentleman to Tennessee." After years of faithful service Barry freed him for good conduct, and Altamont wished to return to Virginia to find family and visit the places he remembered as a boy. Unfortunately, "there was not one human face, white or black, that recognized him, or whom he remembered." With nowhere to turn, Altamont traveled to Washington D.C. For the short remainder of his life, he sold apples

and cakes outside the Treasury Building, seeking charity and sharing his stories with anyone who would listen.<sup>1</sup>

A year earlier, Altamont first appeared in *The National Era* as a “relic of a past age.” The author encouraged readers to seek out this “old colored man” near the Treasury, and give him a “friendly salutation, even if you have not a dime or a half dime to bestow to relieve his necessities, for you will find him the repository of much information connected with past events.” Altamont told strangers about his remarkable life, training horses for George Washington’s cousin Lund Washington and General Andrew Jackson. He had stood alongside “George Washington” during the Revolution and saw the surrender of British General Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown. He also had a penchant for nostalgia, arguing that Generals Winfield Scott and Zachary Taylor were “nothing to old George and General Jackson.” Altamont’s ability to mix his own personal history with the American past gave a younger generation of listeners and readers new perspectives and appreciation for the nation’s departed heroes. By associating himself with the founding generation, Altamont became a local celebrity, and he used that platform to earn a meager living towards the end of his life.<sup>2</sup>

These two newspaper articles, one written near the end of Altamont’s life and the other his obituary, offer rather incredulous details about a former slave’s adventures in nineteenth-century America. The Washington family genealogy, however, raises some doubt about the veracity of Altamont’s autobiography. In the earlier article, it mentions

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<sup>1</sup> *The National Era*, 6 April 1848; *The North Star* 5 May 1848.

<sup>2</sup> *The National Era*, 19 August 1847; I have not come across documentation to verify Altamont’s life experiences. While plausible, there are no historical records to confirm or deny his connections to the Washington or Jackson family. His narrative also appears in a number of other newspapers; See *The Daily Picayune*, 24 April 1846; *Farmer’s Cabinet*, 25 June 1846; for another obituary see *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 6 April 1848.

that Altamont “trained horses at Mount Vernon...first for old Lund Washington.” Lund Washington never owned the Mount Vernon estate; it was owned by Lawrence Washington, George’s older half-brother. In the obituary, it states that Altamont was “originally the property of Lawrence Washington, of King George county, Virginia.” Augustine Washington, Lawrence and George’s father, left his sons land and slaves after his death in 1743. Lawrence received land near Little Hunting Creek and the small family house nearby, later renamed Mount Vernon for Lawrence’s naval commander in the War of Jenkins’ Ear, Admiral Edward Vernon. After the death of his widow, Mount Vernon passed to George Washington in 1754, and if Altamont was ninety-four when he died in 1848 this would put his birth right around the same time. Altamont’s name does not appear in either Augustine or Lawrence Washington’s wills, but this was common for wealthier slaveholders. Slaves were often split for inheritances by total number, not by individuals or families. This gave executors more flexibility in dividing the slave population more equally for the heirs and allowed them to avoid separating family members, though this was not always the case.<sup>3</sup>

The two articles also mention Altamont’s presence at major battles of the American Revolution, most prominently Yorktown. He accompanied “Captain George Washington” and “Colonel George Washington” in the process, but was this the mythical General George Washington? Lawrence had left inheritance to his widow Anne and their one surviving child Sarah, but both passed away in 1754. As a result, Lawrence’s

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<sup>3</sup> *The National Era*, 19 August 1847; *The National Era*, 6 April 1848; The Will of Lawrence Washington, *Wills of George Washington and his Immediate Ancestors*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (Brooklyn, NY: Historical Printing Club, 1891), 72-79. Lund Washington did reside at Mount Vernon as manager of the plantation during the American Revolution, but according to Altamont, he was already by George Washington’s side during the war.

property was divided amongst his brothers John Augustine, Samuel, Charles, and George. This included the slaves of Lawrence, but the obituary states that Altamont was “given to Colonel George Washington” when the war broke out. In his diaries and Revolutionary War entries, Washington never referenced a slave or servant named Altamont. The only one he does mention is William Lee, his personal attendant who famously served alongside the General throughout the war.<sup>4</sup>

Altamont’s first exclusive also touted the story that he had trained horses at the Hermitage for General Andrew Jackson. He was so skilled at developing horses for sport, that this correspondent nicknamed him the “black William R. Johnson of his day,” mighty high praise considering Johnson was called the “Napoleon of the turf” for his dominance in the sport of horse racing. The proclaimed connection to Andrew Jackson offers another opportunity to dig deeper into Altamont’s account, and despite Jackson’s deep passion for horse racing, breeding, and betting, he never mentioned Altamont or a remarkable slave horse trainer at the Hermitage in his papers. Considering that Jackson had recently passed away in 1845, this might have been Altamont’s attempt to reach both older and younger audiences with his personal stories of America’s generals, George Washington and Andrew Jackson. The existing historical evidence does not support

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<sup>4</sup> *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. Donald Jackson, et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1976-1979), 6 volumes; George Washington to Captain Caleb Gibbs, May 1, 1777, *The Papers of George Washington*, Philander Chase, et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1987-), Revolutionary War Series, 9, 320-323; Varick Transcript, November 21, 1778, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Philander Chase, et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1987-), Revolutionary War Series, 18, 247-248; Varick Transcript Dr. James Thatcher, May 14, 1779, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Philander Chase, et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1987-), Revolutionary War Series, 20, 480-481; George Washington’s Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. William Abbot et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 480.

Altamont's version of events, but at the same time there is little evidence to disprove his odyssey.<sup>5</sup>

Altamont's experiences, true or untrue, offer interesting insights to the evolution of American memory and celebrity culture in the nineteenth century. Slaves and former slaves of old age were commonly perceived as worthless because of their inability to perform hard labor or work long hours. They were often assigned menial tasks, such as cleaning, sweeping, and other basic household duties, and their assessed value reflected societal beliefs that they were worth much less compared to younger slaves. As travel and tourism grew in the nineteenth century, these elderly individuals were sought out for their anecdotes and personal memories of America's early heroes. Some, like Altamont, created their own audience by sharing their stories with the outside world, but for slaves and free blacks living at Mount Vernon, the spectators came to them, eager to learn more about their former master. These social and economic outcasts, mostly black and foreign-born, were the first major interpreters and agents of a developing, American historical tourism. While many were either trapped in bondage or contractual employment, these guides achieved some degree of agency by regaling visitors with firsthand histories of George Washington, capturing both the imaginations of their audience along with tokens for their service.

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<sup>5</sup> *The National Era*, 19 August 1847; Timothy Breen, *Puritans and Adventurers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 148-163; *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, eds. Sam Smith, Harold Moser, Daniel Feller et al. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980-), 9 volumes. William R. Johnson was a famous horse breeder and gambler most known for his \$20,000 bet against Cornelius Van Ranst to race his unbeatable horse American Eclipse against Johnson's Henry in May 1823 at Union Course in New York. See *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1870), 42; 94-95. The race was highly sectional, and Eclipse won two of three heats, defeating Henry and wounding Southern pride.



Over 150 years after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, slavery and its lingering effects continue to enter our political discourse in discussions of poverty, education, voting rights, and the expansion of government support programs. This is not a new debate, nor is it one in which historians avoided participating. Until Kenneth Stamp's *The Peculiar Institution*, most white historians characterized slavery as not only benevolent towards African Americans but also a necessity for economic development in a growing American and world economy. Stamp's work challenged these assumptions, arguing that slaves were often malnourished, given poor living conditions, and victims of horrific cruelty. By embracing this system of labor, white Americans institutionalized a virulent form of racism that endured far beyond the surrender at Appomattox. Stamp's work coincided with the long Civil Rights Movement, a social crusade that sought to challenge the same racial stereotypes and social inequalities that Stamp highlighted in his groundbreaking work. Stanley Elkins' provocative thesis on the psychological effects of American slavery proved to be much more controversial, as he contended that slave owners stripped slaves of their identity, culture, language, and traditions, transforming them into docile and submissive objects. While scholars and experts from a variety of disciplines challenged Elkins's "Sambo thesis," it did successfully shift the debate beyond the question of the institution's brutality towards understanding how slaves lived and survived under such extreme conditions.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 3-10. Aside from African-American historians such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Benjamin Quarles, white historians had followed this line of inquiry regarding slavery. The best example of this is Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1918); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 82-86. Elkins compared

In the 1960s and 1970s historians began asking new questions about slave life, and by using alternative sources and theories, drew substantially different conclusions. John Blassingame's *The Slave Community* put slaves at the forefront, and in doing so examined the social and cultural underpinnings of African-American traditions, kinship, and religion. By using former slave narratives, sources that were typically dismissed by previous scholars, Blassingame discovered the roots of a distinct African-American culture that could be identified in many slave communities. Slaves were often religious, sang folk songs or shared tales, participated in dances, and created music with handmade instruments. Despite the oppressive nature of the plantation system and the control whites maintained over blacks, these cultural expressions gave slaves a sense of autonomy, and their quarters might serve as a space to retreat from the abusive and harsh existence imposed upon them. For Blassingame, the fact that African-American culture retained many elements of this slave culture proved that slavery failed to completely dehumanize African Americans. Eugene Genovese masterfully supported this idea in his magnum opus, *Roll Jordan Roll*, where he detailed the processes and efforts to create a world in which that slaves could not only persist but also thrive. While Blassingame contended that family was the most important element of social and cultural cohesion, Genovese countered that religion better illuminated the everyday relations between slave and master.<sup>7</sup>

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the psychological damage inflicted upon concentration camp survivors with slaves experiencing slavery.

<sup>7</sup> John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 41-42; Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), xvi; Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Thought From Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Roger D. Abrahams, *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African American Culture in the Plantation South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).

Recent scholarship on slave narratives has applied literacy criticism and theory to illuminate the foundations of African and Afro-American traditions. Challenging the Western argument that literacy is indicative of culture, Henry Louis Gates Jr. argued that oral traditions and performances were crucial elements of a black literary world often overlooked or disregarded by scholars. Gates explored the rhetorical strategies of the “Signifying Monkey,” a trickster figure with roots in the Yoruba tradition, contending that trickster figures were in fact mediators of culture. According to Gates, “Signifyin(g) is a trope in which are subsumed several other rhetorical tropes, including metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony (the master tropes), and also hyperbole, litotes, and metalepsis.” Signifying defined the black vernacular, shaping African and African-American folklore, music, songs, poetry, narratives, and conversation. As slaves were forcibly transported to the New World, they clung to their cultural traditions to escape the prolonged trauma and violence. African traditions not only endured the Middle Passage but also shaped African-American culture, where storytellers and tricksters became tropes of black literary discourse. Slaves at Mount Vernon shared many of these cultural abilities as storytellers, but they also used their performances to profit from naïve tourists, inform visitors of the depravity of slavery, and ennoble themselves by associating with George Washington.<sup>8</sup>

While this particular chapter does not specifically focus on the institution of slavery, it does explore slavery at Mount Vernon and how slaves, free blacks, and foreign-born laborers interacted with white visitors on a regular basis. Past studies of

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<sup>8</sup> Henry Louis Gates Jr., *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the “Racial” Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 235-276; Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 52.

Mount Vernon and the memory of Washington have focused much more on the major actors—Washington’s descendants, the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, prominent politicians—instead of the individuals on the ground. Recent cultural histories, however, have explored the relationships between those in political and social power with those forging the site’s traditions. Jean Lee’s research highlighted the importance of Mount Vernon as a site of historical nostalgia, a place set in the past where Americans sought sanctuary from a turbulent present. Seth Bruggemen’s examination of George Washington’s birthplace illuminates how the dynamic of myth, history, and memory shaped preservation and commemorative practices. But the most significant contribution to this dialogue came from historian Scott Casper in his investigation of the slave communities at Mount Vernon during the long nineteenth century. As one community was sold or split by inheritance, a new group of slaves arrived at George Washington’s estate. They learned the land and the history of the farm from those who remained behind. They married into existing slave or free black families, and they shared oral traditions that became the foundational stories of Mount Vernon’s historical past.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the more prominent slaves and former slaves of the Washington family featured in Casper’s work—Oliver Smith, West Ford, Hannah Parker, and Sarah Johnson—make brief appearances in this chapter, but this study focuses more on the unknown slaves and free blacks of Mount Vernon. White visitors often described their

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<sup>9</sup> Jean B. Lee, “Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001); Seth Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 11-18; Scott Casper, *Sarah Johnson’s Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang Press, 2008), 4-7; William Dusinberre, *Strategies for Survival: Recollections of Bondage in Antebellum Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 7-12.

guides in terms of race or social status, leaving their actual identities a mystery. The volume of visitors, however, demanded more than a handful of notable guides. By the 1850s, hundreds of Americans were visiting Mount Vernon each week, and through the collective efforts of many free and enslaved black men and women, tourists heard the stories that linked them to Washington. Travelers penned these experiences in letters, diaries, journals, and published them in newspapers and periodicals. While it is difficult to quantify their impact, black guides were the primary Washington storytellers on site, and they certainly influenced visitors and readers with carefully crafted narratives and performances. Historian Lawrence Levine has argued that slave versions of history were often enhanced by their delivery and creativity, two traits common in black culture. Black storytellers engaged their audiences, responding to comments, questions, and emotions to facilitate a more communal experience. They acknowledged the aura of Washington but at the same time humanized the man, speaking of his qualities, interests, and convictions. They provided some of the memories that white Americans desired, and in doing so reinforced pieces of the Washington legend. At other times, they took the ideas of the day and wove them into their histories, most notably abolitionism and Washington's emancipation of his slaves.<sup>10</sup>

The cultural ethos of Washington's legacy encouraged visitors to seek his tomb and home, and his descendants had little control over the flow of these crowds. They longed for familial privacy, but also understood how important Washington was to the

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<sup>10</sup> Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 8-184; Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Thought From Slavery to Freedom*, 88-9. Nineteenth-century travelers tended to use the word "servant" for published accounts, whereas private journals and letters used "servant", "slave", and "negro". White travelers tended to preferred servant because it sounded more pleasant than slave. I have inferred that any encounters between visitors and servants were therefore slaves of the Washington family.

wider American populace. Unable and sometimes unwilling to entertain guests, the Washingtons fulfilled their public obligation by using laborers, slaves, and servants to interact with travelers. Slaves and laborers became the primary Washington storytellers, delighting visitors with the stories passed down through their families and kin. While the Washington family assigned the chore, slaves wrote their scripts, constructing a Washington that was both appealing to visitors and profitable for themselves. While this chapter relies primarily on the accounts and observations of white travelers, there are remarkable similarities in these slave stories. Many of these tales lingered up to the American Civil War, which suggests that slaves were not only sharing the same narratives with visitors but also amongst themselves, passing them through the porous slave community at Mount Vernon. While the evidence suggests many of these guides were not actually slaves of George Washington, their ability to elaborate on his character promoted the idea that Washington belonged to the people and the parallels in their narratives suggest that slaves were also sharing stories to profit from Washington admirers.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*; There was a similar trend happening at Monticello after Jefferson retired from politics. See Merrill Peterson, *Visitors to Monticello* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989) and Marc Leepson, *Saving Monticello: The Levy Family's Epic Quest to Rescue the House that Jefferson Built* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 15-23. While Jefferson inspired his own cult of admirers, there are some differences. First, Mount Vernon received more visitors because of its proximity to Washington D.C. and more readily available means of transportation. Second, Washington was revered by many Americans, whereas Jefferson seemed to attract those more in line with his political ideology. Finally, Jefferson's family immediately sold it to pay off debt, and it eventually found its way into the hands of Commodore Uriah Levy in 1834. Levy did employ slaves and hired laborers to restore the estate, but these were not Monticello slaves. In 1827 and 1829, Jefferson's slaves were sold to eliminate his debt. In contrast, some Washington's freed slaves did stay at Mount Vernon under the terms of his will, and their stories were shared and passed on to new members of the slave community every time a new Washington inherited the estate; I. Scott Philywa, "Washington and Slavery," *A Companion to George Washington*, ed. Edward Lengel (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 104-120.

Despite being one of Virginia's wealthiest slave owners, George Washington struggled in his later years to reconcile his conscience with the inhumanity of slavery. In 1786 Washington wrote to the revolutionary financier Robert Morris, "[t]here is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it [slavery]; but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, and that is by Legislative authority." Washington's letter criticized the Society of Quakers in Philadelphia for their lawsuit seeking the freedom of a friend's slave, but his thoughts on abolitionism suggest that he was a man deeply conflicted over the issue. As the oft-celebrated figure of freedom and liberty, Washington felt uncomfortable with the personal contradiction and the larger paradox that linked the Revolution's freedoms with the protection of chattel slavery. This lingered over the heads of the Founding Fathers and would haunt Washington until his death in 1799.<sup>12</sup>

While Washington firmly believed in the individual's right to property and the government's responsibility to protect that right, the human element seemed to disrupt this logic. Many of Washington's Virginian contemporaries such as Thomas Jefferson

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<sup>12</sup> George Washington to Robert Morris, April 12, 1786, *George Washington: A Collection*, ed. W.B. Allen, (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Classics, 1988), 319. At the time of his death, Washington owned 318 slaves, most of which came from Martha Washington's first marriage; François Furstenberg, "Atlantic Slavery, Atlantic Freedom: George Washington, Slavery, and Transatlantic Abolitionist Networks," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (April, 2011): 247-286; Philip Morgan, "'To Get Quit of Negroes': George Washington and Slavery," *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 3 (December, 2005): 412-429. Morgan argues that Washington began questioning slavery from an economic standpoint during the decline of tobacco production in the 1760s, and then how that thread of thought continued through the Revolution and Presidential years. See also Kenneth Morgan, "George Washington and the Problem of Slavery," *Journal of American Studies* 34, no. 2 (August, 2000): 279-301; Henry Wieneck, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America* (New York: Farrar, Stratus, & Giroux, 2003), 12-13, 292-310. Wieneck elaborates on the relations between Washington's family and their slaves, particularly whether or not West Ford was in some way related to George. While he remains skeptical that Washington fathered West, he maintains that there is no definitive proof either way. Most scholars have countered, based on the historical record, that it seems much more likely that West was fathered by one of Washington's nephews at Bushfield.

and James Madison also shared this dilemma, but few did more than confess their reservations privately or share their frustrations with a confidant.<sup>13</sup> Always more a man of action than words, Washington decided to manumit his slaves in his will. He declared that “[u]pon the decease [of] my wife, it is my Will & desire th[at] all the Slaves which I hold in [my] own right, shall receive their free[dom].” In addition to freedom, he also promised food and shelter for the elderly, education and trade training for the young, and financial support for the elderly who remained working at Mount Vernon. Considering Washington’s affinity for moderation, this was incredibly radical for him, but he was cognizant of how important he was to both America at that time and how significant he would remain in American folklore. Perhaps this decision simply gave him some peace of mind, but it is difficult to imagine that Washington was unaware of the larger conversations and possibilities his actions might spark.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Andrew Levy, *The First Emancipator: The Forgotten Story of Robert Carter the Founding Father Who Freed his Slaves* (New York: Random House, 2005). Levy explores the life and times of Robert Carter III, America’s wealthiest slave owner at the time of the American Revolution. In 1791, Carter penned his “Deed of Gift,” freeing his nearly five hundred slaves from bondage.

<sup>14</sup> George Washington’s Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbot (University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville, VA, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 480. Of the 318 slaves at Mount Vernon, 123 were eligible for freedom under the terms of the will. The dower slaves were to be returned to the Custis estate after Martha’s death and split amongst her grandchildren from her first marriage. See also Robert F. Dalzell and Lee B. Dalzell, *George Washington’s Mount Vernon: At Home in Revolutionary America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 216-217. While Washington never specifically discussed his legacy in his diaries or papers, his efforts to make his correspondence accessible to future Americans is one example of his acknowledgement of how important his deeds were to the founding of America. In a letter to James McHenry, Washington told McHenry that he had but one more house to build at Mount Vernon (“...for the accommodation & security of my Military, Civil & private Papers, which are voluminous and may be interesting.” Washington hoped to complete this structure but passed away before it could be built. See George Washington to James McHenry, April 3, 1797, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Dorothy Twohig et al (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), Retirement Series, 1, 71-72. Washington’s “desire” to educate and support slaves was actually in line with Virginia state law. In 1782, Virginia passed a law on manumission that allowed owners to free slaves upon their death and required them to support slaves who were forty-five or older, males under



Washington's will stipulated that his slaves would receive their freedom upon Martha Washington's death. This was done to prevent the immediate separation of families since many of Washington's slaves had married Martha's dower slaves from her first marriage to John Parke Custis. As rumors of freedom circulated in the slave quarters, Martha began to feel anxious around her servants, and feared that an attempt might be made on her life to expedite George's wishes. A number of suspicious fires convinced Martha to emancipate her husband's slaves early on January 1, 1801, but for most slaves at Mount Vernon, this meant nothing. Only those owned outright by Washington himself were freed, and those who were acquired through the dowry remained in bondage. There was, however, one exception to this gradual emancipation: the General's personal slave, William Lee.<sup>15</sup>

The only slave mentioned by name in George Washington's will, William Lee had served Washington through war, turbulent political times, and retirement. For his faithful service during the American Revolution, Lee was given immediate freedom, an annual pension of thirty dollars, and the choice to stay at Mount Vernon. William had experienced several serious knee injuries in the 1780s, and his ailments rendered him unable to provide for himself. As Lee struggled to cope with his physical limitations, the

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the age of twenty-one, and females under the age of eighteen. See I. Scott Philywa, "Washington and Slavery," *A Companion to George Washington*, ed. Edward Lengel (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 104-105, 116.

<sup>15</sup> George Washington's Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbot, et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 480; Sally Foster Otis to Mrs. Charles W. Apthorp, January 13, 1801, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library. Otis noted that Martha "urged us in the most flattering manner to remain a few days with her," but they could not. It might not have been entirely out of goodwill and hospitality, as Washington's will put Martha's life in a really precarious position; Philip Morgan, "'To Get Quit of Negroes': George Washington and Slavery," *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 3 (December, 2005): 404-405; François Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of the Nation* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2006), 91-98.

legend of Washington transformed him into a celebrity at Mount Vernon. His intimate relationship with the General was well documented, and Americans wanted to know more about Washington from the servant who shared nearly every glorious moment with him.<sup>16</sup>

Charles Willson Peale visited Mount Vernon in the summer of 1804. Perhaps best known for his portraits of the Founding Fathers and his museum of natural history in Philadelphia, Peale was also instrumental in shaping the development of a national, American culture. As he conversed with the Washington family, Peale reminisced about his early paintings of Washington and how that time together gave him a greater sense of the man he captured on canvas. He then “inquired for the old servants of the General,” but was told they were all dead except for William Lee. Peale walked across the grounds to William’s quarters and found him cobbling a pair of shoes. “He is now a cripple in an extraordinary manner; both of his knee-pans were removed from their place” wrote Peale. Despite his immobility, Lee often joined the Washington family when they received prestigious guests or foreign dignitaries. Sir Augustus John Foster, Secretary to the British Legation in 1805, identified “an old mulatto servant who served General Washington during the war in all his campaigns, and who inquired of me very earnestly after Lord Cornwallis.” For white visitors, Lee’s association with Washington made him a living artifact of the General’s past, but even his newfound freedom could not fully absolve his former slave status.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> William Lee, Washington’s Will and Last Testament, July 9, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbot, et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 480.

<sup>17</sup> *The Journal of Charles Willson Peale*, May and June 1804, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Notebook Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; Sir Augustus John Foster, Bart, *Jeffersonian America: Notes on the United States of America Collected in the Years 1805-7 and*

After Martha Washington's death in 1802, Bushrod Washington inherited Mount Vernon and all the problems that came with it. Not only was the plantation losing money, but it also had become a popular destination, slowing progress on everyday work. As more and more strangers began to descend upon the grounds, Bushrod began requesting letters of introduction to prevent unknown travelers from entering the mansion. Washington family members gladly welcomed these patrons with refreshments and exclusive tours inside the house, but for most visitors they were only allowed to explore the grounds and experience the tomb. Those without a letter or card simply wandered the estate in search of someone who could answer their questions about Washington.<sup>18</sup>

Mount Vernon's caretaker, Johann Ehlers, was responsible for the maintenance of the grounds and the gardens surrounding the mansion. These were difficult tasks in and of themselves, but the frequency of visitors forced Bushrod to be more creative with his laborers, making Ehlers the first tour guide of the estate. Edward Hooker, a Revolutionary War veteran and a tutor at nearby Columbian College, stopped by Mount Vernon on his way home to Connecticut in 1808. Bushrod sent him "to the gardens" with "the German gardener," who took Hooker about the estate and down to the family

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*1811-2*, ed. Richard Beale Davis, (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1954), 116-117, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library. A knee pan is the nineteenth-century terminology for a knee cap.

<sup>18</sup> Bushrod Washington's enforcement of this policy allowed him to screen visitors. If a traveler did not have a letter or card of introduction, Bushrod had his servants inform them that they were not welcome in the house but they could freely roam the grounds. These cards often came from men of political or social prominence, which compelled Bushrod to respect their wishes and admit their associates. Jean Lee argues that Jane C. Washington implemented this system, but the evidence suggests that Bushrod employed a similar system earlier to prevent entry into the mansion. See Jean B. Lee, "Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001), 281-282.

vault. Elijah Fletcher, a teacher from Vermont, had a similar experience: “The garden was the greatest curiosity I found” he wrote, and “[i]t is very handsomely tended by a Dutchman who told me he had been in it 23 years.” Sarah Proud described him as a “German, and speaks almost unintelligible English, though he has been here 25 years.” He claimed to have been a gardener for the King of Prussia and the King of England, and casually mentioned he had a “penchant for noble patronage.” The gardener spoke poor English with a thick German accent, but this did not deter visitors from approaching him or inquiring more about George Washington.<sup>19</sup>

Some excursions began expanding beyond the grounds into the mansion itself, so long as the Washington family was absent. Alexander Graydon III, a veteran of the War of 1812, received one of these exclusive tours in 1814. “The general’s old gardener...shewed [sic] us every thing remarkable on the place,” wrote Graydon. “He took us through the greater part of the house, we had the satisfaction of seeing the room where Washington died and several other rooms.” The gardener then took Graydon’s party to the tomb and on to the gardens, “which are very spacious and elegant.” When asked how one man could possibly keep these vast gardens in such fine condition the gardener replied that, “it took him and four negroes the whole year round to attend to the

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<sup>19</sup> Casper, *Sarah Johnson’s Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 24-25; *The Diary of Edward Hooker*, December 8, 1808, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; Elijah Fletcher to (unknown), October 1, 1810, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; Sarah Proud to Mrs. Sarah R. Arnold, September 6, 1813, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; supplementary information in Mary Ellen Graydon Sharpe, *A Family Retrospect* (Indianapolis, IN: Hollenbeck Press, 1909), 27-28. Alexander Graydon III was Mary Ellen’s father. Ehlers claim to royalty is true, as he was trained in England and worked for both George III of England and Frederick II of Prussia. Washington employed Ehlers during the 1790s, but he was fired for excessive drinking and laziness. See George Washington to William Pearce, December 23, 1793, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Theodore Crackel et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), Presidential Series, 14, 610-611. Bushrod rehired Ehlers after he took possession of the estate in 1802.

garden alone.” Ehlers, unable to complete his usual tasks because of his new role as a guide, had started training additional slaves to work in the garden. He taught them agricultural practices, the names of plants and flowers, and the history of Washington’s planting in the gardens, as this was one of the most frequently posed questions by visitors.<sup>20</sup>

The gardener also served as the gatekeeper of the Washington family vault. For many visitors, seeing the tomb was simply not enough; they wanted to go inside and see the final resting place of General George Washington. One visitor, Caleb Cresson Jr., recalled that, “the gate was unlocked by the Gardener, an old German looking man...he pointed out the Coffin of the General, of his wife, and a number of others of the Family.” Ann Mary Eaves entered the tomb and described it as “cram’d with coffins some of which are mouldered to ashes and the bones are strew’d upon the pavement.” She asked the gardener, “whose scull bone that was lying on the ground,” and he replied, “that was the brother of General W., who left him this place.” Elbridge Gerry Jr. recalled “the gardener, an Old German” who “opened the family tomb” and shared stories with Gerry as he took him to the garden and mansion. Not only did the gardener give insight to Washington’s life but he also brought people physically closer to the man than ever

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<sup>20</sup> Alexander Graydon III to Rachel Graydon, October 18, 1814, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; Graydon mentions “two very large chestnut trees standing behind the house which were planted by General Washington’s own hands 59 years ago, as the old man informed us.” There is little proof that Washington actually planted these trees; in fact if it was anyone it was probably Lawrence (or his slaves), Washington’s older step-brother. There is also very little evidence that Washington actually planted any of these trees, flowers, or plants, but he was very involved in the selection and placement. See Andrea Wulf, *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 19-28.

thought possible. He possessed the key to the tomb and served as the medium between Washington and the living.<sup>21</sup>

Since the majority of travelers entered the Mount Vernon estate from the west, Bushrod Washington decided to build two porters' lodges on the western edge of the property. Slave families lived in these lodges, and older slaves were assigned the task of guarding the gates. "A mile this side of the house you enter a gate," penned Elbridge Gerry Jr., "each side of which is a small neat white house, for the porter, an old negro." Alexander Graydon III recorded, "[t]here is an old venerable-looking black man who keeps the gate and opens and shuts for visitors who come to visit the place—he knew Washington when he was a child and has lived there ever since." John Duncan, an English traveler, thanked the "old negro" who opened the gate for him in 1818. The old slave received "from many a visitor, substantial tokens of the universal respect, which is entertained for his memory." According to William Mercer Green, respect was not the only thing the porter received; he observed strangers giving the aged servant "a trifle" for his efforts.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Caleb Cresson Jr. to Sally Cresson, November 21, 1812, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; Ann Mary Eaves to Ann Price, December 17, 1812, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; *The Diary of Elbridge Gerry Jr.*, July 1813, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL. Elbridge was the son of then Vice-President Elbridge Gerry; Bushrod eventually limited this ritual because visitors were tearing off pieces of the black fabric that covered Washington's coffin.

<sup>22</sup> *The Diary of Elbridge Gerry Jr.*, July 1813, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; Alexander Graydon III to Rachel Graydon, October 18, 1814, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; John Duncan, *Travels Through Part of the United States and Canada in 1818 and 1819*, (Glasgow: Wardlaw & Cuninghame, 1823), 1, 288-289, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; *The Diary of William Mercer Green*, 13 (month unknown) 1818, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; William Mercer was a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina in 1818, and eventually would become the first Episcopal bishop of Mississippi. Recent archeological work at the porter lodge foundations has found all the common domestic items expected of a slave family in residence, but one item of interest found was a 1780s Spanish coin.

Bushrod Washington's duties as a Supreme Court Justice often took him away from Mount Vernon for months at a time. If the Washington family was gone or preferred to be alone, slaves acted on their behalf, checking visitor credentials and offering guests tours and refreshments. Robert Donaldson "sent in a Note to Judge Washington" to request permission to see the gardens and grounds of Mount Vernon. "As is customary a Servant was sent to attend us and first led the way to the vault," he noted. The slave then guided Donaldson and his group through the house, pointing out the Key of the Bastille, the paintings on the walls, and the Italian marble fireplace. He was then sent into the garden where he met the gardener, "an Old Frenchman," asking him if he was General Washington's gardener. The man replied no, but answered that the garden "has been much improved since he came." This particular gardener lacked the stories and relational connection that people sought after. Association with Washington was key to attracting believers and affirming the myths that bonded Americans to their imagined national identity.<sup>23</sup>

Slaves and free blacks became the major tour guides and interpreters of Mount Vernon in the first half of the nineteenth century because they had these connections to the site and the Washington family permitted them to interact with strangers. They became the primary Washington storytellers, integrating their own history with the apocryphal tales and legends that white Americans expected. In doing so, slaves,

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<sup>23</sup> *Journal of Robert Donaldson*, July 15, 1818, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library. The identity of this gardener is unknown, but the fact that he admitted he was not Washington's gardener suggests this was either a different, foreign gardener or a replacement for Ehlers; *The Diary of William Mercer Green*, 13 (month unknown) 1818, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; William Mercer Green described him as a "Frenchman," which supports other observations of the gardener's accent; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Press, 1983), 4-6.

especially older slaves and free blacks, were praised for their intelligence and loyalty to Washington. Senator John Elliott of Georgia “was peculiarly struck with the conduct of a Scotch woman” who called “an old white headed servant of the General” to sit near her at the tomb. They “continued for some time in close conversation...to the private life and family habits of the General; she then suddenly rose, shook him by the hand very cordially.” Visitors discovered newfound respect for these black men and women. They were not only guides and sources of valuable information, but also pieces of Washington’s past.<sup>24</sup>

White Americans were fascinated by the appearance of the estate and the possessions of Washington. In many of these accounts, there are several objects that are frequently mentioned such as the key to the Bastille, the marble fireplace, and of course Washington’s tomb. As slaves and free blacks became more active as conduits of memory, visitors constantly referenced the presence of elderly black residents. “We saw an old man, between sixty and seventy years old,” wrote Congressman William Plumer Jr. of New Hampshire, “who was one of the General’s favorite servants.” Plumer also acknowledged the even older slaves who watched the west gate, and noted that “[w]e gave them, as well as the other servants who attended us, some small gratuities.” As Mount Vernon transformed from a private residence into a public attraction, Washington

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<sup>24</sup> John Elliott to (unknown), May 6, 1820, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; William Faux, *Memorable Days in America: Being a Journal of a Tour to the United States, principally undertaken to ascertain, by positive evidence, the condition and probable prospects of British emigrants* (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1823), 469-479; July 16, 1820, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL.



history became a commodity, and slaves exchanged their stories, real or invented, for money.<sup>25</sup>

The excess of visitors created havoc for the estate and the privacy of the Washington family. Unable to control the crowds beyond the house, Bushrod Washington posted signs to prevent unwanted strangers from trespassing on the Mount Vernon grounds. He even published notices in several newspapers and periodicals:

The feelings of Mrs. Washington and myself have been so much wounded by some late occurrences at this place, that I am compelled to give this public notice, that permission will not, in the future, be granted to steam boat parties to enter the gardens, or to walk over the grounds; nor will I consent that Mount Vernon, much less the lawn, shall be the place at which eating, drinking, and dancing parties may assemble.<sup>26</sup>

Nathaniel Carter, editor of the *New York Statesmen*, “had no letters of introduction, and [was] apprised of the notice published by Judge Washington...prohibiting company from trespassing upon his grounds.” Carter and his companions still sought out Bushrod and asked him for a guided tour of the grounds and tomb, to which he complied but not without complaining to Carter about life as a Washington. The “throng of company was so constant and vexatious” that the Washington family was forced to abandon the first floor for the privacy of the upper rooms. “What was still more insufferable,” stammered Bushrod, was the “parties of pleasure accompanied by musicians, [who] were in the habit of making Mount Vernon a resort for amusements and scenes of dissipation.” Mount

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<sup>25</sup> William Plumer Jr. to William Plumer Sr., May 7, 1820, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; if these slaves were older and actually former servants of George Washington, they would have been free men and women who decided to stay on the estate. However, white travelers assumed they were still slaves based on their race.

<sup>26</sup> *Independent Chronicle*, 10 July 1822; reprint in *National Gazette and Literary Register*, 20 July 1822; *Essex Register*, 18 January 1823, reprint in *North Star*, 20 February 1823; this notice was also published in *The Alexandria Gazette* in July 1822. There is a copy of the full declaration along with Bushrod’s expressed desire to sue steamboat captains if they violate his order. See Bushrod’s Notice, July 4, 1822, Fred W. Smith Library.

Vernon drew visitors from various backgrounds, and the property was beginning to resemble more a public carnival than a private estate. Drinking and dancing were strictly prohibited at Mount Vernon, but that did not stop some guests from enjoying the spirits they smuggled in or celebrating their excursions with music and picnics.<sup>27</sup>

These unwelcomed guests seemed unaware that they were contributing to the declining appearance of the grounds. By impeding laborers and slaves from their work, their presence (at least in Bushrod's mind) limited the financial success to which he aspired. His wealth remained heavily in the value of his property, and with no cash on hand to pay basic expenses Bushrod was compelled to sell fifty-four slaves in 1821. Critics took to the press, lambasting Bushrod for his mismanagement of the Mount Vernon estate. For those opposed to slavery, it illuminated the hypocrisy of the American Colonization Society (ACS), an organization founded in 1817 with the mission to free slaves and return them to their African homelands. Despite their proclaimed philanthropic and moral motivations, many of the Society's members remained slave owners and continued to purchase and sell slaves. Abolitionists and social commentators denounced the sitting President of the ACS, arguing that Bushrod did not even deserve to share the same last name as his venerated uncle.<sup>28</sup>

“Amicus Libertati,” the “Friend to Liberty” of the *Baltimore Morning Chronicle*, condemned Bushrod Washington for his lack of humanity. The correspondent published the details of a conversation with a slave at Mount Vernon, who informed the writer that Bushrod sold over fifty slaves, and “the poor creatures who were left, the aged and the

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<sup>27</sup> “Description of an Early Visit to Mount Vernon,” *The Times and Hartford Advertiser*, 14 January 1823, reprint in a New York newspaper December 1822, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL.

<sup>28</sup> *Baltimore Morning Chronicle*, 25 August 1821, reprinted in *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, August 1821;1, 2, 25.

blind, had lost every friend on earth.” According to Liberti’s source, families were separated, husbands and wives split, and extended kin left behind. Another slave was asked if he had been a servant for George Washington, to which the slave replied, “[n]o Sir—not so lucky—I should not be a slave now if I had.” The author highlighted this key difference between George and Bushrod, one man who fought for freedom and gave his slaves the gift of emancipation, and the other a Supreme Court Justice who defended the laws of liberty while holding humans in bondage. “It is no cause of wonder...that the bones of his venerable uncle would tremble in the tomb at such unfeeling injustice,” wrote Amicus. Disturbing Washington’s peaceful slumber evoked a powerful image; one that offended Bushrod’s sensibilities to the point that he felt compelled to defend his actions in print.<sup>29</sup>

Bushrod angrily responded to these charges, arguing that “I [Bushrod] take the liberty, on my own behalf, and on that of my southern fellow citizens, to enter a solemn protest against the propriety of any person questioning our right, legal or moral, to dispose of property.” He was also distressed to learn that “Amicus” had not only visited Mount Vernon without his consent but had also “held conversations with my negroes upon the delicate topics which obviously caused his visit.” As shocking as this was to Bushrod, it does not seem all that surprising that slaves engaged visitors and answered their inquiries. Slaves carefully crafted their responses to questions on slavery, and this particular slave felt comfortable enough sharing the details of the recent slave sale.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Baltimore Morning Chronicle*, 25 August 1821, reprinted in *Genius of Universal Emancipation* August 1821; 1, 2, 25; Casper, *Sarah Johnson’s Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 15-16.

<sup>30</sup> *Nile’s Weekly Register*, 29 September 1821; 21, 525, 70; the story first ran in the *Baltimore Federal Republican*, which was more sympathetic to the Federalist Supreme Court

Bushrod defended his actions, stating that he “had struggled for about 20 years to pay the expenses of [his] farm.” He claimed that Mount Vernon had lost money every year during his tenure, and at times he was forced to purchase food for his slaves since the harvests were so poor. He was appalled that some “unworthy person” would openly discuss his uncle’s emancipation with his slaves and give them the impression that Bushrod had no right to hold them in bondage. The idea of freedom, in Bushrod’s opinion, had “rendered them worse than useless,” and he was forced to sell those tainted by such rhetoric and to inform the rest that they were misled. He had no intention of freeing them or their children, prompting several slaves to flee the estate after the Judge’s next departure for court. While slave guides allowed the Washingtons to avoid interacting with the strangers that set foot on the grounds, they could not always control the conversations that slaves and visitors shared together.<sup>31</sup>

By the 1820s more slaves were working as tour guides, serving as tangible links between visitors and George Washington. A “communicative black man” claimed that he had arrived with Bushrod Washington in 1802 and had served the Washington family for the last forty years. This man conducted Horace Greeley, the future editor of the *New York Tribune*, through the gardens and to the tomb. One visitor recalled the good nature and politeness of the “black gardener,” who told this particular group that he “was a slave

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Justice. See also *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, 28 September 1821; *New York Spectator*, 28 September 1821; *The Evening Post*, 4 October 1821.

<sup>31</sup> *Nile’s Weekly Register*, 29 September 1821; 21, 525, 70; Casper, *Sarah Johnson’s Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 14-18. By comparing Bushrod’s list of slaves in 1815 with the inventory upon his death, it does seem to support his claim that he at least tried to keep the families together through the sale. See Bushrod Washington, “List of my Negroes, July 24, 1815,” Bushrod Washington and John Augustine Washington III Diary 1842-1845, Fred W. Smith Library, and Inventory of Bushrod Washington Estate, admitted January 28, 1830, Fairfax County Will Book Q-1, pp. 1-10, Fairfax County Courthouse Archives. Bushrod complained in his diatribe that he lost “\$500 to 1,000” every year, which appears fairly accurate.

born...on the Mount Vernon estate. He had seen Washington once or twice, when quite a boy.” However, the slave’s descriptions of Washington seemed imprecise to this particular newspaper columnist. They later wrote, “[t]hough his remembrance of the great man was very imperfect, to have *seen* Washington, seemed to have ennobled him in his own estimation, as it certainly did in ours.” This particular slave had a sense of the aura he possessed and had no qualms about sharing his status with others.<sup>32</sup>

After Bushrod’s death in 1829, Mount Vernon passed to his nephew, John Augustine Washington Jr. and his wife, Jane Charlotte Washington. They adopted the same system that Bushrod had implemented, using slaves to interact with visitors. “We were not there long when a servant came with the compliments of Mrs. Jane Washington and an invitation to walk up to the house...we sent our cards by the bearer” wrote one visitor. John Augustine did however take things further, barring those who landed by steamboat from visiting the estate entirely. Slaves initially turned the National Republican Convention of Young Men away because they landed off the Potomac. Even as John Augustine Washington neared death in 1832 visitors still besieged the family. One traveler was disappointed that Washington’s descendant was not available to receive this group, but was glad that “[a] servant accordingly, at our request, merely accompanied us through the rooms made interesting by the hallowed associations that came fast upon

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<sup>32</sup> “Horace Greeley’s Visit to Mount Vernon,” September 4, 1841, *The School Reader*, eds. Charles W. and Joshua C. Sanders (New York, NY: Ivison and Phinney, 1855), 224-226, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library. This is most likely Phil Smith, the black gardener and son of Oliver Smith, Bushrod’s personal servant. Some periodicals mistakenly identify him as “Bill Smith”; reprinted in *The Log Cabin*, 11 September 1841; *The New Yorker*, 11 September 1841; 11, 26, 409; *New York Evangelist*, 18 September 1841; 12, 38; 152; “A Ride to Mount Vernon,” Ann S. Stephens, *Ladies Companion*, April 1841; 14, 291, also in Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library.

us as we traversed them.” As one Washington passed from this world to the next, strangers showed little remorse for their lack of decorum.<sup>33</sup>

The historical trope of the “last servant of Washington” proliferated from the early 1830s onward, and coincided with the passing of the founding generation. As these prominent figures disappeared, and economic and political instability gripped the republic, Americans sought refuge from their polarized present in a nostalgic past. For many travelers, they were on a quest to find physical links to Washington and remember a time of national glory. The obsession to find and talk to the last Washington servant was a reoccurring theme in the decade, a signifier that Americans needed something more corporal than the usual smattering of paintings, speeches, and orations to appease their fears. Ennobled by their association, several elderly black men and women all claimed to be the last of the Washington servants alive, and white tourists were awestruck by both their intelligence and performances. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many of these guides were actually slaves from Washington’s time, but the evidence suggests that most did not have a close relational bond with the General. In fact, most eventual guides probably arrived after Washington’s death with the estate’s new owner, Bushrod Washington.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The Will of Bushrod Washington, July 10, 1826, *Bushrod Washington Family Papers 1662-1835*, Box 3, Legal Documents, Fred W. Smith Library; *Daily National Intelligencer*, 29 June 1841; “A Visit to the Birthplace and to the Tomb of Washington,” *Rhode Island American*, 23 May, 1832; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, June 1, 1832; *Rhetorical Reader*, 1838; 11, 159-162, in Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; *Niles’ Weekly Register*, 12 May 1832; 42, 1077, 206; The National Republican Convention of Young Men was eventually admitted to Mount Vernon to tour the estate, but John Augustine Washington was upset that they took a steamboat and landed on his property without consent.

<sup>34</sup> By the terms of Martha’s will, her dowry slaves were divided and sent to live with her grandchildren on their respective estates. Bushrod brought his own slaves to Mount Vernon. He inherited forty-two that belonged to his father John Augustine Washington in 1787, but most of these slaves would have stayed at Bushfield with his mother, Hannah Bushrod Washington. Upon her death, he would have inherited more, and by 1815, he owned nearly ninety slaves

After Martha's death, the remaining dower slaves were divided amongst her grandchildren, leaving Bushrod over 4,000 acres of property without any real labor force. Some of George Washington's emancipated slaves stayed and worked for pay, most notably William Lee. These former slaves were instrumental in shaping Bushrod's newly transported slave community from his Bushfield estate. The two groups certainly shared conversations and family histories with one another, and it was this information that later proved so valuable to the aged slaves of Mount Vernon. They absorbed the stories of the estate from Washington's actual servants in the early years, and these stories were then passed on in the slave quarters and fields of Mount Vernon's farms.<sup>35</sup>

Unable to converse with Jane Washington or the Washington family, visitors sought out the alleged last servant of the General for anecdotes and personal details. The famed American poet Nathaniel Willis marveled at the "decrepid old family servant, who had served Washington himself forty years." One visitor met "an old servant of the family, and formerly a slave of Washington," and concluded that he had been born on the estate. This slave began sharing yarns about Washington: "I never see that man [George Washington] laugh to show his teeth—he done all his laughing inside." He fondly remembered Lafayette's visit in 1824, and retorted that the Marquis "cried like a little infant." Another slave, identified as "the aged negro," told one tale where he and Washington wrestled in the grass. "Many a thump have I given him in play" exclaimed the slave! He also recalled that he was about thirty-eight years old at the time of

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according to his 1815 list. See Bushrod Washington, "List of my Negroes, July 24, 1815," Bushrod Washington and John Augustine Washington III Diary 1842-1845, Fred W. Smith Library.

<sup>35</sup> Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 8-36. The best example of this that Casper explores is Oliver Smith, Bushrod's personal servant and the identified "aged negro" of the 1830s.

Washington's death, which would have made him about thirty years younger than his supposed playmate.<sup>36</sup>

Another slave, described as the “coloured Cicerone of the place,” gave one lucky visitor his version of the attempted theft of Washington's body. Hobbling along with a cane, he identified the thief as a man named “Fischer...one of the servants of the family” and compared him to a “mighty bad puppy.” Fischer intended to steal the body and take it abroad, selling the remains to the highest bidder. He led the writer to the old tomb and showed him “the broken portion of the door.” Luckily, Washington's coffin was sealed, and Fischer instead took the skulls of a male relative and a female child. Fischer then attempted to set fire to the mansion house, but was quickly apprehended. The skulls, according to the slave, “were found sewed up in his bed clothes.” This story was quite different from the one the Washington family told and the version published in the press, which blamed a disgruntled English gardener who was recently fired.<sup>37</sup>

Aged slaves became objects of reverence, and for many visitors, it made them momentarily forget their guide's status. William Gilmore Simms, a future southern nationalist and ardent white supremacist, experienced this effect when he came across an “old negro” near the tomb of Washington. Simms marveled at the thought that this slave “saw his master in all moments—in all moods.” Simms concluded, “I regarded him with infinitely more veneration than I am accustomed to pay to most white men.” Simms later became one of the most prominent defenders of slavery's merits, but his observation

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<sup>36</sup> *Rhode Island American*, 11 November 1831; *Rhetorical Reader 1832*; *The Alexandria Gazette 1831*, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library; *Christian Register and Boston Observer*, 25 March 1837; Washington died in 1799, so this slave was roughly thirty years younger than Washington. It seems odd that Washington would wrestle with a slave, and this slave would have been entering his teen years while Washington was gone during the American Revolution.

<sup>37</sup> *The New York Mercury*, 25 April 1832.



speaks to the transformative power of historical nostalgia. By providing white visitors with the stories they desired, slaves found agency as performers in the pageantry of Washington's life.<sup>38</sup>

So who were these numinous slaves? Since white visitors lumped all elderly blacks into a single, mythical entity, this allowed multiple slaves to share the same role. Oliver Smith, "an old white-headed negro," befriended one traveler and recalled many of the same stories about Washington that other unidentified slaves told as well. *The Liberator* published a very personal conversation between one of its correspondents and Oliver in 1834. Oliver claimed that he was the father of nine children, two of whom had passed away, and one who was the gardener at Mount Vernon, Phil Smith. The other six were sold to slaveholders in Georgia, a heartbreaking ordeal that Oliver confessed, "...was like cutting off my own limbs." While Oliver Smith knew Mount Vernon from his youth, he was not the General's body servant. Bushrod Washington brought Oliver and his family to Mount Vernon after he inherited the estate in 1802. Smith surely knew the history of the family, but the more intimate details were more likely passed along to him by some of Washington's former slaves.<sup>39</sup>

Another of these aged guides was a man by the name of Samuel Anderson. The *New York Weekly Herald*, one of the most popular publications in America at the time, reprinted an obituary for this former slave on March 1, 1845. Samuel Anderson was

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<sup>38</sup> "Original Communications," *New York Mirror*, 13 October 1832; 10, 15, 116; Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library; "Washington," William Gilmore Simms, 1832, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL.

<sup>39</sup> "Tour at the South," *Liberator*, 22 November 1834; 4, 47, 186; "An Hour at Mount Vernon," *New England Magazine*, November 1834; 398; "Visit to Mount Vernon," *Parley's Magazine*, 1 January 1836; 4, 294; Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 8-36. Smith is one of the figures that Casper examines more in depth, along with his son Phil Smith and daughter Hannah.

described as “an old negro servant of General Washington,” who was estimated to be “about 100 years old.” Another newspaper proclaimed that Samuel “had been liberated by that great man in his will.” As unbelievable as it may seem, Samuel’s connections to Mount Vernon appear authentic. Sometime in June 1799, Washington compiled a list of his slaves, dividing them based on ownership, occupation, where they worked, etc. If Samuel was freed by the terms of Washington’s will, he would have belonged to General Washington outright. According to the list, Washington owned a carpenter named “Sambo” who worked at River Farm, one of the neighboring farms on the property, but was this Sambo Samuel?<sup>40</sup>

According to Washington’s diaries, there was a “Sam” and a “Sambo” working at Mount Vernon in the 1780s. In July 1788, Washington ordered a number of slaves to assist with the harvest. These slaves, who were skilled workers in the mill and wood shop, were sent to the fields, and among those sent was a carpenter, “Sambo...to cut Rye.” Sambo reappeared in Washington’s correspondence as one of the slaves who fled Mount Vernon for the British sloop of war H.M.S *Savage* during the American Revolution. Lund Washington, a cousin of the General and caretaker of the estate in his absence, compiled a list of those who escaped and identified “Sambo. A man about 20 years old, stout and Healthy.” The British later returned Sambo to Mount Vernon after

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<sup>40</sup> *Pittsfield Sun*, 27 February 1845; *The Sun*, 28 February 1845; *Weekly Herald*, 1 March 1845; *Barre Gazette*, 7 March 1845; Washington’s Slave List, June 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbot et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 528; Sambo does not appear again in the Washington descendant wills because he was freed.

the war. The summer before his death Washington drew up a list of his slaves, recording entries for “Sambo” and “Sam” in June of 1799.<sup>41</sup>

According to Washington’s notes, both men were owned outright by him, and by the terms of his will, they would have received freedom after Martha Washington’s death. Sambo’s wife Agnes, a dower slave at River Farm, would have been sent to live with one of the Custis grandchildren. Sam and his wife Alice were owned exclusively by Washington, and therefore were freed after 1801. Since Sambo and Samuel were both emancipated by Washington, it is difficult to identify which is *the* Samuel Anderson in question. Both would have had contact with Washington, and both certainly had knowledge of the family, the history of the estate, and the legendary tales of their former owner. If age is accounted for, Sam was forty in 1799, making him nearly eighty-five at the time of Samuel Anderson’s death. Sambo was listed as twenty in 1781, making him also nearly eighty-five in 1845. A later reflection piece, published in 1876, does allude to the true identity of Samuel Anderson.<sup>42</sup>

After the Civil War “an old citizen of Fairfax County” penned his memories of the old slave named Samuel, but to those who remembered him, it was “Uncle Sambo.” Sambo had told the writer that he was born in Africa, and was brought to the colonies “five years before Braddock’s defeat.” This would correlate with Washington’s records, suggesting that Sambo was in fact Samuel Anderson. As one might expect, the reporter

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<sup>41</sup> George Washington, 18 February 1786, *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. Donald Jackson et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 4; 277-283; George Washington, 3 July 1788, *The Diaries of George Washington*, ed. Donald Jackson et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1979); 5, 355-356; George Washington to Lund Washington, 30 April 1781, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1937); 22, 14-15.

<sup>42</sup> Washington’s Slave List, June 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbot et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 528-529.

remembered Sambo talking very positively of Washington: “I had a good kind master to look after all my wants, but now I have no one to care for me,” Samuel complained near the end of his life. One of his responsibilities was keeping Washington’s hatchet in good condition, which he sharpened for the General and kept safe when it was not in use. The writer could not recall if this was “the same little hatchet that the General used in hacking his father’s cherry tree,” since Sambo never specified. This tidbit suggests the influence of Mason Locke Weems’ whimsical fables about Washington’s childhood, as Sambo was accustomed to fielding questions about the General’s early life. He also recalled a story that Sambo used to tell about Washington’s correctness and attention to detail. Samuel sometimes loaned his boat to Washington, who would always ask before he took it and put it back exactly where he found it. One day, Washington returned the boat during low tide, and his need to be exact was so great that he dragged the vessel twenty yards onto the shore, placing it in its original spot. Needless to say Samuel had a definite connection with Washington and Mount Vernon, and he carefully wove himself into several Washington myths.<sup>43</sup>

Beyond the boundaries of Mount Vernon there were many instances of elderly black Americans trying to claim a share of the Washington legend. Altamont, the former slave mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, managed to survive by trading stories and fruit for pennies. One of the most famous examples was Joice Heth, a slave woman who was purchased by the infamous Phineas Taylor Barnum in the 1830s. Barnum billed Heth as the wet nurse of George Washington, and he estimated her age at around 161.

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<sup>43</sup> Washington’s Slave List, June 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbott et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 528; *Alexandria Gazette*, 18 January 1876; The list also tells us that Sambo was married to Agnes, one of the Custis dower slaves. Little information exists on what happened to Agnes after the death of Martha, as she was probably sent to one of the Custis heirs.

The editor of the *New York Commercial* described her as an “animated mummy,” a woman who lost the use of her limbs and “is totally blind.” The editor questioned the validity of her age, and acknowledged the possibility that she might not be the real Joice Heth, but nonetheless thought she was a “great curiosity and amply compensates the time and expense of a visit.” Barnum thought so too, so much so that he taught Joice about the Weems’ Washington and arranged to exhibit Joice to the American public on tour during the summer and fall of 1835.<sup>44</sup>

Joice’s performances mesmerized audiences and her life story fascinated readers across the country. Born in Madagascar in 1674, she was brought to the colonies, and eventually became the property of Augustine Washington, George Washington’s father. She served the Washington family as a nurse and nanny, and even though she was sold in 1727 to the Atwood family she returned to work for the Washingtons after the birth of little George. One spectator noted that she “abounds in anecdotes” about Washington’s childhood, and her demeanor and appearance seem to validate her life experiences. By February 1836, the stress of Barnum’s tour accelerated Joice’s declining health. She died on February 19, 1836 in New York City. After her death, Barnum was determined to get one more show out of Joice, and did so by advertising for a public autopsy. Nearly 1,500 spectators gathered to watch Dr. David Rogers dissect Joice. After careful calculation of the body’s wear, he estimated her age to be between seventy-five and eighty years old. Much to their disappointment, Barnum did not offer refunds to unsatisfied customers.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *New Bedford Mercury*, 21 August 1835; Casper, *Sarah Johnson’s Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 31. Barnum always touted a bill of sale that proved Heth was once the property of Augustine Washington, but this was a fraudulent document.

<sup>45</sup> *Pittsfield Sun*, 24 September 1835; *Salem Gazette*, 8 September 1835; *Connecticut Courant*, 29 February 1836; *Rhode Island Republican*, 2 March 1836; Michael Farquhar, *A Treasury of Deception: Liars, Misleaders, Hoodwinkers, and the Extraordinary True Stories of*

Barnum received much deserved scorn for his extortion of the American public, but few criticized his impressment of Joice. He had purchased an extremely old slave for his traveling show, and eventually taught Joice how to respond to questions regarding Washington. He instructed her on the “habits, looks, and affairs of Washington,” and over time Joice excelled in her role as Washington’s wet nurse. This scheme netted Barnum over \$20,000, and the experience began a long and successful career in show business and carnival entertainment. Once the public discovered Barnum’s ruse, one newspaper contributor sarcastically noted, “[a]nother old negress has been discovered in Virginia, and is to be taken for exhibition, as the grandmother of Joice Heath.” Joice, at the behest of Barnum, was simply mimicking the same role that slaves had played for years at Mount Vernon.<sup>46</sup>

Most elderly blacks did not have the same public exposure as Joice, but they still asserted their connections to Washington late in life. In the Howard District in Maryland, a “Nicholas Jackson” died January 1, 1845. According to his obituary, “he was a servant of General Washington, during the revolutionary war” and was nearly 100 years old. Another freedman named John Carey sought a pension from Congress in 1843 for his services to Washington during war. He was supposedly “aged 113 years” and served the General in both “the old French War and in the war of the Revolution.” Representative

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*History’s Greatest Hoaxes, Fakes, and Frauds* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 8; Benjamin Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum’s America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Eric Fretz, “P.T. Barnum’s Theatrical Selfhood and the Nineteenth-Century Culture of Exhibition,” in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 97-107; Louis Chude-Sokei, “The Uncanny History of Minstrels and Machines, 1835-1923,” in *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Stephen Johnson (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 105-110.

<sup>46</sup> Richmond Enquirer, 27 September 1836; Eastern Argus, 7 March 1837; Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument*, 19.

John Taliaferro of Virginia presented the petition as Bill No. 755 through the Committee on Revolutionary Pensions. After it was read a third time it passed and moved on to the Senate, where it was soon tabled back to committee. Senator William Allen of Ohio recommended that the measure not pass and it was discharged from the amendment.

While Carey did not receive his pension, his case demonstrates that some white Americans were willing to believe in and advocate for those affiliated with Washington. It also reveals how desperate the elderly were for some type of financial support; and for those on the margins of society, the memory of Washington provided one possibility.<sup>47</sup>

An elderly black man named “George” devised one of the most infamous performances of the last body servant of General George Washington. The future novelist Mark Twain wrote a piece for *Galaxy Magazine* in 1868 chronicling George’s whereabouts throughout the nineteenth century, giving readers snippets of obituaries to demonstrate American naivety. According to Twain’s research, George had perished in 1809, 1825, 1830, 1836, 1840, and 1864. The printed obituaries told the same narrative: George faithfully served Washington throughout his life and was present with him at the latter’s most glorious moments and triumphs. These multiple deaths left Twain to conclude, “[t]he death of Washington’s body servant has ceased to be a novelty; its charm is gone; the people are tired of it; let it cease.” Six different communities had mourned the loss of Washington’s last servant, and old George had “swindled tens of thousands of people into following him to the grave under the delusion that a select and

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<sup>47</sup> *The Pittsfield Sun*, 27 February 1845; *Ohio Statesman*, 7 February 1843; *House Journal*, 27<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 3 February 1843 (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1843); 38, 304-314; *Senate Journal*, 27<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 7 February 1843 (Washington D.C.: Thomas Allen, 1842), 34, 152, 213; Washington’s Slave List, June 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. W.W. Abbot et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4. There is no mention of “Nicholas” in Washington’s final list. There are several Johns, but none match the age or lineage that John Carey used to seek a pension.

peculiar distinction was being conferred upon them.” One might assume that if these towns were willing to celebrate the death of a former Washington slave, they very well may have been supporting him financially during one of his many lives in their communities. Perhaps it was more newsworthy (or just satire) when the *Daily Memphis Avalanche* reported, “[t]here is said to be really a negro in Mississippi who is one hundred and eleven years old, and does not claim to have been a body-servant of George Washington.”<sup>48</sup>

As traffic increased to the estate, the Washington family gradually spent more time away from Mount Vernon. John Burleigh noted, “Mrs. W. had left the same morning for Alexandria,” but of the “8 or 10 slaves upon the estate...the eldest acted as guide over the grounds.” Slaves could neither escape the institution that held them nor the onslaught of visitors who sought recollections of Washington. One particular slave guide “related many anecdotes of Washington which were new and professed to remember him well.” Burleigh also made sure that his reader knew that he was very generous with a gratuity, and that “[t]he art of sponging is so well understood by [the slaves] and the division of labor so well regulated that to come handsomely off 1.25 was absolutely necessary.” Without the Washington family around, this income most likely

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<sup>48</sup> Mark Twain, “General Washington’s Negro-Body Servant: A Biographical Sketch,” *The Galaxy Magazine*, February 1868; see also *The Daily Memphis Avalanche*, 9 February 1868; *The Daily Memphis Avalanche*, 29 December 1868; these stories continued beyond the Civil War, as elderly African Americans connected themselves to Washington for income and recognition. One such example is “Old Uncle Archy,” who claimed to have served Washington in 1881. See Lillie Barr, “Negro Conjurors,” *The Independent*, 3 November 1881; 33, 17, 6.



went right into the slaves' pockets. This letter also suggests that tipping was not only common but slaves also expected it from Washington admirers.<sup>49</sup>

With potential money at stake, elderly slaves intertwined their own histories with Washington's as frequently as possible. James Stuart, an English traveler, recalled that "[t]he porter at one of the lodges, who is a man of color, and very old, is the only one of General Washington's servants who now survives." One account published in the *Boston Mercantile Journal* acknowledged the authenticity of an "aged, though active and intelligent slave, who was a resident in the family of Washington, and who, to use his own language, was as familiar with the General as with the palms of his own hands." While these claims were plausible, sometimes these slaves exaggerated beyond belief. According to one writer for the *Pennsylvanian*, he was lucky enough speak with the slave that "was with the General when he died." Tobias Lear and George Washington Parke Custis later published their own accounts of Washington's death, specifying the names of those present for his final breath. Lear and Custis both mentioned that there were slaves present—notably Christopher Sheels, Caroline, Molly, and Charlotte—but these individuals were all dower slaves. They would have been given to the Custis grandchildren after Martha's death and therefore were no longer living at Mount Vernon if they were living at all, but their stories continued on through the Mount Vernon slave community.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> John Burleigh to friend "B", 12 March 1833, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library. The referenced amount, "1.25," is probably a dollar and a quarter piece.

<sup>50</sup> James Stuart, *Three Years in North America* (New York, NY: J & J Harper, 1833); 1, 396, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library; *The Lebanon County Republican*, 25 October 1834, Mount Vernon Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; *The Pennsylvanian*, 18 January 1836, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; Tobias Lear's Narrative Accounts of the Death of George Washington, December 15, 1799, *The Papers of George*

Younger slaves also tried to capitalize on the historical ethos of Washington. One slave gardener told Harman Westervelt, a self-professed historian, that he fondly remembered the death and burial of his “kind old master.” Westervelt, noting that the slave “had the appearance of a much younger man,” asked the slave how old he was, and he replied forty-eight. Westervelt concluded that this “would make him only about five years old at the death of his master and the story seems rather an equivocal one.” Westervelt’s suspicions grew after another conversation with a female slave who pretended “to recollect some of the circumstances but was unable to describe anything definitely in reference to the death of Washington.” For younger slaves, they simply told the stories they had heard from their parents or extended kin, but their youthful appearance made it much harder to establish credibility with guests. For the slaves interacting with Westervelt, they had an especially challenging time in trying to fool a skeptical historian.<sup>51</sup>

If no older slaves were available, children sometimes served as guides in their place. While their knowledge was limited, they had heard the same stories and told visitors whatever they could remember. Benjamin S. Rotch was rather surprised to find no one present except a “dirty ragged little nigger” who then gave him permission to

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*Washington*, ed. William Abbott et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 542-555; George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Private Memories of Washington, By his Adopted Son, George Washington Parke Custis* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1860), 472-477; Washington’s Slave List, June 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. William Abbott et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 529, 541; Philip Morgan, “‘To Get Quit of Negroes’: George Washington and Slavery,” *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 3 (December, 2005): 403-429.

<sup>51</sup> *The Diary of Harman C. Westervelt*, January 9, 1837, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Account Notebook Volume 2B 1826-1841; this was quite possibly Phil Smith, who did not come to Mount Vernon until 1802 with Bushrod Washington. He would not have been present for Washington’s funeral, especially a boy at such a young age. However, his father Oliver Smith would have accompanied Bushrod to Mount Vernon for the funeral, and it is entirely plausible his son presented that experience as his own.

enter the mansion. Unable to locate Mrs. Washington or any of the Washington family, Rotch begrudgingly accepted a tour from “the aforesaid little negro.” Lost tourists also relied on slave children for directions. “A servant boy met us at the gate” wrote one columnist, and “pointed out the house which was as yet a half a mile in distance.” Slave children also peddled Mount Vernon items to tourists. One visitor was appalled at such entrepreneurship, chastising them for their attempt sell “a relic of Mount Vernon for a sixpence.” For blacks, free or enslaved, offering travelers souvenirs was a way to discourage vandalism to the estate. It was also a business, as blacks exchanged their labor and the Washington name for profit.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps the most sacred duty performed by slaves was taking travelers to Washington’s tomb. For many, the tomb was the primary attraction and reason for their journey. They shared poetry, prayers, and moments of silence with their slave guides, and often sought immediate comfort in the form of inspiring stories or material objects from this revered spot. One writer recalled that, “the slave who conducted us to this spot, where he had conducted thousands before, seemed affected as with us he gazed upon the monument.” This slave then took the group to the old tomb, where the group entered the vault to collect stones and fragments of old coffins. The “conductor smiled and said no females had ever before, since the removal of the remains of Washington, which was six years, entered the vault.” This “gray-haired negro, a faithful and attached servant to Washington,” kept the key to the vault and offered travelers a more intimate experience by taking them into the tomb itself. This account, reminiscing about the slave’s long presence as a sentinel to his former master’s grave, highlighted his pride in discussing

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<sup>52</sup> Benjamin S. Rotch to Anna Lawrence Rotch, February 21, 1848, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Account Notebook Volume 3 1840-1946; *Haverhill Gazette*, 28 April 1836; *Farmer’s Cabinet*, 1 September 1853.

“Massa Washington” and his accomplishments. It also reinforced the belief that slaves were unquestionably loyal to their masters, even beyond the grave.<sup>53</sup>

One tomb guardian named “Uncle Josh” greeted travelers at the gate, and pointed them towards the tomb. When they appeared to doubt him, the elderly slave smiled and replied, “I wouldn’t tell you a lie about it!” The “old negro” then escorted the group about the grounds and to the tomb. Once there, he pointed his cane at the sarcophagus and exhaled, “[t]here is the Old General.” After a moment of silence, the slave mumbled, “[h]e was a good old man...and he has gone to his rest.” The observer thought he saw a tear trickle down the old man’s face, but “Uncle Josh” turned away quickly. Slave guides shared these emotional experiences with visitors, and in the minds of white visitors it reinforced the notion that all Americans regardless of race shared the same paternalistic father, George Washington.<sup>54</sup>

Not only did slaves and free blacks lead visitors to the tomb, but they were also instrumental in the construction of the new family vault. According to his will, Washington desired “that a new one [tomb] of Brick...be built at the foot of what is commonly called the Vineyard Inclosure.” Unfortunately the executors of his estate ignored the request and only took action after an attempt was made to steal Washington’s body. The new vault was finished in 1831 under the supervision of Lawrence Lewis, Washington’s nephew by marriage and the last living executor of his estate. Family

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<sup>53</sup> *Haverhill Gazette*, 28 April 1836, reprinted in *Virginia Herald*, 27 August 1836, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Account Notebook Volume 2B 1826-1841 and *Connecticut Courant*, 29 August 1836; “Traveling Sketches: A Glimpse at Mount Vernon,” *The Rural Repository*, 8 October 1836; 13, 9; 69; *Farmer’s Cabinet*, 1 September 1853. This columnist is remembering the earlier days when one could visit Mount Vernon and interact with this aged slave.

<sup>54</sup> John S. Adams, *Town and Country; or Life at Home and Abroad, Without and Within Us* (Boston, 1856), 97; Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, Fred W. Smith Library. There is no one with the name “Josh” on John Augustine Washington III’s slave lists, so the identity of this guide cannot be determined.

members and slaves carefully moved the bodies to their new resting place. Some of the coffins were so deteriorated that new coffins needed to be built for the transfer of remains. West Ford, a trained carpenter and former slave of George Washington's brother who worked at Mount Vernon with his freedom and some bequeathed land, set about building these coffins for the Washington family.<sup>55</sup>

The new tomb's simplistic design drew criticism from visitors, but others were happy with the site. One contributor to the *New York Evangelist* was "gratified to find a great improvement about the tomb of Washington." He saw "a dozen colored men at work," leveling the ground and clearing the brush off the family vault. He inquired if they were slaves of the family, but was surprised when they replied, "[n]o...we are General Washington's servants, survivors of those whom he set free at his death, and we have come as volunteers to improve the grounds near his tomb as a testimony of our gratitude." The author then took the experience and politicized it, arguing that this emancipation could serve as a model for the nation. Slaves, like Washington's former servants, would be forever grateful to their masters for their freedom. While the legitimacy of the conversation is dubious, former slaves did maintain the grounds and tomb, and Lawrence's slaves did prepare the site for masonry work.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Jane C. Washington to George C. Washington, May 25, 1840, Fred W. Smith Library; George Washington's Last Will and Testament, July 9, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. William Abbot et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), Retirement Series, 4, 491. West Ford became a celebrity of sorts in the 1850s, again as one of the aged Mount Vernon slaves. The irony in that role was that he was actually a free man, and had been so since 1806. John Augustine Washington kept him employed at the estate, and trusted Ford with more responsibility than most. West Ford often handled business transactions for John Augustine as an overseer when he was away, and settled accounts with him upon his return. See Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 58-64; See also the diaries and farm books of John Augustine Washington III, Fred W. Smith Library.

<sup>56</sup> "General Intelligence: Washington's Freed Men," *New York Evangelist*, 1 November 1835; 1,11; 348; reprinted in *Alexandria Gazette*, 16 November 1835, Fred W. Smith Library. This newspaper mentions eleven black men preparing the tomb for work, some freedmen and

Beyond anecdotes and experiences, visitors also craved material objects from the grounds and tomb, hoping to take home a piece of Washington. Many simply took whatever they pleased, and without realizing it directly contributed to the declining appearance of Mount Vernon. Others sought more natural items such as tree branches, pebbles, and flowers. Black gardeners, who constantly preached Washington's role in the planning and planting of the gardens, were soon vulnerable to the demands of overzealous Americans. This was another form of income for interpreters, selling physical pieces of nature that were linked to Washington's hands. One writer for the *Woonsocket Patriot* recalled that an "aged slave" showed them the grounds, and accepted a half dollar so that they could "pluck a lemon from the tree planted by Washington's own hand." Another traveler recounted his interaction with the gardener, who told him that "gentlemen and ladies could be accommodated with oranges or lemons at a shilling a piece, and...they would perfume our trunks on our journey." One "domestic culled us a bouquet of hot-house flowers" wrote the famous author James Fenimore Cooper. The flowers were wrapped and presented to his companion; only later did they discover it was wrapped in a "sheet torn from a farming journal of the modern Cincinnatus, which had been kept in his own hand." The garden produced commodities that people wanted, and slave gardeners attempted to maintain its appearance while harvesting from it for tourists.<sup>57</sup>

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claiming to be former servants of General Washington. Another account by a L. Osgood mentions Lawrence Lewis taking it upon himself to repair the tomb in 1839 with his servants preparing the site for the new archway. See L. Osgood, "Mount Vernon in 1839," June 28, 1839, Mount Vernon Tomb Notebook, Fred W. Smith Library.

<sup>57</sup> *Woonsocket Patriot*, November 1844, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, Fred W. Smith Library; E. Thomson, "The Blind Christian or a Visit to Mount Vernon", *Sketches, Biographical and Incidental*, (Cincinnati 1857); 254-8, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL; James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans: Picked Up By a*

Some slaves even produced canes for sale, offering sightseers a more practical souvenir while exploiting the popular belief that it came from a tree planted near his tomb. One correspondent for the *Prisoner's Friend* was "accosted by a troop of young negroes, each of whom carried a lot of walking canes...which they offered for sale, and which we gladly purchased." One visitor complained, "we were assailed by a negro woman who offered to sell us sticks made of the wood grown on the estate...but a skillful maneuver freed us even from these vandals." In a *New Monthly Magazine* account, the writer observed at Mount Vernon a "well-dressed and intelligent little colored boy" who attempted to sell canes while claiming they came from the forests of Mount Vernon. Washington canes even found their way into popular music. On the cover of the score for "Washington's Tomb Ballad," the artist depicted a white family of three gazing at the final resting place of Washington. Pictured beside the tomb was a black man, and leaned against the brick wall were his canes ready for sale. The success of these Washington canes would eventually lead to a private company in Washington D.C producing their own, however these factory-produced canes did not fare nearly as well as the authentic canes. Handcrafted by "former" Washington slaves, Mount Vernon canes not only symbolized nineteenth-century respectability but also allowed the consumer to own an object linked to the legend.<sup>58</sup>

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*Travelling Bachelor* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828); 2, 248-249, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL. Washington did not actually plant the lemon trees himself, but did select them for planting. Benson Lossing maintains that he received two lemon trees in 1798 from a gentleman from Puerto Rico. See Benson Lossing, *George Washington's Mount Vernon* (Fairfax Press, 1870), 158-159. Washington does not mention receiving these trees in his diaries or papers.

<sup>58</sup> "A Visit to Mount Vernon," C.H. Brainard, *Prisoner's Friend*, August 1 1849; 1, 538; *Harper's Weekly*, 3 July 1858, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, Fred W. Smith Library; *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, March 1859; 106, 18; 438; Mount Vernon Traveler

Slaves at Mount Vernon not only provided access to Washington's past but also basic necessities, selling food and beverages to hungry visitors. Even with improvements in transportation, it still took several hours to reach Mount Vernon, and many travelers were fatigued by the time they arrived. During their visit in 1840, Robert W. Nelson and his party sought sustenance upon their arrival; luckily for them, "the milk maid had just finished churning." Each visitor drank about half a pint of buttermilk, but they were disgruntled to find out that it cost "three times as much as it was worth." A female slave sold a correspondent of the *Boston Atlas* "some hoe cake and milk," and told the reporter that it was the General's favorite meal. Another visitor, L. Osgood, purchased cherries from the "old gardener" and sat under the shade of tree while the old servant regaled him with stories of Washington's many toils in the gardens. While the Washington family provided more refined refreshments for distinguished guests inside the mansion, slaves offered whatever necessities they could to ordinary visitors.<sup>59</sup>

Not all elderly slave guides were male; in fact, many accounts mention slave women performing the same tasks. An "old black woman" permitted visitors to enter at the western gates, and she received some silver for her efforts. One contributor to the *Hudson River Chronicle*, J.S.B., recalled that "an aged servant woman" took his party

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Accounts Volume 3, FWSL; "Washington's Tomb Ballad," T.P. Coulston and Carrol Clifford (Philadelphia: William Coulston, 1850), Virginia Historical Society.

<sup>59</sup> *The Diary of Robert W. Nelson*, July 16, 1840, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library; *The North Star*, 3 August 1849, reprint of the *Correspondence of the Boston Atlas*, 2 July 1849, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL; L. Osgood to unknown, "Mt. Vernon in 1839 by a Native of this Country," June 28, 1839, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; Nelly Custis Lewis Washington, along with visitor accounts are cited as the sources for knowing Washington's favorite breakfast food, which he enjoyed with honey and butter. See Mary Thompson, "'Served Up in excellent order': Everyday Dining at Mount Vernon," *Dining with the Washingtons: Historic Recipes, Entertaining, and Hospitality from Mount Vernon*, ed. Stephen McLeod (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 37-39.



through the house, pointing out Washington's study, the key to the Bastille, and the portraits of the Washington family. One correspondent for the *Southern Literary Messenger* wrote, "[w]e went with the negro woman, who had undertaken to act as our guide, to visit the tomb." If the travelers had no money for gratuities, black guides asked for whatever guests might have on them to share. Despite being "eighty years old," one female slave had "not lost her taste for tobacco," and asked a visitor for a pinch in 1840. Black women performed the same duties as their male counterparts. They opened doors and gates, gave tours, and sold Mount Vernon objects and food to travelers.<sup>60</sup>

One elderly female slave became a person of reverence in the 1840s. She explained to visitors that she knew George Washington quite well, and that she was but a "small girl at the time of Braddock's defeat." This slave made quite the impression on Mrs. Morgan L. Martin, who met the blind woman at the gates. The slave told Martin that she was over one hundred years old and formerly a servant of General Washington. She then asked for alms from the travelers for her many sufferings. Robert Creswell Jr. also encountered this slave at the porter's lodge on a visit in 1849. She claimed the "honor of having been a servant of the patriot's family," and continued to reiterate her connection to the Washington family. She told Creswell that she "saw him die, and saw his corpse while it lay in state." Creswell and his party bought several canes from her, which she maintained were carved from wood cut near the tomb.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "An Hour at Mount Vernon," *New England Magazine*, November 1834; 398; *Hudson River Chronicle*, 18 May 1841; "A Jerseyman in the Old Dominion," *Southern Literary Messenger*, December 1839; 5, 15, 799; "Mount Vernon," *The Poughkeepsie Casket*, 4 April 1840; 3, 26, 204.

<sup>61</sup> E. Thomson, "The Blind Christian or a Visit to Mount Vernon", *Sketches, Biographical and Incidental*, (Cincinnati 1857); 254-8, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Account Notebook Volume 3 1840-1946; The Diary of Morgan L. Martin, 28 February 1847, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Account Notebook Volume 3 1840-1946; "Mount Vernon," Robert Creswell

This female guide spun the same tale to other visitors, claiming she was “ten years old at the time of Braddock’s defeat,” but since this writer admitted he and his party had no idea when that was they “could not verify her words.” A newspaper account in the *Pittsfield Sun* claimed she was “the only surviving servant of the family,” and that she still resided on the Mount Vernon estate. This writer conversed with her about her life, the General’s family, and her memory of Washington returning from war. “She manifests no little sense of the honor of her position,” the author wrote, and was astounded that “she remembers him well.” Another visitor guessed that she must have been “about one hundred and two years old” yet “her intellectual faculties were unimpaired by age, and that she possessed a degree of intelligence very rare among the slave population of the south.” These performances directly challenged white attitudes of black inferiority, and the storyteller’s age and abilities convinced visitors that their stories were not only believable but also truthful.<sup>62</sup>

While a name was never given, the Washington family slave lists and inventories do give some clues to the identity of this aged female slave guide. There are two possibilities: “Old Hannah” or “Old Betty,” two women who were relocated to Mount Vernon later in their lives. Bushrod Washington purchased the Nugent family from “R.B. Lee” and the matriarch, Hannah, remained at Mount Vernon for the rest of her life. Bushrod’s list of slaves estimated her birth year as 1765, and to visitors in the late 1840s she would have certainly looked nearly 100 years old. “Old Betty” became the property of John Augustine Washington Jr. after the death of his mother Hannah Lee Washington.

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Jr., *Godey’s Magazine and Lady’s Book*, October 1849; 39, 247; also in Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Account Notebook Volume 3 1840-1946.

<sup>62</sup> “A Visit to Mount Vernon,” *Ladies Repository*, December 1844; 4, 354; *Pittsfield Sun*, 26 September 1850; “A Visit to Mount Vernon,” C.H. Brainard, *Prisoner’s Friend*, August 1 1849; 1, 538.

Old Betty worked at Augustine's Blakeley plantation until 1842. She was then integrated into the Mount Vernon slave community shortly thereafter, and died sometime before 1855. Her approximate age is not listed in John Augustine Washington Jr.'s inventory of 1833, an indication that they did not know how old she really was. The Mount Vernon guide might have been one of these two women, or maybe even both of them, but this is only speculation. Both women had arrived at Mount Vernon well after the death of George Washington and were born after Braddock's defeat in 1755. This imagined narrative linked them to important moments in Washington's life, but their connection to the man would have been through the ownership of his descendants, suggesting that these stories passed through slave descendants rather than Washington's family.<sup>63</sup>

Another elderly slave woman identified herself to visitors in a remembered conversation she had with General George Washington after his return from war: "As he rode through the gate and said: 'Oh, my good Sylvia, the Britishers did not hit me after all—and they have all gone back to old England, and I have come home to live and die on the estate;--and young Sylvia seized the General's hand and kissed it.'" She reminded the visitor that she saw Washington die, and whenever she spoke of him she looked upwards towards heaven. There is a "Silvia" who appears in Bushrod Washington's 1815 slave list, but she was only twenty-eight years old at the time, and by the end of the 1840s, would have only been in her sixties. While white tourists were generally poor at assessing the age of slaves, it seems rather unlikely that they could confuse sixty for 100.

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<sup>63</sup> Bushrod Washington, "List of my Negroes," July 24, 1815, Diary of Bushrod Washington and John Augustine Washington III 1842-1845, Fred W. Smith Library; Inventory of John Augustine Washington II Estate, admitted January 21, 1833, Jefferson County (W.Va.) Will Book 7, 148, Jefferson County Courthouse Archives.

But Sylvia was probably using the same stories that Old Betty and Old Hannah used with travelers, and surprisingly these listeners did not question her authenticity.<sup>64</sup>

West Ford, the carpenter who built new coffins for the Washington family in 1831, aged into the role of the venerable slave in the late 1850s despite his legal status as a free man. Ford once belonged to John Augustine Washington, and eventually ended up at Bushrod's Mount Vernon. Freed at age twenty-one, he worked as a carpenter and overseer, eventually obtaining land of his own near Little Hunting Creek. Benson Lossing, a historian and contributor to *Harper's Magazine* in the 1850s, engaged West and asked him about the history of Mount Vernon and his relationship with the Washington family. West Ford told Benson that he had belonged to Bushrod Washington, and had lived at the estate for fifty-seven years. He "well knew Billy— Washington's favorite body servant during the Revolutionary War." He bled Billy in his later years when "delirium tremens" seized the man and would throw him into fits of terror. The author was so captivated by Ford's narrative that he asked if he could sketch him, and West granted his wish. Posing in a black satin vest and a silk cravat, he defended his choice of attire by saying, "artists make colored people look bad enough anyhow." As an independent property owner, West was already challenging racial sentiments of the day, but he also understood how white prejudice often reinforced caricatures of African Americans. Benson assumed that Ford was one of the mythical Washington servants based on his race and age. Visitors preferred a guide with a direct link to Washington, and Ford's appearance made that belief possible. He did not, however, need additional income from awestruck strangers; he ironically was one of the

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<sup>64</sup> "Mount Vernon," *The Columbian Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1849; 10, 2, 87; "List of my Negroes," Bushrod Washington, July 24, 1815, Diary of Bushrod Washington and John Augustine Washington III 1842-1845, FWSL.

county's wealthiest black residents and a business associate of John Augustine Washington III, conducting transactions on his behalf when he was away from Mount Vernon.<sup>65</sup>

After her husband died, Jane C. Washington retained ownership of Mount Vernon for nearly twenty years, but her son Augustine Washington III began managing the plantation in September 1841. Striving to turn Mount Vernon around, John made sweeping changes in pursuit of turning a profit on the land. He envisioned the possibility that Mount Vernon could be both a fully functional plantation and a tourist site. But with smaller inheritances split more ways, the last private owner of Mount Vernon had fewer resources than his predecessors. The rising cost of slaves forced John Augustine to rent out the labor of slaves and seek cheaper alternatives for a work force. He attempted an "experiment with several newly imported Irish," three men and one woman, in order to determine if he "could substitute them in any way for negroes." While that particular test was a failure, he did successfully hire a new gardener. "He is a German and appears to understand his business pretty well," Augustine wrote. "I had some twenty or thirty offers after my advertisement for one [a gardener]." John Augustine sought replacements

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<sup>65</sup> *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, March 1859, Volume 18, MVATA Volume 3; Benson J. Lossing, *George Washington's Mount Vernon* (Fairfax, VA: Fairfax Press, 1859), 352-3; Scott Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang Press, 2008), 58-78; Henry Wieneck, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America* (New York: Farrar, Stratus, & Giroux, 2003), 12-13, 292-293; Ford eventually returned to Mount Vernon during the Civil War. He died there in 1863. Recent work by Linda Allen Bryant suggests that West Ford was the offspring of George Washington and Venus, West's mother. Based on the documentation at Mount Vernon, it seems highly unlikely that George was the father, and much more likely that one of his nephew's sons fathered the child. Bryant's evidence is primarily oral tradition passed through the West Ford family. Either way, both the Ford family and the MVLA do not accept the others' explanation, and there is no evidence to prove or disprove this theory. See Linda Allen Bryant, *I Cannot Tell a Lie: The True Story of George Washington's African American Descendants* (New York: iUniverse Star, 2004).

for black laborers on the estate, not only in terms of farm work but also as potential tour guides, and white wage earners provided that possibility.<sup>66</sup>

John Augustine did differ from his illustrious ancestors in one important way: he embraced the idea of making Mount Vernon more accessible for tourists by forging relationships with companies and investors to profit from visitors. He allowed more access to the first floor of the mansion, something that his mother, father, and uncle had expressly prohibited. In addition to changing these rules, John Augustine negotiated a monthly rate with the steamboat companies so they could drop passengers off directly at Mount Vernon. By 1850, steamboats were arriving three times a week, bringing 500 or more persons with them. The company also contributed to the building of a walkway from the wharf to the vault, making Washington's tomb more available and the first stop on the tour of the grounds.<sup>67</sup>

He also began collecting the proceeds that slave guides and gardeners earned after he agreed to rent Mount Vernon and manage it on behalf of his mother. In his farm books, John Augustine meticulously recorded his daily activities, business transactions, and monetary acquisitions and payments. He frequently collected income from the slave gardener Phil Smith, who sold fruit, flowers, and plants directly out of Washington's garden to tourists. In 1843, John Augustine Washington sought the garden sales from Smith eight times during the entire year, reporting a profit of \$16.55. A year later, he asked Phil twenty-three times for garden sales, and reported total sales at \$51.06. In 1845, he inquired on twenty-eight occasions, reporting \$46.69. In January 1846 John

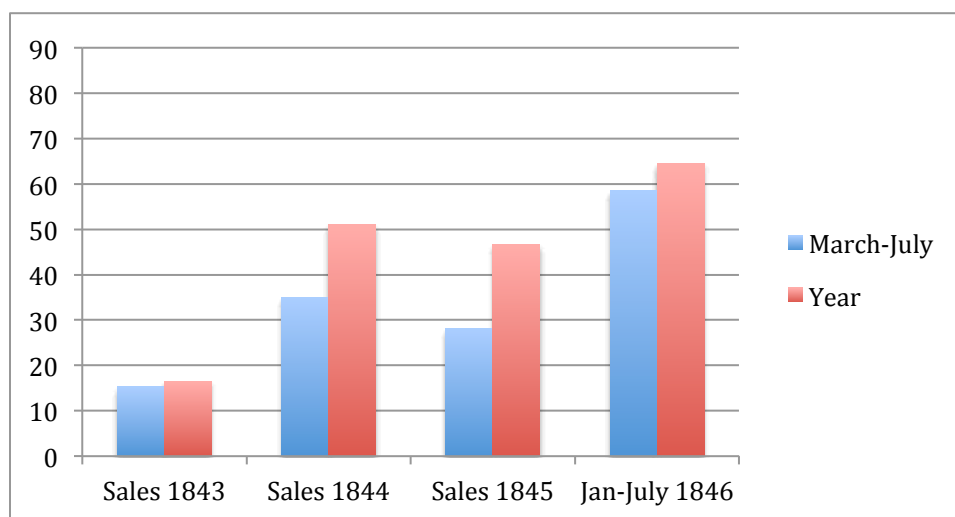
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<sup>66</sup> John Augustine Washington III to Eleanor Love Washington, September 24, 1849, Fred W. Smith Library; John Augustine Washington III to Eleanor Love Washington, August 24, 1852, FWSL; John Augustine Washington Farm Book, September 16, 1841, FWSL.

<sup>67</sup> John Augustine Washington III to Eleanor Love Washington, September 18, 1850, Fred W. Smith Library; *Charleston Mercury*, 1 May 1856.

Augustine hired a white gardener named George Kerr and entrusted him to account for the garden sales. Kerr was now in charge of inventory for the garden, and provided monthly payments to John Augustine Washington. Under Kerr's supervision, the garden produced better sales for the tourist months March through August, and total sales were the highest ever recorded.<sup>68</sup>

#### Mount Vernon Garden Sales, 1843-1846



While there is only seven months of recorded sales with George Kerr at the helm, there are several possible explanations for why income rose during Kerr's tenure as manager of the gardens. First, sales were no longer solely in the hands of Phil Smith.

<sup>68</sup> The Diary of Bushrod Washington and John Augustine Washington III 1842-1845, Fred W. Smith Library. John Augustine tracked these sales vigorously in 1844-1845, so these two years give us a good sense of how often he collected and how much he accounted for. The section of the book with Kerr's sales come after Augustine's summary statement of the year 1846. He was hired in January and would have received some training from Phil Smith as well. Phil died in mid September, as his passing is mentioned by John Augustine Washington in a letter to his wife. See John Augustine Washington III to Eleanor Love Selden Washington, September 17, 1846, FWSL.

John Augustine sporadically asked for the revenue from Smith, and based on the numbers, it is possible that Smith perhaps was keeping small sums from the sales. With two gardeners present, one of whom recorded the items sold and the amount received, skimming would no longer be possible. Second, John Augustine no longer asked for sales whenever he pleased, but instead collected monthly revenue from the garden. These annual payments were more consistent and allow us to see discrepancies in monthly revenue. For example, in the month of April, Phil averaged \$4.65 in sales whereas Kerr totaled \$14.33. In the month of May, Phil averaged \$10.80, Kerr \$24.41. In June, Phil sold on average \$7.57, Kerr \$9.42. Finally, sales may have been at their peak simply because Kerr and Phil worked in tandem, selling items from the garden and provided John Augustine with an inventory of their transactions with tourists. One visitor was saddened to learn “Old Phil” was summoned by death in late 1846, and with the “successor of old Phil in [the] horticultural department being sick with chills and fever, we negotiated the usual supply of lemons, cane-sticks, &c., with a young colored boy.” By hiring a second gardener to track sales, John Augustine turned the garden into a more efficient business that produced a substantial amount of revenue. It is also possible that Smith, like many Mount Vernon slaves, used the nostalgia of Washington’s gardens to make some money for himself on the side.<sup>69</sup>

These sales were either used by John Augustine Washington for minor business transactions and tolls, or they were given to his wife Nelly for household expenses. “I enclose you fourteen dollars, the proceeds of your flowers since you left home,” he wrote to his wife Eleanor in 1852. These flowers were sold by “a pleasant-looking colored

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<sup>69</sup> Diary of Bushrod Washington and John Augustine Washington III 1842-1845, Fred W. Smith Library; “Autumn Visit to Mount Vernon,” J.N.D., *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 7 November 1846; 24, 45, 180. For a more thorough explanation of this graph, see Appendix C.



woman” who offered to pick a bouquet for visitors for only “a shilling or two.” By performing the act on behalf of travelers, Mount Vernon’s black families could earn money and also prevent damage to the gardens, but this frequent harvesting contributed to the poor appearance of the grounds. By the 1850s, travelers often suggested that the estate was falling apart because of John Augustine’s indifference and poor character. In reality, it was more of a combination of the lack of finances for repair and tourist vandalism. Even with his business connections and collected income on site, he struggled to make ends meet, prompting him to sell the estate to the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association (MVLA) in 1858.<sup>70</sup>

As the sale of Mount Vernon became public, Americans were excited that the estate would be preserved. Criticism of John Augustine Washington—from his upkeep of the property to his increased asking price of \$200,000—grew even as he and his family were preparing to leave the estate. The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association came into possession of the grounds on February 22, 1860, and immediately began the restoration process. One visitor noted, “[i]t is also hoped that that after Mr. Washington finally removes to his new home...the place will not be disfigured by decrepid or youthful negroes, miserably clad, who are made to sell canes, shrubs, and other souvenirs, for the profit of others.” At some point, John Augustine’s business savvy went beyond good taste, and as individuals noticed the money-driven strategies in place, more Americans

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<sup>70</sup> John A. Washington to Eleanor Love Washington, April 1852, Fred W. Smith Library; *The Independent* 24 May 1855. John Augustine started giving Eleanor money out of the garden account as early as May 1844, and continued to pull money from it whenever he needed some supplementary specie. The Diary of Bushrod Washington and John Augustine Washington III 1842-1845, FWSL; Casper, *Sarah Johnson’s Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 70-72.

hoped something would be done to save Mount Vernon from becoming a cheapened tourist destination.<sup>71</sup>

The memory of Washington prompted many Americans to seek out the home and final resting place of the Father of his Country during the nineteenth century. Inspired by his leadership and no doubt shaped by the cultural explosion of Washington lore, visitors traversed difficult terrain to reach Mount Vernon. Once there, travelers reminisced about Washington's character and the unity he produced as a military commander and President. These days were gone, and as the country continued to divide, Americans longed for the Founders and the unity they remembered. Mount Vernon offered patrons a return to that glorious past, one that cherished republican simplicity, virtue, and patriotism. As an active plantation, it also reinforced the paternalistic argument that slavery was in the best interest of African Americans and the republic. As anti-slavery sentiment grew, the space became a site to contest those ideas, but that entirely depended on the guide and his or her audience.

Washington's descendants tried to live private lives, but they were always held to impossible standards and publically scrutinized for their actions. Despite their efforts to keep Washington's domain intact, this sanctuary was not impervious to the outside world. Visitors brought memories and preconceived notions with them, and they walked the grounds hoping to find some form of reconciliation between the reconstructed past and the present. The gardeners of Mount Vernon offered that peace of mind, and as Washington's audience grew, so did need for more storytellers. This demand coincided with the training of slaves and free blacks as gardeners, but for the rest of the estate,

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<sup>71</sup> *Commercial Advertiser*, 10 July 1860, Mount Vernon Archive Traveler Account Notebook Volume 3 1840-1946.

black guides relied on their own family histories, experiences, and conversations within the wider slave community. Slaves and free blacks used this knowledge to educate and entertain, but they also reinterpreted it for their own gain.

Aged slaves were sought out by white tourists and revered as living historical artifacts of Washington's life. These men and women offered travelers tales about Washington's battles in the Revolution, his extensive work in the gardens, and the man's final moments, even if these stories were not their own. These slaves often spoke of a personal relationship with Washington, and their ability to mix their history with his garnered a newfound admiration between white visitors and black guides. To their credit, some of these slaves and free blacks had spent more time at Mount Vernon than even the Washington proprietors. They were the only tangible links between the living and the dead, and that association gave them distinction in the minds of white Americans.

The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association is often praised as the first major historical preservation movement in American history. Not only did these women raise the necessary funds to purchase the grounds but they also began the immediate restoration of the estate, saving it from falling into total disrepair. While the organization was certainly at the forefront of preservation, they were inexperienced in terms of historical interpretation. As a result, the MVLA encouraged black women and men living at Mount Vernon to share their histories. The ladies transcribed them later for use as the first historical manuals on the property. After the Civil War, a number of former slaves returned to Mount Vernon to reunite families and rebuild their community, and these free men and women were repositories of information. Their history was written on the Mount Vernon landscape, and the MVLA wasted no time collaborating with these

storytellers to restore George Washington's home. Needless to say, without the knowledge provided by former slaves and passed on to later slave generations, the MVLA would have had only the wills, papers, and inventories of the Washington family to reconstruct Washington's world. The Washington papers, along with the slave recollections, gave the ladies a nuanced understanding of daily life at the estate and authenticated the preservation and interpretive processes.

The MVLA continued this tradition by hiring these newly freed African Americans as laborers, servers, and guides well into the Reconstruction Era, but as these former slaves either passed away or left Mount Vernon to start new lives, they were replaced with white workers. Of course, the exception to this rule was the guardian of the tomb, a role designated for Edmund Parker until his death in 1899. White tourists marveled at the eloquence and memory of an aged black man who shared intimate histories and experiences passed through several slave families, but it was his deference to the great Washington that reinforced attitudes shaped by Jim Crow segregation and white superiority. A former slave, defined by his devotion to a master he never knew, comforted white Americans in a time of rising racial discrimination, prejudice, and violence.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 109-110; 185-214. Edmund Parker was the uncle of Sarah Johnson, one of the main protagonists of Casper's work. After Parker's death, he was replaced by another elderly African-American man named Charles Simms.

## Chapter 4

## Frontiersman, Solider, and Farmer:

## The Democratic Washington in Popular Culture

We are informed, that Mr. Samuel Kennedy of South 2d Street, Philadelphia, is about publishing an elegant engraving of the Apotheosis of WASHINGTON—wherein there is at one view described, all that can be said for the soldier, the statesman, the husband, and the friend. We hear the composition of the plate represents a whole length portrait of Washington, rising gently in a graceful attitude on light clouds from Mount Vernon, which appear underneath—on one side are the portraits of Warren and Montgomery, among clouds descending in an inviting attitude, towards our principle Hero—on the other side, a figure of a cupid, suspended in the air, attentively admiring Washington, and holding a wreath of immortality over his head.<sup>1</sup>

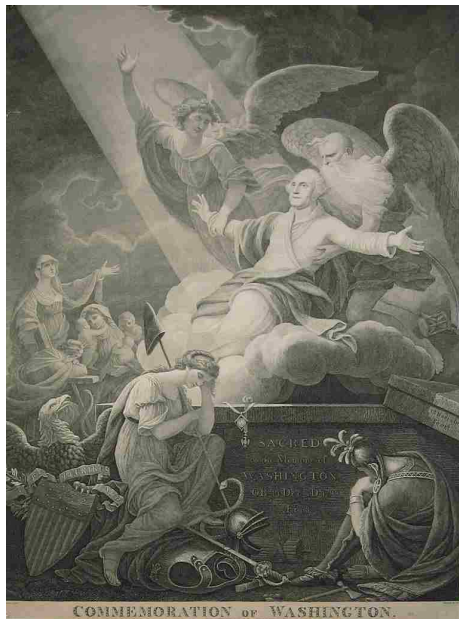
-*The Daily Advertiser*, December 20, 1800

Washington's death in December 1799 deeply affected the American populace. Public commemorations, orations, and eulogies resounded from politicians, civic leaders, and preachers, all reminding Americans of Washington's virtue and his fortitude as the deliverer of American independence. They reminisced on the struggles that the young nation faced in its darkest hours, and highlighted the perseverance of Washington in war, politics, and diplomacy. His retirement from public life affirmed his reputation as a man who only wished to serve for the greater good. His death, however, signified a new age of uncertainty for the republic, but as long as Americans remembered and emulated

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<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, 20 December 1800; *Philadelphia Gazette*, 24 December 1800; *New-Jersey Journal*, 6 January 1801; *Federal Gazette*, 24 January 1801; Samuel Kennedy sent a copy of this print to President Thomas Jefferson in March 1801. See Samuel Kennedy to Thomas Jefferson, March 11, 1801, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 33, 244-245. This engraving, crafted by David Edwin, was based off the famous *The Apotheosis of Washington* painting by Rembrandt Peale in 1800. Edwin/Peale's version featured a Washington in Romanesque robes ascending into the heavens, as a cherub crowns him with laurels and Joseph Warren and Richard Montgomery look on. Jefferson endorsed the letter as received, but there is no reply to Samuel Kennedy.

Washington, he would continue to serve as the model citizen for future generations. In hindsight Washington was many of these things, but he was also much more complex than his contemporaries acknowledged. Nonetheless, with the real Washington gone, elites seized the opportunity to transform Washington into a national symbol and the embodiment of the Revolution's ideals.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 41-89; Archie P. McDonald, "George Washington: More than Man," *George Washington In and As Culture*, ed. Kevin L. Cope (New York: AMS Press Inc., 2001), 3-10.

<sup>3</sup> John James Barralet (1747-1815), "The Apotheosis of Washington," (Philadelphia: Simon Chaudron and Barralet, January 1802), *Online Library of Liberty*, accessed August 24, 2015, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/presidents-day-and-the-apotheosis-of-washington>. Barralet's engraving was circulated extensively after Washington's death, featuring personifications of Immortality and Father Time raising him to the heavens while Faith, Hope, and Charity mourn below. Barralet, an Irish-born artist, even included a sorrowful Native American, seen at the bottom right corner; Phoebe Lloyd Jacobs, "John James Barralet and the Apotheosis of George Washington," *Winterthur Portfolio* 12 (1977): 115-137. Jefferson was asked by publishers to add his name to the subscriber list free of charge so other Americans could see Jefferson's name in the press. Jefferson never responded to the request. See Simon Chaudron to Thomas Jefferson, January 10, 1801, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Barbara Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 32, 419-420.

With such a diverse population, political and cultural elites attempted to create a nation that could mollify these differences and ease tensions between dissimilar groups. Nation building became the vehicle of choice for overcoming these variances, and the intelligentsia labored to unify the populace through days of celebration, imagery, poetry, music, pamphlets, and historical readers. Since most nationalist movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries utilized their mythic and storied past to promote national identity, Americans faced a much more difficult task in creating their own distinct nationhood. With no ancient foundations or legends for Americans to build upon, cultural agents could only look back to the American Revolution and glorify its heroes for their rejection of monarchy and tyranny. Washington's contributions to independence made him a national hero and one of the most popular men in America, but after his death, Americans feared that without him the republic would collapse. By transforming him into a national symbol, elites hoped to inspire patriotism, solidify political control, and comfort anxieties that America might not endure without Washington. While his physical presence was gone, they attempted to employ his memory and image to unite Americans and bestow lessons in civic virtue, using Washington as a bulwark of American nation building.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> François Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 30-34. Washington as Cincinnatus seemed to resonate with educated citizens, whereas for less educated Americans preachers disseminated Washington as Moses for his leading of a nation out of slavery and into freedom. See Robert P. Hay, "George Washington: American Moses," *American Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1969): 780-791; David C. Ward, "Creating a National Culture: Charles Willson Peale's *George Washington at the Battle of Princeton* in History and Memory," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 70 (2011): 4-17; Adam Greenhalgh, "Not a Man but a God: The Apotheosis of Gilbert Stuart's Athenaeum Portrait of George Washington," *Winterthur Portfolio* 41, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 269-304; Max Cavitch, "The Man That Was Used up: Poetry, Particularity, and the Politics of Remembering George Washington," *American Literature* 75, no. 2 (June 2003): 247-274; Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 25-30. While Hroch analyzed the development

This chapter explores the makings of an American nation through the memory of George Washington and his tomb. While politicians battled to control his political legacy, social and cultural mediators produced countless Washington texts and imagery, hoping to inspire patriotism in Americans while also profiting at their expense. Early efforts portrayed Washington as a god-like figure, elevating him for worship and emulation. But as political and religious democracy spread, cultural agents shifted public perceptions of Washington, recasting him in more democratic terms. By immersing the public in Washington folklore, poetry, and images of his tomb, these cultural producers democratized Washington, and while they did not directly challenge Washington the deity, they did reshape the national symbol to fit the changing political and social landscapes.

Nationalism scholar Hans Kohn has argued that only the idea of liberty unified thirteen distinct and disparate colonies into a nation. Americans had no common descent, religion, or culture to instill a sense of national identity. Revolutionary leaders created their own conceptualizations of liberty, redefining it in political, economic, social, and religious terms. These ideas were rooted in English political theory and Enlightenment rationality, and they justified the very existence of a new country and an American nation, providing the framework for nationhood that Americans built upon after the Revolution. This was an astonishing feat in and of itself, as Kohn astutely noted: “So far only the outward structure of the Republic existed; the generations of the first decades of

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of nationalism in European countries, he contended that the “intelligentsia,” or cultural elites were vital to facilitating national consciousness by identifying shared cultural, linguistic, and historical traits. The intelligentsia laid the conceptual foundations for nationalism (Phase A); this discourse invited new agents and activists from a variety of backgrounds to join the nation-making process (Phase B); and only when the majority of the population embraced these ideas and rituals to create a mass political movement (Phase C) were nations fully realized.



the nineteenth century were faced with the task of filling this structure with living substance.” Kohn and intellectual historians focused more on the evolution and dissemination of ideas that not only made revolution possible but also necessary, a process that ultimately fostered a collective, national awakening.<sup>5</sup>

Recent studies of American nationalism have focused on the nation-making process itself, exploring days of celebration, rituals, orations, symbols, and the myths that cultivated sentiments of early American nationalism. Robert Bellah and Catherine Albanese argued that nationalism was a secular religion of sorts, and that national holidays, symbols, and rituals offered Americans occasions to share common beliefs and values with one another. Len Travers’ exhaustive study of Fourth of July celebrations revealed that these commemorations served as a conduit to a seemingly distant past, allowing individuals to assess their country’s progress as a republic and elevate a national identity over local or regional identities. Simon Newman’s research on parade politics, and his emphasis on both days of celebration and the growing newspaper coverage of such spirited events, argued that political culture was popularized through the American press, connecting participants and readers through “a common national language of ritual activity.” David Waldstreicher’s study of nationalism in the early Republic explored how political factions battled to control of days of commemoration. These political episodes shaped a nationalizing process that permitted more middling white Americans, women, and free African Americans to participate in nationalist pageantry. At the heart of this

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<sup>5</sup> Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism: An Interpretative Essay* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1957), 3-13, 41; Paul C. Nagel, *This Sacred Trust: American Nationality 1798-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), xii-xvi; Paul C. Nagel, *One Nation Indivisible: The Union in American Thought 1776-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 1-9; Fred Somkin, *Unquiet Eagle: Memory and Desire in the Idea of American Freedom, 1815-1860* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967); see also Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

development laid the struggle for consensus, as more Americans laid claim to the legacy of the Revolution by reinterpreting its ideals and asserting their own place in the nation.<sup>6</sup>

Sarah Purcell's examination of the memory of the American Revolution through military heroes revealed how conservative individuals transformed the memory of a divisive and violent war into one of national cohesion and celebration. The Revolution served as the foundation for a national mythology of military leaders who gave their lives for independence, and by emphasizing bodily sacrifice for freedom, elites attempted to build nationhood through the veneration of liberty's martyrs. François Furstenberg contended that American civic texts—pamphlets, biographies, schoolbooks, sermons, orations, broadsides, and newspapers—while derivative of Enlightenment ideas and political theory, were disseminated in a more accessible form for less-educated readers to promote a shared sense of national identity. These texts highlighted the rhetoric of major historical documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and Washington's Farewell Address, and in doing so fostered a nation rooted in popular consent. Nationalists invoked George Washington as the mythic political father to all Americans and promoted a paternalistic mentality that allowed freedom and slavery to coexist in the new nation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 1-21; Catherine L. Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976); Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 6-7; Simon Newman, *Parades and Politics: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 5; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997), 216-245; Robert P. Hay, "Providence and the American Past," *Indiana Magazine of History* 65, no. 2 (June 1969): 79-101. For more on the struggle of consensus with historical memory, see Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 2-3, 9-10; François Furstenberg,

In her succinct study of early American culture, historian Eve Kornfeld acknowledged the profound difficulties revolutionary intellectuals faced after casting off the chains of political slavery. Colonists were from a wide variety of ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds, and the prevalence of familial matters and community concerns led many of the country's elite to believe that local and regional interests would trump national allegiance. Only a strong, national culture could remind all Americans of their commitment to the republic and its pillars of liberty and civic virtue. Intellectuals labored to invent a national culture that could foster an American identity and unite the populace under the auspices of nationhood while excluding Native Americans and African Americans because of their perceived racial inferiority. By identifying the "others" and differentiating American culture from European traditions, intellectuals sought to inspire a shared sense of belonging among white men and women. This vision for cultural accord, however, failed to resonate with the greater American populace as some Americans embraced this nationalism, others clung to leftover colonial hierarchies and institutions, and many directly challenged their designated place in the new nation. Perhaps, as Kornfeld suggested, there was no unified American identity but rather a pervasive myth that one existed in the first place.<sup>8</sup>

Few scholars have had such an impact on this dialogue as nationalism theorist Benedict Anderson. Coining the phrase "imagined communities," Anderson defined a nation as "an imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and

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*In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 16-23; Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988). For more on understanding how this paradox was created and justified, see Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> Eve Kornfeld, *Creating an American Culture, 1775-1800: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2001), 5-9.

sovereign,” and linked the development of nationalism with the rise of modernity. Anderson maintained that a constructed culture, along with vernacular languages and the rise of print capitalism, fostered nationalist movements around the world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nationalist ideas, sentiments, and imagery were shared with more of the populace than ever before, cultivating a sense of national consciousness and solidifying invented bonds between members of the nation and to the nation itself. On the peripheries of empire, colonists learned that the Crown viewed them much differently from their British counterparts. Patriot leaders and supporters stirred these sentiments through newspapers, pamphlets, and political tracts, creating a nascent national consciousness that grew prior to the American Revolution. While Anderson does not push much beyond the Revolution, his contention that a nation was an “imagined community” fits nicely onto the complexity of early America. For cultural agents and commentators in the early Republic, they certainly believed that a nation could not exist unless it was created, and it could not survive unless its people celebrated it. Thus the revolutionary generation promoted the republican ideal as its “imagined community,” but as the country democratized, this form of nationhood gradually shifted away from republicanism towards democratic inclusion.<sup>9</sup>

To be clear, all of these scholars agree that any study of early American nationalism poses serious methodological, semantic, and conceptual difficulties. While politicians and cultural elites promoted nationalistic commemorations, speeches, parades, eulogies, poetry, and artwork, these sources only give the modern reader pieces of the

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<sup>9</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983), 5-6, 37-65; Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1992), 7-8. For the purposes of this study I am relying heavily on Benedict Anderson’s definition of nationalism as “imagined communities” because it best describes the nation-building process in early America.

story, and few describe how Americans actually *felt* towards the nation. This constructed identity resonated more with those who had some stake in the Republic's survival, and as elites advocated republicanism to stabilize the new country, this form of nationalism often fell flat for those left on the margins of the imagined community. Native Americans, free blacks, slaves, women, and landless whites sometimes struggled to celebrate a nation that did not recognize their personhood, status, or contributions to independence. Some found agency in nationalist endeavors in other ways, but by defining the American nation through exclusion, it undercut the effectiveness and acceptance of a national republican culture. These groups had few political rights under republicanism, and poor whites could only aspire for citizenship when, depending on the laws of their respective state, they obtained a certain amount of property or paid a specific amount in taxes. This was a daunting task for the republican citizenry, to create a nation that the American populace would revere while simultaneously excluding most from direct political participation.<sup>10</sup>

As the country moved further away from the Founding, the efforts to bind Americans to republican nationhood produced mixed results. For example, the memory of the American Revolution, the major cultural platform for encouraging republican nationalism, became contested, redefined, and reconstructed repeatedly. While a shared historical experience, the complexity and variety of that experience had deeply different meanings to Americans of all sorts. If there was one idea, however, one symbol that more Americans could agree on, it was Washington and his significance to the creation of the new country. His contemporaries quickly realized after the American Revolution that

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<sup>10</sup> Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*, 12-14; Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 593-602.

he instilled a sense of cohesion and patriotism among the people, so they encouraged his participation in the Constitutional Convention. After its successful ratification, they extended this logic, electing Washington unanimously to serve as the first President of the United States, believing that he would validate the new federal government abroad and receive popular support from the populace. Washington became the symbol of republicanism that elites hoped would foster national sentiments and unity. But much like the memory of the Revolution, he too would be recast, reimagined, and reinterpreted as Americans faced profound changes over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

During his lifetime George Washington obsessed over the clout of appearance, and carefully considered the possible perceptions of his speeches, correspondence, and public actions. The fact that most Americans today remember Washington as a man who served his country reluctantly, stood above partisan politics, and relinquished military and political power is a testament to both the persona he created and the mythology in which Americans have draped him. Once he passed away however, Washington no longer possessed control over his image, and for political actors, religious and social pundits, and cultural mediators, his legacy became a definitional battleground. National-minded elites made Washington the centerpiece of an imagined American identity, emphasizing his commitment to republicanism and his perfection in all matters. This presentation of Washington manifested in apotheosis imagery, portraying him as a deity instead a human being, or as a statue of stoicism instead of a modest man. The process of glorification, which began after the American Revolution, stripped away the humanity of

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<sup>11</sup> Jon Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009), 272-277; Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency George Washington* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2004), 180-184; Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington, Man and Monument* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, third edition 1982), 129-149; Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 231-235.

Washington after his death and transformed him into a national symbol for America. But as the nineteenth century progressed, middling Americans craved a national hero more like themselves and less like a perfect, Roman god.<sup>12</sup>

After Washington's death, Americans wished to learn more about the man and his life, and over the next sixty years many writers, amateur and professional, stepped forward to satisfy the public's appetite. While these authors had different motivations such as inspiring patriotism, fame and fortune, and bestowing lessons in civility, they all attempted to write the definitive work on George Washington and thereby shape the memory of the man. Elites and intellectuals tended to produce hagiographies of Washington because they were the written reflections and affirmations of their republican symbol. More popular writers, however, often with little education or formal training, labored to make Washington more relatable to the ordinary American. The financial success and celebrity status that these writers experienced reveal the growing popularity of a democratic Washington, and no author influenced this genre more than Mason Locke Weems. Born in 1759 to a moderately wealthy Maryland family, Weems studied medicine and theology in London during the Revolution and was ordained as a Protestant Episcopal clergyman. Returning to the newly recognized United States in 1784, Weems worked as a minister through the decade, but financial hardship forced him to seek

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<sup>12</sup> Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol*, 193-207; Paul Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 184-201; Gary Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Press, 1984); One of the best examples of Americans rejecting this memory and portrayal of George Washington as a god is the public disapproval of Horatio Greenough's *George Washington* (1840) sculpture, which featured the man modeled on the god Zeus, half-clothed in a toga. The statue arrived in 1841 and sat in the Capitol Rotunda, but the weight of the marble, along with the unpopularity of the piece sent Greenough's massive work to the east lawn of the Capitol, and eventually in a number of other government buildings and museums. See Richard Saunders, *Horatio Greenough: An American Sculptor's Drawings* (Middlebury, VT: Middlebury College of Museum Art, 1999), 85-87.

additional income from outside the church. He traveled throughout the states as a bookseller and preacher, eventually joining literary forces with printer Mathew Carey of Philadelphia in the mid-1790s. He began writing stories and pamphlets for publication, and when Washington died in 1799, Weems recognized the opportunity to make his mark on the national tragedy.<sup>13</sup>

Writing to Carey in January 1800, Weems exclaimed, “Washington you know is gone! Millions are gaping to read something about him...My plan! I give his history, sufficiently minute...I then go on to show that his unparalleled rise and elevation were due to his Great Virtues.” As news of Washington’s death spread across the country, Weems hastily finished a short biography of the man, publishing the first edition on Washington’s Birthday February 22, 1800. As publishers sought more editions, Weems continued to add anecdotes to the narrative, expanding the work into a more complete version of Washington’s life. In the first few editions, very little was written about Washington’s childhood. In the third publication of 1800, only three paragraphs were devoted to Washington’s upbringing. Weems mentioned that “his education was of the private and proper sort,” and that in school “he was remarkable for *good nature* and *candour*; qualities which acquired him so entirely the hearts of his young companions.”

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<sup>13</sup> Edward Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America’s Founder, in Myth and Memory* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 19; Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington’s Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation*, 107-113; Lawrence C. Wroth, *Parson Weems: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Baltimore: The Eichelberger Book Company, 1911), 19-40; Jerry Wallace, *A Parson at Large: Being an Account of Mason Locke Weems, George Washington’s Quaint Biographer, and his Relation to the American Episcopate* (Springfield, IL: Christ Church Rector, 1934), 3-4.



But as time wore on, Weems integrated more material into Washington's early years, hoping to inspire younger readers to emulate Washington's moral example.<sup>14</sup>

Weems and Washington did have some contact before Washington's death in 1799. Weems first met Washington through Dr. James Craik, the General's personal physician, and he cultivated this relationship by sending Washington copies of his pamphlets, *The Immortal Mentor* (1796) and *The Philanthropist* (1799), receiving letters of gratitude for his efforts. *The Philanthropist* condemned partisanship and political parties, and advocated for Christian civility for the country, playing up many of the themes that Washington employed in his Farewell Address. As word of the atrocities of the French Revolution spread, Weems argued that the word "equality" brought terrifying images of "hungry sans-culottes in full march for desolation, equaling all property, leveling all distinctions, knocking down kings, clapping up beggars, and waving the tri-coloured flag of anarchy, confusion, and wretchedness, over the ruins of happiness and order." Weems proposed that Americans show devotion to country and their fellow man through a different kind of equality, one rooted in "mutual dependence, of civil obligation, of social affection, of dutiful obedience to the laws."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Mason Locke Weems to Mathew Carey, January 12, 1800, in Paul Leicester Ford, *Mason Locke Weems: His Works, His Ways: A Bibliography Left Unfinished* (New York: Plimpton Press, 1929), 2: 8-9; Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation*, 130; Wroth, *Parson Weems: A Biographical and Critical Study*, 64-90; Wallace, *A Parson at Large: Being an Account of Mason Locke Weems, George Washington's Quaint Biographer, and his Relation to the American Episcopate*, 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Farmers' Weekly Museum*, 16 June 1801; *Federal Gazette*, 16 June 1801; Mason Locke Weems, *The Philanthropist: or, A Good Twenty-Five Cents Worth of Political Love Powder, for Honest Adamites and Jeffersonians* (Philadelphia: 1809, 1799), 6-10. Weems married Frances Ewell in 1795, a daughter of Dr. James Craik's sister. See Frank Gizzard Jr., *George Washington: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2002), 46-47.

The retired Washington responded to Weems in a brief letter, thanking him for the pamphlet and applauding “the doctrine it endeavours to inculcate...Happy it would be for this country at least, if they were so.” It is no wonder than this work resonated with Washington, who had denounced political factions, pleaded for fraternal brotherhood, and internalized a fear of full-fledged democratic equality. Always the opportunist, Weems added Washington’s note to the front of the pamphlet, boosting sales of *The Philanthropist* after Washington’s death, but he did not stop there. Eager to further his credibility as the official Washington biographer, Weems also had their correspondence published in a number of newspapers after Washington’s passing.<sup>16</sup>

Weems’ biography was an immediate literary sensation, prompting publishers to reprint new editions well into the 1820s; by the time of Weems’ death in 1825, the book was in its fortieth edition. Weems employed simplistic and engaging prose, making it much more readable for literate and semi-literate Americans, and the cost of the text was relatively inexpensive. Early editions of *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington* sold for 25-37 ½ cents a copy, quite affordable for any American who wished to learn more about the hero of the American Revolution. Extracts of the work were also published in newspapers and periodicals, hoping to peak the curiosity of readers. As the biography grew in popularity and Weems expanded the

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<sup>16</sup> George Washington to Mason Locke Weems, August 29, 1799, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. W.W. Abbot, Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1998), Retirement Series, 4, 273; Mason Locke Weems, *The Philanthropist: or, A Good Twenty-Five Cents Worth of Political Love Powder, for Honest Adamites and Jeffersonians* (Philadelphia: 1809, First edition 1799), 6-10; Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington’s Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation*, 105-145. Much of Weems’s ideas came from the Scottish philosopher William Laurence Brown, but there is little evidence to suggest that he actually studied with Brown. It is more likely that he was simply influenced by Brown’s work. See William Laurence Brown, *An essay on the natural equality of men, on the rights that result from it and on the duties, which it imposes* (Philadelphia: Printed for John Ormrod by William W. Woodward, 1793).

text, publishers raised prices, offering the seventh edition in 1809 for 87 ½ cents. Weems furthered his claim as the preeminent Washington biographer by labeling himself the former “Minister of Mount Vernon Parish,” a congregation that he never served nor even existed.<sup>17</sup>

Most commentators applauded his efforts to not only make Washington come alive for future generations but also appear more common in his upbringing. One columnist noted, “[i]t has been a subject of just complaint that in the lives of Washington, which have appeared, there has been so little of biography and so much of history; that we are not permitted to see him in the private walks of life. Mr. Weems comes forward to supply this deficiency.” By adding more chapters on Washington’s adolescent years, Weems humanized the republican symbol, presenting him as a man who learned virtue from a young age. The most famous Weems myth first appeared in the 1806 version and told the story of six-year old George chopping down a cherry tree in the family garden. When questioned about the fallen tree, George “staggered under it for a moment; but quickly recovered himself,” admitting to his father, “I can’t tell a lie, Pa, you know I can’t tell a lie, I did cut it with my hatchet.” Augustine Washington embraced his son and praised his honesty, telling him “[s]uch an act of heroism in my son is worth more than a thousand trees, though blossomed with silver, and their fruits of purest gold.” The cherry tree myth quickly found its way into American popular culture, appearing

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<sup>17</sup> Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington’s Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation*, 130; *The Western Star*, 17 October 1801; *American Citizen and General Advertiser*, 28 May 1802; *The Balance, and Columbian Repository*, 7 December 1802; *Philadelphia Literary Reporter*, 1 March 1809; *The Monthly Anthology, and Boston Review Containing Sketches and Reports of Philosophy, Religion*, 1 March 1809; 215; *The Monthly Magazine, and American Review*, September 1800; 3, 3; Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America’s Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 20. Weems did pastor briefly at the Episcopal Pohick Church, some seven miles from Mount Vernon.

continuously in William Holmes McGuffey's readers for schoolchildren and in over twenty-five early American schoolbooks.<sup>18</sup>

Unbeknownst to readers, Weems fabricated this touching moment, and while he portrayed Washington as a lover of truth, he intended to inspire young readers to live morally, connecting Washington's childhood experiences with his deeply held religious convictions. Weems hoped that, "[w]hen the children of years to come, hearing his great name re-echoed from every lip, shall say to their fathers, *what was it that raised Washington to such a height of Glory?*" that they would respond, "it was his *great talents, constantly guided and guarded by religion.*" While historians continue to debate the depth of Washington's religious convictions, he wrote very little about them, infrequently attended church, and abstained from taking Communion in public.<sup>19</sup>

Weems amplified his religious slant by inventing another story about Washington's childhood that involved Augustine Washington writing his son's name in cabbage seed. When George discovered that the plants spelled his name, he quizzically suspected his father as the culprit. "But Pa, who did make it there, who did make it there?" George exclaimed. "It grew there by chance, I suppose my son," Augustine

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<sup>18</sup> *Newburyport Herald*, 22 May 1810; *American Advocate*, 29 May 1810; *The True Republican and Newburn Weekly Advertiser*, 23 June 1810; "Anecdotes: George Washington," *The Juvenile Repository*, 1 July 1811; 1, 1, 5; Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation*, 125-126.

<sup>19</sup> Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation*, 125-126; for more on Washington's religion and the Christian/deist dichotomy, see Paul F. Boller, *George Washington and Religion* (Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1964); Michael and Jan Novak, *Washington's God: Religion, Liberty, and the Father of Our Country* (New York: Basic Books, 2007); Peter R. Henriques, *Realistic Visionary: A Portrait of George Washington* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008); Mary V. Thompson, *In the Hands of a Good Providence: Religion in the Life of George Washington* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008). Some historians have argued that the lack of personal written reflections or constant church attendance suggests Washington was not very spiritual, while others have maintained that his behavior, charity, and familiarity with the Bible imply that he was more religious than previously believed.

replied. George questioned this explanation, arguing that a single letter of his name had never appeared before in the form of plants. He concluded that his father must have done it to scare him, but Augustine bestowed another important lesson of Christian belief on George: “I want, my son, to introduce you to your *true* Father.” Bewildered by this statement, George reasoned that Augustine was his father, and he his son whom he loved. Augustine concurred, but told George that God had given life to everything around him, from the cattle on the farm to the trees and plants surrounding George’s name. Finally subdued, a quiet George reflected on this lesson, and Weems suggested that “[p]erhaps it was at that moment that the good Spirit of God ingrafted on his heart that germ of *piety*, which filled his after life with so many of the precious fruits of *mortality*.” Weems’ parables, taught through the life of little George, were aimed at younger readers so they could relate to Washington’s struggle with life’s deep questions regarding God and spirituality.<sup>20</sup>

While some found faults with Weems’ interpretation, most were complimentary of his effort to offer more Americans the chance to learn about George Washington. One commentator highlighted Weems’ storytelling ability, as his work was “written in a style very fascinating to the young, it will have an extensive circulation.” The multiple editions were “honorable proof, that the public curiosity is yet awake, in respect to the life and character of the beloved hero of the revolution.” The success of Weems’ editions prompted more educated writers to offer their own accounts of Washington’s life. John

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<sup>20</sup> “Anecdotes: George Washington,” *The Juvenile Repository*, 1 July 1811; 1, 1, 5; Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America’s Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 21-22. Lengel also discusses the myths that Weems invented in later editions involving Washington’s religion, such as he was a devoted church attendee, his mentioning of God on his deathbed, and was spotted praying in the woods at Valley Forge; this last myth first appeared in the seventeenth edition in 1809; Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington’s Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation*, 135.

Marshall, Supreme Court Justice and avid Washington admirer, published a five-volume biography of the man between 1804 and 1807. Bushrod Washington allowed Marshall full access to his uncle's papers and correspondences, but Marshall's volumes on Washington were written for an elite audience. They were long, monotonous works that lacked accessible language or fresh anecdotes. David Ramsay, the famed historian of the American Revolution, produced *The Life of George Washington* in 1807, hoping to inspire reverence by capitalizing on the public's demand for Washington history. Ramsay's monograph was well researched and articulated, but his commitment to verifiable primary sources left readers with more facts and less stories. Ramsay devoted only three pages to Washington's childhood, noting that his education "was therefore very little extended beyond what is common, except in mathematics." While Ramsay felt professionally obligated to historical accuracy, Weems did not share this sentiment, relying heavily on hearsay, legends, and episodes with no documentation whatsoever. But by using these types of sources, Weems crafted a more democratic Washington, one who experienced the same perils that ordinary Americans continued to face in the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

As Weems' biography of the democratic Washington grew in popularity, bookstores across the country vied to have it in stock for customers. Advertisements for *The Life of Washington* were taken out in major cities such as Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, and New York, but booksellers in smaller markets also provided Weems'

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<sup>21</sup> *The Panoplist, and Missionary Magazine*, 18 April 1810; 2, 11, 525; Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America's Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 16-18; John Marshall, *The Life of George Washington*, 5 vols., (Philadelphia, PA: C.P. Wayne, 1804-1807); David Ramsay, *The Life of George Washington* (New York: Hopkins & Seymour Company, 1807), 1-4; Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation*, 139-143. Marshall returned the papers to Bushrod Washington, but kept a number of Washington letters as souvenirs for himself and friends.

account to more people. Book agents in Newburyport, Massachusetts; Brattleboro, Vermont; Hallowell, Maine; Charles Town, Virginia; Cooperstown, New York; Alexandria, Virginia; Norwich, Connecticut; and Washington, Kentucky all promoted Weems' work and offered it to local customers. *The Life of Washington* was even translated into German for newly arrived immigrants in Pennsylvania. In the town of Reading, about sixty miles northwest of Philadelphia, the local German newspaper *Der Readinger Adler* advertised "General Washington's Leben, in Deutch und English. For Sale at this Office, The Life of Washington, by Weems." Mathew Carey, now Weems' exclusive publisher in Philadelphia, advertised "The Life of Washington, by M.L. Weems, in German. Price 1 dollar. With six engravings." As Weems' version of Washington's life became part of American popular culture, Washington was transformed into the exceptional American, a man from humble origins who by the grace of God became America's greatest hero and political father. Later editions recast Washington as more common in his education, occupations, and mannerisms. As a result Washington became more relevant for the American populace, no longer conceived as a Roman-like god but as an ordinary man who achieved greatness by overcoming many hindrances to lead a nation to independence.<sup>22</sup>

Weems' fixation on Washington's private deeds, and how his humble childhood shaped his moral convictions, became the most enduring means for democratizing

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<sup>22</sup> *Philadelphia Literary Reporter*, 1 March 1809; *Baltimore Patriot*, 8 March 1813; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 27 July 1816; *The Evening Post*, 23 July 1817; *Newburyport Herald*, 31 May 1811; *The Reporter*, 1 July 1811; *American Advocate*, 15 October 1811; *Farmer's Repository*, 27 December 1811; *Cooperstown Federalist*, 29 February 1812; *Otsego Herald*, 19 September 1812; *Alexandria Herald*, 1 June 1812; *Native American*, 28 October 1812; *The Union*, 22 September 1815; *Der Readinger Adler*, 26 February 1811; *Der Readinger Adler*, 12 March 1811; "Literary Intelligence," *Select Reviews, and Spirit of the Foreign Magazines*, July 1810; 4, 19, 69; Weems' complete version of *The Life of Washington* first appears around 1809, and was republished multiple times over with some minor changes in the following decades.

George Washington. According to Weems, there was “nothing of Washington the dutiful son—the affectionate brother—the cheerful school-boy—the diligent surveyor—the neat draftsman—the laborious farmer—the widow’s husband—the orphan’s father—the poor man’s friend,” mentioned by his contemporaries, but only Washington “the HERO, and the Demigod.” While Weems’ work had its share of deficiencies, he correctly criticized fellow Washington writers and commentators who neglected his formative years in favor of lionizing him for political gain or national unity. As Weems produced more editions, he integrated more material on Washington’s early life to elucidate how important his Christian education and upbringing was in fostering his sense of right and wrong. But by casting Washington not as a model of perfection, but as a man who learned the attributes of virtue, piety, and humility from his father, he was presented more as an ordinary figure with religious principles who achieved greatness. As more and more American readers explored the mythical beginnings of George Washington, they found a man far more relatable to them than they ever imagined.<sup>23</sup>

According to Weems’ 1809 edition, little George was educated at a “little old field school, kept by one of his father’s tenants, named Hobby.” Even though George received basic instruction in all major subjects, the death of his father ensured that George would never acquire the same level of education that many of his revolutionary peers obtained at elite schools in the colonies and abroad in Europe. Citing an old legend that George liked to divide his schoolmates into two armies, one “was called French, the

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<sup>23</sup> Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of George Washington; With Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honorable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countryman* (Philadelphia: R. Cochran, sixth edition 1808), 5. This passage was added at some point between 1800 and 1808. See Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits, of General George Washington* (Philadelphia, PA: John Bioren, 1800, third edition); Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington’s Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation*, 123.



other American,” Weems concluded that he was “[b]orn to be a soldier.” Overlooking the fact that little George would have considered himself and his comrades “British” rather an American in the mid-eighteenth century, Weems’ portrayal of Washington’s call to arms does have some truth to it. With no formal education and inheritance split between elder brothers of two marriages, George had few options to better his quality of life in eighteenth-century Virginia. For more middling colonists, military service could serve as a means of social ascendancy, and George seized this opportunity to raise his personal status. As Weems happily noted, “[l]uckily for America, George Washington was not born with a ‘*silver spoon in his mouth.*’” Weems credited Washington’s commitment to hard work and self-improvement as the reasons for his rapid rise in the colonial militia and state politics, bestowing an important lesson to readers that regardless of background or education, anyone could achieve great things in America with the proper moral instruction and sheer determination.<sup>24</sup>

Weems also portrayed George’s career as a surveyor in more democratic terms. Appointed by Lord Bryan Fairfax before the start of his military career, the young Washington was “closely pursuing the laborious life of a woodsman.” To become a county surveyor, one typically needed an apprenticeship and some form of prior experience in the field. Washington had neither of these, but his brother Lawrence and the Fairfax family called in enough favors to secure the position on his behalf, something

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<sup>24</sup> Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of George Washington; With Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honorable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countryman* (Philadelphia: R. Cochran, sixth edition 1808), 25. In one of the earliest editions, there are no references to these stories. Weems only devotes three paragraphs to Washington’s childhood, and then goes into his account of the French and Indian War. See Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits, of General George Washington* (Philadelphia, PA: John Bioren, 1800), 3-4; Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America’s Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 23.

that Weems deliberately left out of his biography. As Washington headed west, he faced many challenges such as dangerous river crossings, inclement weather, a meager sustenance, and the constant threat of Indian violence. Washington the surveyor resonated with more Americans because he experienced the very same circumstances and fears that they did on the ever-expanding American frontier. Weems maintained that this very existence also helped shape his sense of masculinity, one that revolved around fortitude, endurance, and physical strength. Boarding with the Stevenson widow in Frederick, who had seven sons of “Herculean size and strength,” Washington was enthusiastic that such youths could provide “an abundance of that manly exercise in which he delighted.” They competed against one another “at running, jumping, and wrestling,” but since the brothers outweighed George, he often lost grappling matches but won contests of agility. Weems quoted Hugh Stevenson’s memory of Washington that “he and his brother John had often laid the conqueror of England on his back,” but “in running and jumping they were no match for him.” While Washington the deity might reign supreme over his contemporaries in every conceivable way, the fallible George Washington did lose to peers on occasion.<sup>25</sup>

Weems also wove the theme of modesty into Washington’s entire life story, a moral lesson that Weems included to teach young Americans to respect the authority of their parents, social betters, and God. During the French and Indian War, Weems promoted the idea that “Washington, with his usual modesty,” respectfully advised Major

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<sup>25</sup> Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of George Washington; With Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honorable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countryman* (Philadelphia: R. Cochran, 1808, sixth edition), 25-27. Again, these were anecdotes included in later versions but are omitted from the earlier editions. Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits, of General George Washington* (Philadelphia, PA: John Bioren, 1800); Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon*, 12-13.

General Edward Braddock on the battle tactics of the French and Native Americans, only to be belittled by the British Commander who declared, “[h]igh times, by God! High times! When a young Buckskin can teach a British General how to fight!” Upon his return from Fort Necessity to Williamsburg, Weems discussed Washington’s struggle to address the speaker in the House of Burgesses “Mr. Robertson,” who after several moments of awkward silence responded, “Major Washington, Major Washington, sit down! Your modesty alone is equal to your merit.” Even as Washington surrendered command of the Continental Army on December 23, 1783, he deferentially “begged to offer [the Continental Congress] his sincerest congratulations for the glorious result of their united struggles; took no part of the praise to himself; but ascribed all to the blessing of Heaven on the exertions of the nation.” Bidding the delegates and the American public farewell, Washington exited the Maryland State House in Annapolis bound for Mount Vernon, but again Weems’ emphasis on modesty spoke to both Americans of humble origins and the greater need for Christian virtue to ensure the survival of the country.<sup>26</sup>

Weems’s most forceful explanation for how George Washington rose from lowly origins to national prominence came at the very end of his monograph:

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<sup>26</sup> Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of George Washington; With Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honorable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countryman* (Philadelphia: R. Cochran, sixth edition 1808), 33-34; 40; 127. Weems’ story involving “Speaker Robertson” is probably John Robinson, who served as Speaker of the House of Burgesses from 1738-1766. The story of Washington’s modesty with Braddock was printed in the third edition, see Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits, of General George Washington* (Philadelphia, PA: John Bioren, 1800), 5. The other stories discussed were added to later editions. Buckskin was a derogatory term for a colonist, one that stuck throughout the American Revolution and was used synonymously with Native American. It also hinted at class, as buckskin was considered to be someone living on the frontier with little education and wealth. Weems’ interpretation of Washington’s address to Congress on surrendering his command is fairly accurate; See Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon*, 243-244.

And what is it that raises a young man from poverty to wealth, from obscurity to never-dying fame: What but *Industry!* See Washington, born of humble parents, and in humble circumstances—born in a narrow nook and obscure corner of the British plantations! Yet, lo! What great things wonder-working Industry can bring out of this unpromising Nazareth! While but a youth, he manifested such a noble contempt of *sloth*, such a manly spirit to be always learning or doing something useful or clever, that he was the *praise* of all who knew him.

The experiences of Washington's childhood not only shaped his ascent but also forged his character in the process. Weems purposely portrayed Washington as an ordinary colonist of very limited means who achieved greatness in war, politics, and business. Weems' credited Washington's success to his industry and sound sense of judgment, but both of these were, in Weems' mind, gifts given to him by God. His identifying of Washington as a "Nazareth" linked Washington to Jesus Christ, another historical figure with no formal education who appeared to have little potential but changed the world with his preaching and his death. Weems' message is undeniable in this passage; Washington came from so little but with the proper moral education and resolve he overcame obstacles to become a respected landowner, politician, military commander, and eventually President of the United States. While Weems did not directly challenge the marble Washington or its perfection, his interpretation of imperfections humanized Washington, offering stories that illuminated the humble origins of a man deified in paintings, engravings, statues, and monuments. Weems' Washington aptly reflected the sculpting process rather than the finished product, and as Weems brought Washington down from his pedestal amongst the people, more Americans embraced this popular interpretation of Washington's life.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> This monologue was included in the earliest versions of Weems' work. See Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits, of General George Washington* (Philadelphia, PA: John Bioren, third edition 1800), 49; Mason Locke Weems, *The*

Weems' efforts to make Washington familiar to ordinary Americans generated backlash from elite intellectuals. Jared Sparks, an academic and later President of Harvard University, sought to restore the memory of Washington as a republican symbol and reaffirm Washington as a model of perfection. In the 1830s Sparks solicited the Washington family for permission to write a new biography on Washington and publish subsequent volumes of his writings. As a trained nineteenth-century historian, Sparks argued that in order to tell the complete story of Washington's greatness, one needed to explore the man's written words instead of relying on inventive stories or fables. While historians today rely on the same commitment to primary sources that Sparks promoted, few would agree with his decision to judiciously edit Washington's materials. In instances where Sparks ran across "an awkward use of words, faults of grammar, or inaccuracies of style," he felt "bound to correct them." He modified misspellings, punctuation, tenses, and even entire phrases in Washington's writings and public statements, both for his biography and for the twelve volumes of Washington's writings published between 1833 and 1837. Spark's extensive editorial work produced a more educated Washington, flawless both in his writing and thought processes.<sup>28</sup>

Sparks explained that his scholarly endeavor sought to bring "these papers before the public" and that these documents were prepared to reflect the "imperishable name of

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*Life of George Washington; With Curious Anecdotes, Equally Honorable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countryman* (Philadelphia: R. Cochran, sixth edition 1808), 214; Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America's Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 25-26; Weems never goes into detail about how Washington made his fortune. He only devotes a single page to the courtship between George and Martha, and while he acknowledges her wealth as a widow, he never credits her as the reason for George's financial success.

<sup>28</sup> Jared Sparks, *The Life of George Washington; being his Correspondence, Addresses, Messages, and other Papers, Official and Private* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, and Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1833), xiv-xv; See Jared Sparks, *Life and Writings of George Washington*, 12 vols., (American Stationers' Company, John B. Russell 1834-1837); Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America's Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 17-18.

their author.” In order to do so, Sparks followed two criteria in his editorial process; first, he chose documents that “have a permanent value on account of the historical facts which they contain,” and second those that “contain the views, opinions, counsels, and reflections of the writer on all topics, showing thereby the structure of his mind, its powers and resources, and the strong and varied points of his character.” Not only did Sparks intentionally distort Washington’s words, but he also selected documents for publication that he alone considered significant to understanding Washington. Sparks complained that there were simply too many documents to publish, and those deemed inconsequential were left out of the volumes. While Sparks intended to make Washington more accessible for Americans, by correcting Washington’s writings he recast Washington as both highly educated and in line with the republican symbol.<sup>29</sup>

This did not deter Sparks from keeping many of these “lesser” letters for himself as mementoes. He cut up documents and gave away portions of letters to friends, family, and acquaintances, scattering Washington’s writings across the country. Sparks “was disappointed” when his associate Robert Lewis sent him a letter without Washington autographs, as it was his “intention to distribute them in Europe among eminent persons.” In a letter to Robert Gilmore, Sparks apologized for exhausting his “treasures” and promised to bring a “parcel of autographs” to Baltimore when he visited Gilmore. While Sparks believed his undertakings would make Washington more available for Americans to study and appreciate, his editing and documentary processing attempted to salvage Washington the symbol of perfection. His editions became the academic standard for

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<sup>29</sup> Jared Sparks, *The Life of George Washington; being his Correspondence, Addresses, Messages, and other Papers, Official and Private* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, and Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1833), xiv-xv.

future studies, influencing countless historians and biographers well into the twentieth century who also fell into the habit of perfecting Washington.<sup>30</sup>

With the passing of the revolutionary generation in the 1820s, it is possible that Sparks labored to revive the godlike Washington to ease social anxieties, but ordinary Americans continued to gravitate more towards popular works about George Washington. Weems' monograph had set an important precedent for writers who were willing to take more liberties to humanize, and sometimes even sensationalize, George Washington's past. George Lippard, a Philadelphian minister turned novelist, published two works of historical fiction involving George Washington. Lippard rose to national literary prominence in 1844 with his horror story *The Quaker Story, or The Monks of Monk Hall*, which featured a secret society of Philadelphia elites that practiced the dark arts by torturing victims, assaulting women, and tossing corpses down into a pit beneath their mansion. Lippard's skillful prose and terrifying plot enthralled readers, and his work quickly became a sensation amongst the general public. One commentator noted, "[i]t is a pity, for his *fame's sake*, that Mr. Lippard does not employ his pen upon some nobler subjects than those he yet has chosen. . . . Seek nobler themes, and loftier notes will be your reward, Mr. L." While critics derided his works as filled with vice and filth, Americans hungrily devoured his sensationalist novels. *The Quaker City* sold some

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<sup>30</sup> Jared Sparks, *The Life of George Washington; being his Correspondence, Addresses, Messages, and other Papers, Official and Private* (Boston: Russell, Odiome, and Metcalf, and Hilliard, Gray, and Co., 1833), xiv-xv. Probably the most infamous instance of this historical cut, copy, and past process is Sparks' treatment of Washington's draft of his First Inaugural Address. It was over sixty pages long, and Sparks cut it to pieces. Today, only about a third of the document has been recovered, and historians believe Colonel David Humphreys composed it. See Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America's Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 18; Jared Sparks to Robert Lewis, February 25, 1828, Fred W. Smith Library; Jared Sparks to Robert Gilmore, January 31, 1832, FWSL. After Sparks' publication of Washington's papers, Bushrod's nephew George Corbin Washington sold the remainder of the collection to the United States government. See George C. Washington to Louis McLane, January 3, 1834, FWSL.

48,000 copies in 1845 and another 60,000 the following year, much to the chagrin of more intellectual reviewers and writers.<sup>31</sup>

As Lippard's reputation grew as a master of literary horror, he took this particular columnist's advice and produced two major works on George Washington that would entertain and engage common Americans. In *Washington and His Generals; or, Legends of the Revolution* (1847) and *Washington and His Men: A New Series of Legends of the Revolution* (1849), Lippard portrayed Washington as a brave and daring military commander who often rode into enemy fire, barked orders at subordinates, and rallied the terrified Continental soldiers with his courage. Lippard did not completely abandon his penchant for gore, as the battlefield was often littered with blood, limbs, and disemboweled corpses. Tapping into the American fascination with spiritualism, he included a mystical preacher figure that appeared after battles to offer last rites for the deceased and laud the merit of General George Washington's actions. This phantom religious figure mysteriously vanishes before the next battle, but declares that, "Man, chosen among men, as the leader of freemen, I speak to thee...whose mission was joy to the captive, freedom to the slave, I bless thee, --Washington." While Lippard wrote entertaining and gruesome novels, he sensationalized Washington and his actions in the

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<sup>31</sup> George Lippard, *The Quaker City, or The Monks of Monk Hall: A Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery and Crime* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson and Bros., 1845); Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America's Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 36-37; John Cleman, "Irresistible Impulses: Edgar Allan Poe and the Insanity Defense," *American Literature* 63, no. 4 (December, 1991): 623-640; "The Quaker City," *Western Literary Journal and Monthly Review*, January 1845; 1, 3, 183; Paul J. Erickson, "George Lippard," *Writers of the American Renaissance: An A-to-Z Guide*, ed. Denise Knight (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), 240-242; Emilio De Grazia, "The Life and Works of George Lippard," (Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1969).



fight for independence, and his literary success in historical fiction speaks to the wider effort to democratize Washington for popular cultural consumption.<sup>32</sup>

Not all scholarship on Washington took such impressive liberties with his life story or purposely distorted his writings. Washington Irving, the creator of beloved literary characters Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane, published a five-volume biography of George Washington between 1855 and 1859. Already renowned as one of America's most gifted writers, Irving felt less inclined to fabricate stories or exaggerate legends. While he did invent dialogue and thoughts that he could have no way of knowing, this was common practice amongst America's first historians. But Irving's *Life of Washington* was well researched and written in accessible prose, making it one of the best nineteenth-century biographies of the man. One critic credited Irving's portrayal as more "agreeable" to the common reader, a "charming variation from the stiff, stuck-up likenesses of him, with which the public eye is familiarised." Another commentator found "Washington in his noble simplicity and his lofty purity of soul comes before us," and he hoped that Irving would write "at least two more volumes" on the man. Irving's diligence, however, did not resonate with the general reading public, who were more interested in the legends of Mason Locke Weems and sensationalism of George Lippard,

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<sup>32</sup> George Lippard, *Washington and His Generals; or, Legends of the Revolution* (Philadelphia: G.B. Ziber, 1847), 75-78. Lippard maintains in his footnote that everything is of "historical fact or oral tradition," but he does not cite where these oral traditions originate. George Lippard, *Paul Ardenheim, the Monk of Wissahikon* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1848), 162-165; Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America's Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 40-41; Lippard wove the mythical preacher figure into his later book, *Paul Ardenheim, the Monk of Wissahikon* (1848), where a lost Washington stops to ask the elderly man for directions. He tells Washington how he became lost, baffling the General and making him a believer in the man's spiritual authority. The priest of Wissahikon then commands Washington to kneel at the altar and receive his blessing as the nation's deliverer of independence. "From you, old man, I take the vow... On this Book I swear to be faithful unto all!" Washington proudly proclaims. While there is no evidence that anything like this took place, Americans were fascinated by Lippard's legends, making him one of the most successful popular historical fiction writers of the mid-nineteenth century.

making them financially successful and their fables a force to be reckoned with in American popular culture.<sup>33</sup>

As national politics became more divisive in the 1850s, many Americans looked to the past for remedies that could inspire national unity. George Washington Parke Custis, Washington's step-grandson and the last living relative who had a close relationship with George Washington, stepped forward to enlighten Americans with his own legends. Born in 1781 to John "Jackie" Parke Custis and Eleanor Calvert, George Washington Parke Custis was named after his preeminent step-grandfather. Later that year his father serving as aide-de-camp to Washington during the siege of Yorktown, contracted an illness and died, leaving Eleanor Parke Custis and young George fatherless. Eleanor Calvert decided to leave the two younger children with Martha and George Washington, and took the eldest daughters Elizabeth and Martha with her into widowhood, remarrying two years later. George adored Eleanor, or "Nelly" as she was affectionately called, but George Parke Custis, also referred to as "Wash" or "Tub", constantly vexed his adopted grandfather.<sup>34</sup>

Wash and Nelly were the children that George and Martha never had, and they were inseparable from their adoptive parents. While Martha focused on teaching Nelly how to be a distinguished Virginian woman, George struggled to motivate his lethargic

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<sup>33</sup> Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America's Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 43-44; "New Books," *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics and Literature*, 9 June 1855; 14, 23, 273; "Review 8—No Title," *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany*, March 1856; 60, 2, 306; Brian Jay Jones, *Washington Irving: The Definitive Biography of America's First Bestselling Author* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011); Andrew Burstein, *The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 322-325; Washington Irving, *The Life of Washington*, 4 vols., (New York, London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1856-1859).

<sup>34</sup> Ferling, *The Ascent of George Washington: The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon*, 54-55; Ellis, *His Excellency George Washington*, 42-43.

teenage step-grandson. Hoping to give Wash a formal education, Washington sent him to Germantown Academy, St. John's College in Annapolis, and eventually Princeton University. But Wash never acclimated to the intellectual rigors of college, spending more of his time writing short stories and poetry. While letters between these two were always amiable, Washington began to lose patience with his aloof step-grandson. "With respect to your Epistolary amusements, I had nothing further in view in the caution I gave you, than not to let them interfere with your studies, which were of more interesting concern," wrote George in July 1797.<sup>35</sup>

In letter to Wash's tutor Zechariah Lewis, Washington pleaded with him "to impress upon his [Custis's] mind the advantages to be derived from education—and the wishes of his friends that he may turn out a finished scholar—and finally that this is no otherwise to be accomplished than by close application and a continuation at College." In George's opinion, Wash was distracted by "an indolent temper, amusements, at present innocent but unprofitable," which made his learning a "difficulty at *present*." Washington believed that the proper college education would give Wash the intellectual tools for success and an opportunity to forge personal relationships with some of the nation's best and brightest citizens. Custis disagreed with this sentiment, deciding to leave Princeton later that fall. While he loved his adopted grandson, Wash's lack of responsibility and desire for self-improvement exasperated George. "He will have himself only to upbraid for any consequences which may follow," he wrote to Samuel

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<sup>35</sup> George Washington to George Washington Parke Custis, July 23, 1797, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. W.W. Abbot, Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1998), Retirement Series, 1, 266-267.

Smith, President of Princeton University after Wash's departure from school. Even the great George Washington struggled to solve the timeless riddle of teenage angst.<sup>36</sup>

When George Washington Parke Custis turned twenty-one, he inherited a wealth of land and slaves from his father Jackie, his grandmother Martha, and his step-grandfather George. As Wash settled into his new life as a wealthy Virginia aristocrat, he began building Arlington House, a grandiose mansion that he filled with George Washington regalia. To fill his spare time, Custis became an orator, delivering his first public speech at the Washington Society's Fourth of July celebration in 1804. He also gave closing remarks to the "Arlington Sheepshearing Institution" in 1808, congratulating those in attendance on a fine year of livestock production, but devoting more attention to the "memory of General Washington" in his oration. And so began a long and successful career as George Washington's personal publicist, a role that George Washington Parke Custis felt he was born to play. Even as Sparks compiled Washington's writings in the 1830s, Wash frequently corresponded with him. He even invited Sparks several times to Arlington House to discuss the editorial process, the selection of documents, and their future publication.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> George Washington to Zechariah Lewis, August 14, 1797, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. W.W. Abbot, Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1998), Retirement Series, 1, 298-299; George Washington to Samuel Stanhope Smith, October 9, 1797, *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. W.W. Abbot, Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1998), Retirement Series, 1, 396. Smith personally wrote Washington to inform him of Custis's poor academic performance and outstanding bills to be paid. Washington sent \$100 to cover the expenses with the Marquis de Lafayette, who just finished visiting him at Mount Vernon and was heading to New York. See also Ellis, *His Excellency George Washington*, 255-256; Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington*, 215.

<sup>37</sup> James Fisher, *Historical Dictionary of American Theater: Beginnings* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 125; *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, 2 July 1804; *National Intelligencer*, 6 May 1808; *Commercial Advertiser*, 9 May 1808; *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, 13 May 1808; *Weekly Eastern Argus*, 19 May 1808; Lorri Glover, *Founders as Fathers: The Private Lives and Politics of the American Revolutionaries* (New Haven: Yale

Beyond promoting his step-grandfather and his own connection to America's greatest hero, George Washington Parke Custis was also a playwright, producing a number of works such as *The Indian Prophecy* or *Visions of Glory* (1828), *Pocahontas* or *The Settlers of Virginia* (1830), *The Railroad* (1830), *North Point* or *Baltimore Defended* (1833), and *Montgomerie* or *The Orphan of a Wreck* (1836). *The Indian Prophecy* was performed in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington D.C., and was loosely based on George Washington's exploits in the French and Indian War. Custis' embellishment and mythologizing of his step-grandfather gave further traction to the Weems myth that Washington, elusive of French and Indian bullets, was destined for a greater purpose. In his play a great Indian sachem named Menawa rejects Washington's peace offering telling him, "[t]he Great Spirit protects that man, and guides his destines," and "[h]e will become the Chief of many nations, and a people yet unborn will hail him as the founder of a mighty empire!" With these words Menawa perishes in the arms of his people as the curtain closes, amplifying one of the more pervasive fables of Washington's past.<sup>38</sup>

Eager to offer the American populace his own semi-democratic version of Washington, George Washington Parke Custis began compiling his magnum opus *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington* in the 1850s. He published bits and

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University Press, 2014), 247; George Washington Parke Custis to Jared Sparks, February 19, 1835, Fred W. Smith Library.

<sup>38</sup> *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 18 January 1828; George Washington Parke Custis, *The Indian Prophecy: A National Drama in Two Acts* (Georgetown: James Thomas, 1828), 34-35; Roger A. Hall, *Performing the American Frontier, 1870-1906* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 26; There is nothing in the Washington diaries to suggest such a conversation ever took place. While Washington frequently met with Indian chiefs in the Ohio Country, there is nothing recorded of a "Menawa" or such deference for Washington. See Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America's Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 34-35. The credit for the myth belongs to Dr. James Craik, whose niece Frances Ewell married Mason Locke Weems, which is probably also where Weems learned the story. See Frank Gizzard, *George Washington: A Biographical Companion* (New York: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 45-47.

pieces in newspapers and periodicals, but his daughter Mary Anna Custis Lee did not print the final version until after his death in 1857. In *Recollections*, Custis offered readers a much more nuanced portrait of Washington, but as the last living family member who knew Washington personally, his text became a sensation on the eve of the Civil War. Using personal memories, Custis gave the American populace a Weems-like presentation of Washington, detailing his habits, manners, and daily regiments. He strove to make Washington seem more modest and simplistic, less a Virginia aristocrat and more a middling but proficient farmer. Always an early riser, Washington would visit his stables and work in his study until breakfast. A servant would prepare his clothes, which “were made after the old-fashioned cut, of the best, though plainest materials.” A simple meal of “Indian cakes, honey and tea” was his favorite. He carried an umbrella during his rides about the estate, but this was not “an article of luxury, for luxuries were to him known only by name.” At exactly quarter to three, “the industrious farmer returned,” and Washington ate heartily at 3 o’clock. He was “not particular in his diet,” and he often “drank a homemade beverage.” The afternoon was spent in the library, and in the evening he joined family members for tea and conversation, retiring to bed around 9 o’clock.<sup>39</sup>

Washington in retirement certainly appeared more ordinary than most expected, but Custis was not immune to the legends and stories regarding Washington’s stature or

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<sup>39</sup> “Miscellany: Tired of the Minister Gentle Manners,” *Christian Inquirer*, 19 May 1849; 3, 32, 4; George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Memoirs of Washington* (Washington D.C.: William H. Moore, 1859), 5-8, University of Virginia Library Special Collections; At the United States Agricultural Society Meeting in April 1855, Vice-President of the Association George Washington Parke Custis gave an oration entitled, “Farmer of Mount Vernon,” which revolved around Washington’s industry and principles of self-improvement. See “United States Agricultural Society: Second Day Officers for 1855,” *Plough, the Loom and the Anvil*, April 1855; 7, 10, 597. Custis began publishing pieces of his work as early as 1826, see “Review 2—No Title,” *The North American Review*, July 1860; 91, 188, 265.

physical strength. In one anecdote, a young Washington was reading under a tree while some companions were engaged in a wrestling match. When the champion called forward challengers, Washington hurled him to the ground and “leisurely retired to his shade.” According to Custis Washington threw a stone across the Rappahannock River near Fredericksburg and another “over the Palisades into the Hudson.” On another occasion he joined a competition of younger men who were “pitching the bar,” hurling the missile “beyond any of its former limits.” In Custis’ estimation, Washington’s “personal prowess, that elicited the admiration of a people who have nearly all passed from the stage of life, still serves as a model for the manhood of modern times.” It seemed that Custis was trying to find some middle ground between the popular Weems’ version of Washington and the republican symbol, but this made his recollections a peculiar mix of personal observation and legends.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to stories about his grandfather’s life, military battles, and experiences as President, George Washington Parke Custis also used the *Recollections* to declare that Washington, and his remains, belonged to all Americans. Custis had supported removal by the federal government in 1832, and took this opportunity to articulate his opinions to readers: “He [Washington] no doubt believed that his ashes would be claimed as national property, and be entombed with national honors,” he wrote, “hence his silence on a subject that has agitated the American public for more than half a century.” After Washington’s death, Congress had done the right thing requesting his remains, and Custis praised his grandmother Martha for acquiescing on the condition that they would be buried together. Martha “had the right, the only right” to allow such memorialization,

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<sup>40</sup> George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Memoirs of Washington* (Washington D.C.: William H. Moore, 1859), 40-41, University of Virginia Library Special Collections.

and she granted it “to the prayer of the nation as expressed by its highest authority.” By using the phrase “national property,” Custis reaffirmed the popular belief that Washington belonged to the nation and in turn so did his body.<sup>41</sup>

As an ardent nationalist and Washington opportunist, Custis condemned the political squabbling over “the right of a State! No one State can appropriate to itself that which belongs to the whole.” Even “little Delaware” had the same right to Washington’s remains as “any of her larger sisters,” and he hoped that the government would purchase Mount Vernon and erect a magnificent tomb of “white American marble, in blocks each of a ton weight,” decorated by “a dome of copper, surmounted by an eagle in bronze, a bronze door, and for inscription two words only...*Pater Patriae*,” Latin for “Father of the Country.” While Custis humanized Washington through remembrances and by characterizing him as an industrious farmer, he also disseminated many Washington legends, hoping to glorify his familial lineage. His work attempted to combine the public and private Washington, offering readers more insight into his everyday life while lionizing his deeds and physical attributes. While a haphazard effort, Custis did further the idea that just as the memory of Washington belonged to the nation and its citizens, so too did his physical remains.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Memoirs of Washington* (Washington D.C.: William H. Moore, 1859), 89-90, University of Virginia Library Special Collections. Custis even recalled Martha’s dying moments at Mount Vernon, when she told him, “Remember, Washington, to have my remains placed in a leaden coffin, that they may be removed with those of the General at the command of the Government.”

<sup>42</sup> George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Memoirs of Washington* (Washington D.C.: William H. Moore, 1859), 90-91, University of Virginia Library Special Collections; this portion of the *Recollections* was published earlier in the 1850s as Congress and the state of Virginia attempted to purchase Mount Vernon. See “Last Days at Mount Vernon,” *The United States Magazine of Science, Art, Manufactures, Agriculture, Commerce and Trade*, (15 May 1854; 1, 5; “Last Days at Mount Vernon,” *Home Journal*, 10 June 1854; 24, 435, 1; Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America’s Founder, in Myth and Memory*, 35-36.



Literary commentators lauded Custis's *Recollections* with praise, echoing similar compliments that Weems received over fifty years prior. One author praised the volume and sarcastically noted, "[t]hese 'recollections' refer almost entirely to the private life of their subject; to *the man* who (we trust it is neither treason nor scandal here to say so) ate, drink, and slept like other men, and it is this which gives the book its great and peculiar interest." The editorial went on, stating that the world, "[h]as had enough of Washington on horseback, Washington on a pedestal, Washington in the Presidential chair, and Washington under all possible circumstances of well won semi-deification," but the true merit of Custis's work was portraying the man "as he appeared to an intelligent young relative in the habit of daily intercourse." Another critic believed that the work would be a "public favor" to the youth of America and found it a "most acceptable contribution to the personal history of the Father of his Country." Supplementary notes by the popular nineteenth-century historian Benson Lossing gave Custis's account more credence amongst educated readers, but the portrayal of Washington through the *Recollections* was directed at all Americans who felt some metaphysical connection to George Washington, a link that Custis used to buttress his support for the removal of Washington's body.<sup>43</sup>

While many writers produced factual and fictional versions of Washington's life, cultural agents embraced Weems' Washington and created a wide variety of poetry, music, and imagery of his tomb, all of which reinforced the belief that the humble Washington was the property of the nation and thus belonged to all Americans. In one

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<sup>43</sup> "New Books: New Music," *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature*, 19 May 1860; 38, 20, 237; "Review 1—No Title," *Arthur's Home Magazine*, April 1861; 17, 249; Benson Lossing also published his own history of Mount Vernon entitled *The Home of Washington* shortly after the publication of *The Recollections*. See Benson J. Lossing, *The Home of Washington and its Associations: Historical, Biographical, and Pictorial* (New York: W.A. Townsend and Company, 1859).

poetic address performed by “students of the Georgetown College,” they reminded those present that they revered the man, “[w]ho snatched from slavery’s hand her iron rod/Who trampled down the Britons’ tyrant laws/And nobly fought and bled in Freedom’s cause.” They were heading to Mount Vernon afterwards, declaring that, “[w]e also come to shed a tender tear/Upon his grave, whom ev’ry heart holds dear,” hoping that Washington would show these free men “how to live, and how to die.” Ebenezer Baily, a Massachusetts poet and Yale graduate, won a poetry competition commemorating Washington’s birthday in 1825 for his ode *Triumphs of Liberty*. Bailey wrote, “[t]hough no imperial Mausoleum rise/To point the stranger where the hero lies/He sleeps in glory. To his humble tomb/The shrine of Freedom, pious pilgrims come/To pay the heart-felt homage, and to share/The sacred influence that reposes there...The land he sav’d, the empire of the Free/Thy broad and steadfast throne, *Triumphant Liberty!*” Bailey eloquently and rhythmically portrayed Washington’s legacy as a man of the people and as the deliverer of an empire destined for greatness.<sup>44</sup>

Visitors to Mount Vernon often shared their tales by publishing their accounts, but for aspiring poets and writers, the tomb became a source of inspiration for artistic pursuits and remembering Washington’s modesty. “F.M.B.” wrote an ode “At the Grave of Washington, at Mount Vernon,” exclaiming “[a]nd thou art here!—this is thy tomb/This lone and nameless grave/Unmarked, save by the wild flower’s bloom/Or trailing cedar’s wave...The simple turf heaped on that spot/As well might o’er a peasant rot.” F.M.B went on to chronicle the great deeds of Washington, but reasoned that the simplistic tomb was “[y]et better far yon simple mound/Its verdant turf with cedars

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<sup>44</sup> *Alexandria Gazette*, 25 June 1819; “Muse’s Bower: Triumphs of Liberty,” *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, 1 October 1825; 1, 6, 47.

crowned/Than pageant of their fate/Each blade upon that lowly bed/A legend of the worthy dead.” The author encouraged Americans to visit Washington’s tomb, “[f]or a father lies below/A parent to thy parents, he/Shall not his cor[p]se then claim from thee/Thy tear-drops’ deepest flow?” Lydia Sigourney, a popular nineteenth-century poet and advocate of women’s education, published “Washington’s Tomb” in 1837. She promoted similar attributes of Washington, asking readers to “[m]eet here, as brothers meet/Round a loved hearth-stone/Meet in a communion sweet/Here, at your father’s feet, WASHINGTON!” Sigourney also wove in tenets of Republican Motherhood, commenting “[b]ut when the mother at her knee/Teacheth her cradled son/Lessons of Liberty/Shall he not lisp of thee/Washington!” For Sigourney, Washington was the means to end “[d]iscord” or “mad [d]isunion,” a reflection of the changing partisan atmosphere, and her words intended to unite “brothers” around their shared political father. Both of these works suggested that Washington had not only given America its freedom but also made its citizens a political family. By visiting the humble tomb, Americans could thank Washington for bestowing both freedom and democracy to the people.<sup>45</sup>

One author, “A”, published a sonnet written at Washington’s tomb, calling on the people to “[c]ome, in your loveliness, and mourn with me/O’er the lone tomb where

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<sup>45</sup> F.M.B., “Ode: Written at the Grave of Washington, At Mount Vernon,” *New York Monthly Magazine*, September 1836; 8, 3, 329; Mrs. Sigourney, “Washington’s Tomb,” *The New Yorker*, 22 July 1837; 3, 18, 287; Mrs. Sigourney, “Washington’s Tomb,” *The Poughkeepsie Casket*, 18 April 1840; 4, 1, 8; Siourney’s poem was later put to music by Henry Russell. See Henry Russell and Lydia Sigourney, “Washington’s Tomb: An Ode to the Memory of Washington,” (New York: James L. Hewitt, 1837), University of Virginia Library Special Collections; Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 11-12, 200; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 243, 295-299.

Washington is laid.” Again, Washington was hailed as a hero over “tyrant’s shame,” and a “sage, beloved of Liberty!” He would always be “a beacon of light” to “[f]reedom’s sons,” a coalescing force that would last as “[l]ong as the everlasting hills.” Elizabeth W. Long transformed her experience passing Mount Vernon on a steamboat into a poem in 1849, beckoning readers to “[s]ail with me down broad Potomac past, the Tomb/of Washington/Feel the impress of his Greatness stamped upon the Nation’s heart/See each manly brow uncovered, lovely lips in awe apart/Fear not! While this reverence lingers with its clear, warm, hallowing light/This must fade from brow and bosom ere can come our country’s night.” As Long alluded in her prose, Washington’s legacy transcended divisions and barriers, and the sight of his grave reminded Americans that all could claim him as their shared political father.<sup>46</sup>

Harvey Rice, a lawyer and Democratic state senator of Ohio, produced an entire volume of poetry entitled “Mount Vernon and Other Poems” linking Washington with the advent of political democracy. In a thirteen-page poem, Rice offered readers a romanticized journey across the grounds, through the mansion and gardens, and down to Washington’s final resting place. Rice wrote, “[t]hough but a lowly shrine/There grateful hearts delight to pay/Homage to Freedom’s son divine/The mightiest in the fray/The mightiest in his country’s darkest day!” Washington had fought “for Human Rights, though traitors sneered” and he was “[s]worn to defend the rights of man,” even casting aside the offer of a crown “[t]o bide the people’s sway.” In Rice’s estimation, “[h]is name the oppressed shall breathe, and dare/With well-directed blade/Reclaim their holiest rights, too long delayed.” Washington represented the freedom that democracy bestowed

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<sup>46</sup> A, “Sonnet: Written at the Tomb of Washington, Mount Vernon,” *New York Literary Gazette*, 20 April 1839; 12, 89; Mrs. Elizabeth W. Long, “Mount Vernon,” *The Literary World*, 17 February 1849; 4, 107, 155.

on all white men, regardless of their class, status, or place in American society. This, according to Rice, was his greatest contribution to America.<sup>47</sup>

The memory of Washington and his simple tomb also found its way into popular culture through nineteenth-century musical compositions. Written by T.P. Coulston, composed by Carrol Clifford, and arranged by C. Everest, “Washington’s Tomb Ballad” was frequently performed at tomb visits and commemoration ceremonies. The song began, “[h]opes of freemen e’er will cluster, Where Potomac’s water glide; Where beneath the shades of Vernon, Sleeps our noble country’s pride,” followed by the chorus, “Let no desecrating footsteps E’er that soil of freedom tread.” The second verse followed: “Hearts of freeman, ever beating/Funeral dirges round that grave/Stand as sentinels forever/And those hearts are strong and brave...For they stand as one united, Death or freedom sworn to share.” Washington’s name was incessantly connected to free men, those who owed their very political livelihood to a man who actually dreaded the growth and spread of democracy.<sup>48</sup>

Not all music written in honor of Washington contained lyrics but some were simply musical pieces designed for popular celebration or dancing. One of the most widespread forms of nineteenth-century dance was the waltz, and composers employed Washington’s memory to write new musical pieces for this type of dance. Francis Buck wrote a “Mount Vernon Waltz” in 1847, dedicating it to “Passed Midshipman Seawell U.S.M.” James Porter did the same in 1850, publishing the “Mount Vernon Waltz” and dedicating it to the “Aeolian Musical Association of Philadelphia.” In 1857, Edward L.

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<sup>47</sup> Harvey Rice, “Mount Vernon and Other Poems,” (Boston: John P. Jewett & Company, Cleveland Henry P.B. Jewett, 1858), 13-26; University of Virginia Library Special Collections.

<sup>48</sup> T.P. Coulston and Carrol Clifford, “Washington’s Tomb Ballad” (Philadelphia: William Coulston, 1850), Virginia Historical Society.

Ripley composed “The Mount Vernon Waltz” on behalf of the Mount Vernon ladies. Another version, composed by Frederic Southgate, was written in 1858 and dedicated to Edward Everett whose ticket sales from his speaking tour across the country had recently enabled the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association to purchase the estate. Composers produced pieces for popular cultural consumption, and their works reinforced the idea that all Americans were linked to the memory of Washington through the mediums of music and dance.<sup>49</sup>




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<sup>49</sup> Francis Buck, “The Mount Vernon Waltz,” (New Orleans: Frederick Benteen, 1847), Virginia Historical Society; James Porter, “The Mount Vernon Waltz,” (Philadelphia: J.W. Porters Academy, 1850), Virginia Historical Society; Edward L. Ripley, “The Mount Vernon Waltz,” (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Company, 1857), University of Virginia Library Special Collections; Ripley also wrote ballads for the Southern cause; see Edward L. Ripley, “Southern Rights Polka,” (Charleston, SC: John Siegling and Oliver Ditson & Company, 1857), University of South Carolina Digital Collections; F. Southgate, “Mount Vernon March,” (Baltimore: Henry McCaffrey, 1858), University of Virginia Library Special Collections.

Beyond works of poetry and musical performances and compositions, the imagery of Washington's tomb—drawings, engravings, lithographs, and paintings—visually affirmed the modesty and humility of Weems' Washington. While formal portraits of Washington never deviated very far from the likes of Gilbert Stuart, Rembrandt Peale, and Jonathan Trumbull, Washington's tomb attracted attention from more amateur artists. For ordinary Americans, imagery became their primary means of visualizing and experiencing Washington's grave, and for those fortunate enough to visit the tomb in person, their accounts reaffirmed the simplistic and humble traits that Weems' Washington embodied.<sup>50</sup>

While some visitors balked at Washington's final resting place, others appreciated the modesty of the tomb as further proof that Washington was forever disinterested in hero worship. One gentleman described the grave as "very humble; and it seems scarcely possible that so mean a place can contain so great a man." Another visitor in 1827 was surprised that there was "no monumental marble...no sculptured urn or consecrated bust," but "all was simple and natural, but not less affecting than mausoleums and sarcophagi." While this writer believed that "the gratitude of the nation should indeed raise a monument," to the average traveler "this plain grave...was a more delightful spot for contemplation, than the shade of a pyramid or the summit of a column." The self-

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<sup>50</sup> *New England Galaxy and Masonic Magazine*, 19 March 1819; *Middlesex Gazette*, 10 January 1827; *Agricultural Intelligencer*, 24 March 1820, reprint *Savannah Republican*; The above image is by Russian artist Pavel Svinin. See *Traveling Across North America 1812-1813: Watercolors by the Russian Diplomat Pavel Svinin* (New York: Harry Abrams Inc. Publishers, 1992), 44; Pavel Petrovich Svinin (1787-1839), "General Washington's Tomb at Mount Vernon," 1811-1813, *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, accessed August 26, 2015, <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/12724>. Svinin was a Russian writer, editor, and painter who visited the United States between 1811-1813 as Secretary to the Russian Consul-General based out of Philadelphia. He primarily painted in watercolors and specialized in American landscapes.

taught English immigrant artist Joshua Shaw's depiction of the tomb, printed by Mason Locke Weems's publisher Mathew Carey in *Picturesque Views of American Scenery*, embodied these observations, as he portrayed the site as a peaceful coexistence between the grave of Washington and the Virginian landscape. The austerity of such a tomb was not lost on visitors, and its appearance made Washington seem less aristocratic and more like an ordinary man.<sup>51</sup>

The construction of a new family tomb as Washington specified in his will was executed by Lawrence Lewis and completed in spring of 1831. The new tomb, however, was very much an enlarged version of the old one, composed mainly of brick and en faced with roughcast. One visitor to Mount Vernon in 1834 noted, “[i]t differs from other tombs in general use only in simplicity...And while all within the tomb and around it is going to decay, it is pleasing to believe that Washington, though dead, yet lives and moves among the bright spirits in a higher and purer world.” Another traveler, reflecting on “[t]he boy George who was afraid to tell a lie, the youth George Washington, who with the most filial fondness, forsook hope and ambition to sooth the anguish of a mother,” could not help but ruminate in the anecdotes of Weems' Washington that so many Americans had come to accept full heartedly. Standing in front of the tomb, the correspondent noted that, “[e]very thing around me was going to decay. Ruin stared me

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<sup>51</sup> *Salem Gazette*, 21 September 1824; *Connecticut Courant*, 29 January 1827; Joshua Shaw (artist), John Hill (printmaker), 1820–1821, *Picturesque Views of American Scenery* (Philadelphia: M. Carey & Sons, 1819-1821); Mount Vernon Ladies' Association Collection, Gift of Alexander W. Weddell, 1946, M-1451/A; *150 Years of Philadelphia Painters and Paintings: Selections from the Sewell C. Biggs Museum of American Art*, Milo M. Naeve and John C. Van Horne (Dover, DE: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1999), 11; The above image has been taken from an article, “The New Tomb of Washington.” *The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, 1 November 1834; 1, 3, 105, accessed August 30, 2015. <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/docview/124036017/13A737427EB74603PQ/2?aaccountid=100>.



in the faced wherever I turned my eyes,” and no longer was the idea that “he lives in the hearts of his countrymen” a satisfactory answer to this problem. While the donation of marble sarcophagi by William Struthers did alleviate some of these passions, the presence of the natural surrounding the tomb appeased visitors, as nature had become the dominant theme of American culture in the 1830s.<sup>52</sup>

As Americans became more enthralled with nature and landscape imagery, Washington’s tomb became one of the most frequently printed scenes in American popular culture. One visitor named “J.S.B.” remarked in 1841, “I stood in front of the tomb, surrounded with the solemn stillness of the forest, undisturbed but by the murmurings of the waters of the Potomac...I felt a more deep and mournful melancholy than I ever experience before.” Everything seemed to “inspire the mind with the deep solemnity of the place, and the utter vanity of all human ambition,” he wrote in the *Hudson River Chronicle*. This description mirrored the imagery employed by the Hudson River School, a leading nineteenth-century art movement that made nature the focal point of American artwork. Hudson River artists illustrated the tranquility between humans and nature in grand landscape paintings, weaving in themes of exploration, settlement, and discovery as Americans pushed westward. America’s natural beauty and sublimity were both aesthetically pleasing and representative of a wider, cultural appreciation of nature that was growing in literature, religion, and most notably Transcendentalism. Whether artists of Washington’s tomb intentionally played up these themes is unknown, as perhaps they were simply staying true to the object in question. But their paintings and sketches of Washington’s tomb paralleled the themes of the Hudson River School, capturing the beauty of nature surrounding Washington’s grave

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<sup>52</sup> *Farmer’s Cabinet*, 12 September 1834; *Connecticut Courant*, 29 August 1836.

and the modesty of his tomb, all while contributing to this new form of American popular culture. As important as natural sites were to facilitating national identity, so too were historically significant places of remembrance.<sup>53</sup>

As America's obsession with the natural became more pronounced, artists and printers strove to meet this cultural demand. The volume *Splendid Views of American Scenery* offered consumers twelve breathtaking natural scenes, including "the Light House in Long Island," "Characteristic Scenery on the Hudson River," "the Great Bend of the Susquehanna," "the Catskill Mountains from the Hudson," and of course "The Tomb of Washington, Mount Vernon." In another tome of natural imagery published in 1839, Nathaniel Parker Willis' *American Scenery* combined commentary with the drawings of English-born traveling artist William Henry Bartlett. In the preface, Willis hoped that this collection would give common Americans who lacked the time or wealth

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<sup>53</sup> *Hudson River Chronicle*, 18 May 1841; Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3-14; Gene E. Veith, *Painters of Faith: The Spiritual Landscape in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2001), 13-17; Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3-7; John Howat, *The Hudson River and its Painters* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 15-17; Judith Hansen O'Toole, *Different Views in Hudson River School Painting* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 7-13; Diana Strazdes, "Wilderness and Its Waters": A Professional Identity for the Hudson River School," *Early American Studies* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 333-362; John Gadsby Chapman was one of the more famous artists to do this, painting a series of natural landscapes that revolved around George Washington's life; for more on America's destiny, see Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 407-411; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982, 1939); for more on Manifest Destiny, see *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism*, eds. Sam W. Haynes and Christopher Morris (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997); Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); for more on artwork and Manifest Destiny, see Roger Cushing Aikin, "Paintings of Manifest Destiny: Mapping the Nation," *American Art* 14, no. 3 (Autumn, 2000): 78-89; Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and the American Landscape Painting c. 1830-1865* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Matthew Baigell, "Territory, Race, Religion: Images of Manifest Destiny," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 4, no. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn, 1990): 2-21.

to travel a taste of the American wilderness writing, “[s]o great a gratification is seldom enjoyed at so little cost and pains.” Bartlett, who apprenticed under John Britton in London and later traveled the globe sketching natural landscapes and historic sites, framed the tomb around the ruggedness of the natural, and while he included a few visitors at the tomb they were smaller in stature compared to the vault, trees, and Virginia skyline. Visuals of Washington’s tomb fit perfectly within these collections, as the tomb sat in the middle and was surrounded by wildflowers, bushes, stones, grass, and trees.<sup>54</sup>



<sup>54</sup> *The Christian Telescope and Universalist Miscellany*, 27 September 1828; 4, 51, 414; *The Hartford Times*, 29 September 1828; *Splendid Views of American Scenery* (Philadelphia: T.K. Greenbank, 1828); Nathaniel Willis and W.H. Bartlett, *American Scenery or, Land, Lake, and River Illustrations of Transatlantic Nature* (London: George Virtue, 1839), 110-114, Virginia Historical Society Collections; Hussein I. El-Mudarris, Olivier Salmon, *Romantic Travel Through Bartlett's Engravings: From Europe to the Middle East* (Aleppoart Press, 2007), 15-16; Alexander M. Ross, *William Henry Bartlett: Artist, Author and Traveller* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973); *The Hudson River School: American Landscape Paintings from 1821-1907* (Shreveport, LA: R.W. Norton Art Gallery, 1973), 37; *Albany Institute of History & Art: 200 Years of Collecting*, Tammi K. Groft, Mary Alice Mackay (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), 72.

As more artists began to sketch and paint the site, they reoriented Washington's tomb by pushing to the left margin, giving the viewer a more panoramic view of the Mount Vernon mansion, the Virginia countryside, the Potomac River, and rolling hills of Maryland. This transition in portrayal kept Washington's tomb in line with the Hudson River School technique, making the tomb a smaller part of the image and devoting more attention to the rustic space surrounding it. The Englishman William Henry Brooke's sketch and Archibald Dick's engraving of Washington's tomb became one of the most imitated images of the late 1830s and was published in popular magazines and periodicals, reaching more Americans than art galleries or museums ever could.<sup>55</sup> Brooke's drawing became the template for other artists to engrave or paint Washington's tomb throughout the 1840s and many followed his example. Nathaniel Currier, trained as a lithographer under the tutelage of William and John Pendleton in Boston, produced a similar image based on Brooke's work in 1840. Currier, later founder of the Currier & Ives Company, added color and eliminated the large tree that often framed the right side of the portrait, giving viewers more sublime views of the Potomac River and landscape. While Brooke's drawing was the inspiration for Currier's lithograph, Currier's versions became one of his best-selling prints in the 1850s, allowing more Americans to experience Washington's tomb and reinforcing the attributes of the Weems' Washington.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> W.H. Brooke, Archibald L. Dick, Larkin Mead, "Residence and the Tomb of Washington, Mount Vernon, on the Potomac," (1838-9), Fred W. Smith Library, Curatorial Collections, EV-4290/RP-634.

<sup>56</sup> Nathaniel Currier, "The Tomb of Washington, Mount Vernon, Virginia," (1840), Fred W. Smith Library, Curatorial Collection, CS-3299\_M-1087; Bryan F. LeBeau, *Currier & Ives: America Imagined* (Washington D.C.: The Smithsonian Press, 2001). LeBeau argues that the ability to identify and produce images that Americans would consistently purchase made Currier and Ives the major print publisher in the United States during the nineteenth century.



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Tomb imagery was not limited to simply print or lithographic forms. Painters, armed with these mass-produced images, began to recreate Washington's tomb in their own artistic medium. William Matthew Prior, an American artist who has had over 1,500 paintings attributed to him and his protégés, painted a similar version of Washington's tomb. With no formal art training, Prior became known as a folk portraitist and landscape artist, meaning his style fell outside the boundaries of elite artisanship. As one of America's most famous folk painters, Prior made a name for himself painting portraits of men, families, and children. His work, along with the work of his brothers-in-law Nathaniel, Joseph, and Sturtevant Hamblin, became known as the Prior-Hamblin School, which was considered by traditional art critics as more naïve in interpretation and execution. His use of longer brush strokes allowed him to avoid painting intricate details,

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<sup>57</sup> William Matthew Prior (1806-1873), "Mt. Vernon and Washington's Tomb," (1853 or after) accessed September 4, 2015, <http://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=&t=objects&type=exact&f=&s=thew&record=111>.

a technique that detractors considered primitive compared to European styles. Still, Prior and his peers churned out portraits and landscapes, offering a distinctly American folk style that ignored the stylistic traditions of the Old World. Prior drew a series of images of Washington's tomb dating back to 1840, and while the mediums of ink, chalk, charcoal, and oil-based paint changed, Prior stayed relatively consistent with his portrayal of Washington's modest tomb.<sup>58</sup>

After the American Revolution George Washington was elevated as an icon, a symbol of the republicanism that elites disseminated to the people for national unity. But these nationalist designs failed to generate their desired effect, instead becoming sources of competition for political parties, fraternal organizations, and the many Americans who were left on the margins of the nation-making process. As political democracy incorporated more middling Americans into the folds of the nation, the memory of Washington was transformed to greet them. While Washington the demigod never left, he did step aside for a new, democratic Washington. He was the frontiersman, the surveyor, the proficient farmer, and the humbly entombed citizen. This Washington resonated more with the American populace because these occupations and attributes reflected the origins, lifestyles, and struggles of many Americans. His modest education and common roots spoke volumes about his rise to greatness, and it also perpetuated the idea that ordinary Americans could aspire and achieve great things as well. This

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<sup>58</sup> Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester, *Primitive Painters in America: 1750-1950* (New York: Dodd Mead & Company, 1950), 80-89. In another version, Prior painted the tomb and featured a single rider on a horse, contemplating Washington's grave. This was done after 1852, as now marble obelisks are featured in the painting. The image also includes the wooden plank walkway, which was added by John Augustine for visitors arriving on steamboats in the fall of 1850. William Matthew Prior, "Mount Vernon and the Tomb of Washington," (1853 or after), accessed September 4, 2015, <http://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=&t=objects&type=exact&f=&s=thew&record=106>

imagined connection to free men was fostered by writers, poets, artists, and musical composers, all of whom recast Washington to fit the rapidly changing nineteenth century.

Despite the political disagreements over the proper memorialization of Washington's body, the memory of Washington had already entered popular American culture, forging a link between Washington and the people which cultural agents cultivated for nationalistic and pecuniary gain. The tomb had already become a place of veneration, but as poetry, music, and imagery highlighted the link between Washington and the nation, more Americans embraced the Mason Locke Weems' version of George Washington. As Weems' creativity made Washington more relatable to the average American, poets, composers, and artists played up these humanistic traits, reinforcing the populist Washington as a man of humble origins, simple tastes, and learned virtue. These endeavors, along with the countless visits to Washington's tomb, fostered a Washington of the people and by the people. It was this version of Washington that captivated Americans and fostered the idea that Washington and his memory belonged to the nation. If there was more proof of this cultural transformation and its lasting effect, one could find it on a small homestead on the Indiana frontier. A young boy with no formal education and a fascination for books opened Weems's *Life of Washington*, reading it cover to cover. For the rest of his life, he maintained that this story shaped his views on hard work, honesty, leadership, and civic duty to his fellow man and country. That boy was Abraham Lincoln.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Abraham Lincoln, "Address to the Senate of New Jersey," 21 February 1861, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, ed. Roy Basler (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1946), 574-575; Abraham Lincoln, "Address to the New Jersey Senate at Trenton, New Jersey," 21 February 1861, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 4, 235-236.

## Chapter 5

The Civic Pilgrimage: Washington's Tomb  
and the Veneration of Washington Mementoes

Mount Vernon has become, like Jerusalem and Mecca, the resort of the travellers of all nations, who come within its vicinity; veneration and respect for the great and illustrious chief, whose body it contains, lead all who have heard his name, to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of patriotism and publick worth, and to stroll over the ground which has been hallowed by the ashes of heroism and virtue. A twig, a flower, or even a stone, becomes interesting, when taken from the spot where Washington lived and died, and no man quits it without bearing with him some memento to exhibit to his family and friends.

-*The National Register*, May 30, 1818

Signed “Adieu. S” and printed under the headline “Letter from Washington [D.C.]...By a Foreigner,” this article told the story of one French traveler’s experience visiting Mount Vernon. The traveler was baffled that “the remains of this great and excellent man still repose in a humble sepulchre,” remarking that Americans were not an ungrateful people but “seem to have an aversion to perpetuate a man’s name by monumental brass or to express their gratitude by *splendid* tombs.” Citing Westminster Abbey as a proper example of how nations should revere their illustrious dead, the traveler expressed indignation at the “apathy and indifference of this great republick.” Despite these criticisms, “S” compared the stream of Mount Vernon visitors with Jerusalem and Mecca, two holy sites with deep spiritual meanings in the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic faiths. “S” was one of many visitors who labeled the journey to Washington’s tomb a pilgrimage, one’s test of faith through travel to reach a religiously sacred place. But in nineteenth-century America, words such as “pilgrim,” “pilgrimage,”



and “relic” reflected a patriotic sense of American nationalism, which in turn gave these objects personal, historical, and national significance.<sup>1</sup>

As politicians and cultural agents transformed Washington into the symbol of the nation, holidays and commemorations trumpeted both his importance to the founding and called for Americans to emulate his example. These cultural episodes reinforced the Federalist memory of Washington the ideal citizen, but national days of celebration shed little light on how Americans, citizens or not, remembered Washington personally. As democracy permitted more Americans to claim Washington for the people, federal and state assemblies sought his physical remains to validate their own conceptualizations of the man and the American nation. While governments fought over the possession of Washington’s body, Americans and foreign travelers visited his grave and celebrated him in their own ways. Although civic commemorations illuminate the efforts of politicians and groups to shape public memory, the pilgrimage provides a deeper understanding of how individuals interacted with the dead and remembered national heroes on a more personal level.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Letters from Washington...By a Foreigner,” *The National Register*, 30 May 1818; 337; *The American Beacon*, 5 June 1818; *Rhode Island American*, 30 June 1818.

<sup>2</sup> Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of An American Symbol* (New York: Free Press Books, 1987), 107-148; Paul Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (Los Angeles: University of California Los Angeles, 1988), 1-16; Edward Lengel, *Inventing George Washington: America’s Founder in Myth and Memory* (New York: HarperCollins Books, 2011), 14-26; Catherine Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1976), 168. Albanese’s work highlights the differentiation between secondary and primary relics. Secondary relics were objects from the site or places of major events. The “primary relics were his remains.” For more on the use of Washington’s image in nationalistic celebrations, and how Federalists and Republicans battled to control the symbol, see David Waldstreicher in *The Midst of Perpetual Fetes* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1997); studies of American political culture tend to focus more on the public celebration of memory, and the participation of citizens and non-citizens in the processes of memorialization. For more on the significance of relics in the Middle Ages, see Patrick Geary,

Pilgrims often criticized Washington's family for his simple tomb at Mount Vernon, but its modest appearance did not stop visitors from either believing this spot was holy ground or participating in ritualistic behavior. Travelers often took items from the estate—tree branches, flowers, sticks, and pebbles out of veneration—but to the Washington family, these guests were simply strangers who vandalized the grounds. Despite these objections, many Americans believed that Washington belonged to the nation, therefore so did his home, former possessions, and tomb. They justified their intrusion as a right, that all Americans merited the opportunity to perform a civic pilgrimage to his tomb. The phenomenon of “pilgrimages” to Mount Vernon highlights the significance of Washington's tomb to public and personal expressions of American political culture. Visitors, armed with their own memory of Washington, descended upon the grounds and sought items to link themselves to a cherished, nostalgic past. By taking items near Washington's tomb, they invented traditions that linked their experiences with the legend of George Washington, fostering a greater sense of national belonging through the physical possession of objects.<sup>3</sup>

Historians continue to explore the dynamics of American nation building through material culture, the uses of space, and the diffusion of symbolism. In his study of death

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*Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978). While the historical conditions varied tremendously between these periods, there are some similarities in how societies attributed value and imbued objects with historical significance.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Lee, “Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109 (September, 2001): 264-7; François Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of the Nation* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2006), 61-64; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983), 5-6, 37-65; *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1. Hobsbawm defines “invented tradition” as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”

in America, cultural historian Gary Laderman acknowledged the professed sacredness of Washington's remains, but reasoned that since Protestant culture rejected the veneration of the body, Americans preferred to remember Washington as a symbol instead. Yet, while many Americans did revere Washington the icon, thousands of pilgrims traveled to Mount Vernon to experience Washington's tomb during the nineteenth century. These visitors frequently described these trips with religious language, referring to them as "pilgrimages" and objects as "relics." Historian Thomas Chambers argued that nineteenth-century Americans learned to revere place through battlefield tourism and before the 1820s "little sacred ground existed." The number of Mount Vernon pilgrims, however, disputes this idea, swelling in size from hundreds to tens of thousands by the time of the Civil War. In her study of the American Protestant pilgrimage, cultural anthropologist Gwen Neville contended that since Protestants were without martyrs or saints to worship, they created the sacredness of a site over time through a "community of believers." In the instance of Mount Vernon, this growing community of visitors declared the site as the nation's shrine. The physical presence of visitors reaffirmed the myths of Washington; and by venerating his memory with their company they projected sacredness onto anything associated with Washington, transforming ordinary objects into artifacts of American history.<sup>4</sup>

In the early years after Washington's death, visitors shied away from using religious language to describe their experiences at Mount Vernon. After the War of

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<sup>4</sup> Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 17; Thomas Chambers, *Memories of War: Visiting Battlefields and Bonefields in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), xiii; Gwen Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage: Rituals of Reunion in American Protestant Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), 20-1; Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of the Nation*, 20-23; Carlton J.H. Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York, NY: Macmillan Co., 1960), 164-167.

1812, words such as “pilgrimage,” “relic,” “sacred,” “holy,” and “hallowed” were regularly employed by visitors. This can be partially explained by the growing nationalist fervor following Andrew Jackson’s unexpected victory at New Orleans, but this language continued well into the nineteenth century. In order to fully understand this development in rhetoric, a one must look deeper into the democratization of religious expression in early America and its influence during the formative years of the early Republic.<sup>5</sup>

While the Constitution dramatically altered the relationship between religion and government, the rhetoric of the Revolution was not lost on those seeking deeper spiritual enlightenment. Historian Nathan O. Hatch’s exploration of popular evangelical movements shed light on the changing undercurrents between the declining religious elite and the common people during the early Republic. Hatch contended that camp meetings, traveling orators, and the development of religious journalism democratized American Christianity, creating a more egalitarian form of popular worship and religious belief. Americans could judge for themselves what they believed in, and anyone seeking spiritual purpose in their life could do so without the teachings and condemnations of

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<sup>5</sup> Using database searches of American newspapers and periodicals, I created a spreadsheet and marked whenever a printed account used the terms relic(s), pilgrim(s), pilgrimage, or sacred/holy/hallowed. Before the War of 1812 these words were intermittently used, and grew afterwards as more visitors experienced George Washington’s home. As this community of believers grew, so did the religious rhetoric to describe the experience. For these searches, I used the Readex American Historical Newspapers online database and ProQuest’s online Periodicals collection. See [http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/HistArchive?p\\_product=EANX&p\\_action=timeframes&p\\_theme=ahnp&p\\_nbid=D5AF5EEUMTQ0MTQ2OTg1MC4xNjE0MzA6MT0xND0xMzQuNDguMTYwLjI0NA&p\\_clear\\_search=yes&d\\_refprod=EANX&](http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/HistArchive?p_product=EANX&p_action=timeframes&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=D5AF5EEUMTQ0MTQ2OTg1MC4xNjE0MzA6MT0xND0xMzQuNDguMTYwLjI0NA&p_clear_search=yes&d_refprod=EANX&) and <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/advanced?accountid=100> . The complete spreadsheets can be found in Appendix D. By the time of the American Revolution, the colonies were a religiously vibrant place, but this spiritual diversity did not necessarily imply peaceful coexistence. Many of these denominations competed for converts, public funding, and autonomy, making early America ripe with religious prejudice and conflict between different sects.

pastors and church elders. This religious fervor promoted democratic self-reflection and expression, which resonated with more middling Americans on the western edges of the republic, and their participation in these public events demonstrated that the Second Great Awakening was not simply a struggle between evangelicals and rational thinkers, but between well established religious practices and popular culture. As Americans contested various tenets of religious doctrine and worship, they applied a similar reconsideration of the country's history, challenging narratives to claim ownership of the past.<sup>6</sup>

As churches were disestablished by state legislatures and populist evangelical movements achieved national prominence, secularism and democracy shifted how Americans perceived religious and governmental authorities.<sup>7</sup> While these measures

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<sup>6</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 3-16; some historians have argued that this democratic spiritual ethos reaches even further back in history to the Great Awakening. Thomas Kidd argued that revivals and salvation expanded the boundaries of the "saved" during the First Great Awakening in the American colonies. See Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); While most Americans were indeed Christians, the United States would not be an exclusively Christian nation, a major departure from colonial era policy that permitted colonies to create and fund their own state churches. The issue of taxation, and using public money to support state-sponsored churches, fueled the disestablishment movement after the Revolution as citizens who did not belong to that particular faith cried foul; Jon Butler, "Why Revolutionary America Wasn't a 'Christian Nation,'" in *Religion and the New Republic: Faith in the Founding of America*, ed. James H. Hutson (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), 189-196; Daniel L. Dreisbach, "The Bible and the Political Culture of the American Founding," in *Faith and the Founders of the American Republic*, eds. Daniel L. Dreisbach and Mark David Hall (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 144-173; John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?: A Historical Introduction* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2011); Daniel Walker Howe, "Church, State, and Education in the Young American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 22, no. 1 (Spring, 2002), 1-24; Kelly Olds, "Privatizing the Church: Disestablishment in Connecticut and Massachusetts," *Journal of Political Economy* 102, no. 2 (April, 1994): 277-297; The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, passed by Congress on September 25, 1789 and ratified on December 15, 1791, prohibits the establishment of a national religion. See <http://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendments/amendment-I>, accessed October 29, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Jon Butler, *Religion in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Bryan LeBeau, *Religion in America to 1865* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 35-

intended to separate religion from government and the control of elites, Americans still used religious language to describe nationally significant places. Travelers called Washington's tomb "sacred" well into the nineteenth century and anything associated with him a "relic." As historian Michael Kammen noted about nineteenth-century Americans, "they strongly preferred to think about time in theological and millennial terms rather than in historical or chronological terms." The reverence for objects was crucial for how Americans understood the changing world around them and deepening their relationship with a collective past. Although some visitors described these objects in a more secular tone, referring to objects as "mementoes" or "souvenirs," others attributed sacredness to Washington's tomb and former possessions. While it is impossible to know whether or not Americans believed these objects were "holy" in the Judeo-Christian sense, their use of the language does suggest how treasured these objects and places were in forging their own memory of Washington. Religious relic or secular

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53; Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 6-10. Bonomi argued that religion was not in decline by the end of the eighteenth century as most historians previously posited. Instead, she identifies the influence of religion on colonial America and its role as a nexus for revolutionary political thought; David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 5-20. Hall contended that there was a constant interaction between clerical and popular culture, as elites and common peoples in tandem shaped a popular religious culture that integrated both doctrine and folklore practices through an expansion of colonial literacy; Jon Butler, "Why Revolutionary America Wasn't a 'Christian Nation,'" in *Religion and the New Republic: Faith in the Founding of America*, ed. James H. Hutson (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), 190-193; Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of Our Founders: Religion and the New Nation* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 12-35; *Religious Intolerance in America*, eds. John Corrigan and Lynn S. Neal (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). This edited collection explores the historical mistreatment of Catholics, Mormons, Native Americans, Jehovah's Witnesses, Adventists, and a number of other modern religious entities.

memento, these objects allowed ordinary Americans to claim a piece of Washington's memory and weave themselves into the glorified narrative of the American Revolution.<sup>8</sup>

Aptly described by historian Seth Bruggeman as “object fetishism,” exhibits and museum collections that displayed artifacts of the past fascinated Americans. Viewers were much less concerned with the authenticity of these “relics” than their modern counterparts because they were a vital part of the nineteenth-century mindset. These objects captivated the imaginations of those who saw them, and for the promoters of such endeavors, the attraction of profit coupled with a desire to promote patriotism often permitted unsavory business practices. Relics could be utilized for nation building, forging personal links between the sightseer and person or event in question; at other times, these objects served brazen attempts to exploit a gullible populace. Historian Teresa Barnett has argued that relics are “embedded in a network of objects and modes of meaning that bears little relation to our conception of how the material world represents the past. And that is precisely the point.” Barnett's study asserts that the professionalization of history in the late nineteenth century denied the legitimacy of relics as a true form of historical representation. As a result, curators and specialists removed relics from exhibits and collections to make room for the documented objects of the twentieth century. The dismissal of “relics” as “real history” seems valid according to our modern standards, but this idea falls flat when considering their significance to the people who actually revered them. Americans today approach historical self-

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred Knopf Inc., 1991), 34, 50; Evert Jan van Leeuwen, “The Graveyard Aesthetics of Revolutionary Elegiac Verse: Remembering the Revolution as a Sacred Cause,” in *Remembering the Revolution: Memory, History, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War*, eds. Michael A. McDonnell, Clare Corbould, Frances M. Clarke, and W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 75-92.

understanding through documents, texts, and scholarly experts, but for nineteenth-century Americans relics were the preferred means of the same analytic process.<sup>9</sup>

In his assessment of medieval relics, historian Patrick Geary argued that veneration of a relic was the “reflection of the values assigned by the society that honored it.” As different conceptualizations of the Revolution and the nation began to develop, so did efforts to attribute differing values and meaning to the memory of Washington. By taking objects from Mount Vernon, visitors broke off sacred pieces for their own benefit, connecting to Washington in a more meaningful way than through artwork, monuments, or statues. This act, otherwise considered vandalism, allowed Americans to claim a piece of Washington’s legacy, further democratizing the memory of George Washington through the means of physical possession. Pilgrims, who shared their experiences with the wider American public through newspapers and periodicals, maintained that Washington was the property of the nation and as such, the people had the right to seize these historically significant items. While politicians bickered over the right to his body, pilgrims reasoned that the nation not only owned his memory but also everything that Washington had touched, planted, or used during his lifetime.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Seth Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 44-48; Teresa Barnett, *Sacred Relics: Pieces of the Past in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, 5-8; For more on medieval pilgrimage and relics, see Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) and Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). While medieval relics and pilgrimages are quite different from the experiences of nineteenth-century Americans, their studies give insight to the methodological considerations of human culture’s reliance on objects and how societies projected their values and attitudes; Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution*, 168; Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion*, 164-7. Hayes argued that nationalism has religious appeal, and warns contemporaries to avoid judging the superstitions of the past as absurd in comparison to modern worship of the state and its national heroes; For a similar exploration in the American pilgrimage and the theft of relics by



After Washington's death in 1799, many Americans wrote to Martha Washington to express their condolences, but some were more self-serving in their sympathies. They requested Washington relics from Martha to commemorate the General, asking for hair, letters with his signature, or anything that Washington formerly possessed. Joseph May, invited by Tobias Lear to meet Martha at Mount Vernon in May 1800, sent an agent to the family auction after Martha's death on behalf of his friend, "Mr. Isaac P. Davis." Davis asked May to "procure...some valuable Relic of the Family," so May's agent purchased "the painting of the Great Falls of the Potomac," a portrait that May remembered seeing "in the Hall at Mount Vernon" during his visit in 1800. The obsession with Washington's belongings was not restricted to common Americans. William Thornton attempted to purchase the "Terrestrial Globe, which formerly belonged to General Washington," for President Thomas Jefferson, citing his wish "to possess [it], as a Relick." Thornton lost the bidding war with "a young man" who offered Bushrod Washington "250 Dollars" for the globe. Thornton complained to Jefferson, "I was sorry that the Heirs of such a man should have acted so unworthily."<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Pim Cope, a Federalist merchant and Pennsylvania Assembly member from Philadelphia, made a pilgrimage to Mount Vernon in the spring of 1802. In his

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pilgrims, see Robert E. Cray Jr., "Memorialization and Enshrinement: George Whitefield and Popular Religious Culture, 1770-1850," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10, no. 3 (Autumn, 1990): 339-361, 350. In his examination of the veneration of George Whitefield's remains, Cray states, "Eighteenth-century American Protestants did not perceive relics quite the same way as medieval pilgrims, but the soldiers in the vault did consider the clothes valued keepsakes, a testament to Whitefield's saintly reputation among them." Objects and materials associated with the revered were fragments of the deceased's reputation. This was also the case with George Washington at Mount Vernon.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph May, February 11, 1823, Certificate of Authenticity given by Joseph May to William Stevenson, Fred W, Smith Library; William Thornton to Thomas Jefferson, July 28, 1802, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Barbara Oberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 38, 136-137; Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution*, 148-149.

travel diary, Cope detailed the furniture, paintings, and relics of the mansion, including the key to the Bastille, a gift from the Marquis de Lafayette. He walked down to the family tomb and described his companions' reactions: "One [man] placed himself on the green turf and mused, with his head resting on his arms. Another stood alone among the thicket with folded arms and downcast eyes. A third reclined against a tree and wept...there was nothing artificial in this, nothing premeditated." Cope believed that it was the "effect of the nature and the offspring of the moment" that stirred such patriotic, emotional responses, and that the trip brought "melancholy satisfaction" knowing that "these very grounds [Washington] trod ten thousand times before me, and that it still contained the cold remains of that matchless man."<sup>12</sup>

While Cope did not take anything from the vault, he noticed a pilgrim's unfinished poem on the bricks, noting that there were "a few bricks crumbling into ruin...on which these lines are written with a pencil":

Columbia groans beneath the dreadful wound,  
And Europe echoes to the mournful sound.  
The sons of freedom shudder at the stroke,  
And universal virtue feels the shock.

These stanzas originated from a Washington obituary printed in December 1799, and their presence on the tomb demonstrated a past pilgrim's efforts to mark the tomb in a more personal manner. According to Cope's account, he added four lines from the English poet Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*:

The pomp of heraldry, the boast of power.  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Await alike the inevitable hour;

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<sup>12</sup> *The Boston Gazette*, 31 December 1807; *The Diary of Thomas Pim Cope*, excerpt featured in *Experiencing Mount Vernon: Eyewitness Accounts, 1784-1865*, ed. Jean B. Lee (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 95-102.

The paths of glory lead but to the grave.<sup>13</sup>

Published in 1751, this poem explored the beauty of a rural church cemetery, the peacefulness of repose, and the narrator's preoccupation with the inevitability of death. These lines also alluded to the idea that regardless of status, power, or wealth, everyone must perish. While it is difficult to know exactly what Cope's intentions were, or if he even penciled these words on the tomb door, he was one of many visitors who left their mark on Washington's tomb through some sort of defacement.<sup>14</sup>

During his visit in 1805 General James Taylor of Newport, Kentucky presented his letter of introduction to Bushrod Washington, requesting a complete tour of the mansion, grounds, and tomb. The Judge obliged him, taking him to see the requested sites. When they reached the old vault, Bushrod allowed Taylor to enter the tomb, where he saw the coffins of George and Martha Washington. "They each had been covered with black cloth,—the General's was quite rotten, the coffin was bare in spots" wrote Taylor. Much to his disbelief, previous pilgrims had entered the tomb and tore pieces of the black cloth off Washington's coffin as keepsakes of their journey. Another man, Josiah Quincy Jr., described his father's stay at Mount Vernon in 1806. Josiah Quincy Sr., a Massachusetts representative to Congress, told his son about the Washington family tradition that permitted "[g]uests of the family...to pass through the [tomb's] portal, and to touch the receptacle of his [Washington's] remains." Quincy's father partook in this ritual, telling his son "the velvet cover of the coffin was hanging in tatters, it having been brought to this condition by the results of relic hunters." Desecration of the coffin forced

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Gray, "An Elegy Wrote in a Country Churchyard," *The Works of Thomas Gray*, Volume 1, ed. Edmund Gosse (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1968), 71-79, 74.

<sup>14</sup> *The Diary of Thomas Pim Cope*, excerpt featured in *Experiencing Mount Vernon: Eyewitness Accounts, 1784-1865*, ed. Jean B. Lee (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 98-99; *Philadelphia Gazette*, 21 December 1799.

the family to restrict future tomb visits. They denied John Duncan's request to go inside the tomb in 1818, and he blamed it on "some person having had the rudeness to strip part of the cloth from the coffin...all access to it is now forbidden." If, however, the guests were considered worthy enough, Bushrod Washington allowed them to enter the tomb under his supervision. In December 1826, "Captain Partridge" and his group of "cadets" were permitted to see the coffin, and "with a holy theft [they] tore shreds of it to bear away as relics." While the Washington family granted tomb visits as a privilege to its guests, strangers were not given the same courtesy. As the stories are presented, the nameless pilgrims were blamed for the destruction of the black cloth, even though the family's welcomed guests most likely participated in its deterioration as well.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to taking material objects from inside the tomb, pilgrims made their mark on the brick enfacement and wooden door of the vault. According to William Mercer Green, "[t]he door is much decayed by time and defaced by the knives of thoughtless visitors....Thousands of names are cut on it." Robert Donaldson performed a "[p]ilgrimage to Mt. Vernon" in July of 1818. His servant guide informed him that many visitors and parties come down from Washington D.C., and "[m]any take Relics." Donaldson himself took "a pebble & Cedar twig" as mementoes, but these were merely harmless souvenirs in his opinion. "Thoughtless visitors," he noted, "have carved their Names on the Door of the Vault." Another visitor noted that "one of the stones in the top

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<sup>15</sup> *The Narrative of General James Taylor*, Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 244-246, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL. Quincy also mentions seeing Washington's ghost when he stayed in his bedroom. This story seems even more specious as Bushrod would have slept in the master bedroom, not a guest; John Duncan, *Travels Through Part of the United States and Canada in 1818 and 1819* (Glasgow: Wardlaw & Cuninghame, 1823), 1, 288-289, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; "Mount Vernon," *New England Galaxy*, 8 January 1827, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL.

of the vault has been misplaced,” most likely another relic taken as a memento. Many pilgrims wished to leave their mark on this sacred place and did so with a pocketknife or by breaking off a piece of the vault. But these acts also had symbolic meaning; by carving their names onto Washington’s tomb or taking a piece of it, they claimed Washington for themselves, solidifying imagined bonds between the man, visitor, and the nation. After his visit in 1834 Benjamin B. French remarked, “I thought how many illustrious individuals had passed in the very foot paths I was traveling...the good Lafayette, of Jefferson, Madison, & Monroe I doubted whether ever another man would live, in America, whose memory would be so dearly cherished as was that of George Washington.” These stories suggest that pilgrims not only took objects from the tomb but also physically imposed their mark on it, reminding future pilgrims that they all shared the same veneration for George Washington, the American nation, and the men who forged it.<sup>16</sup>

Objects located near Washington’s tomb also merited special attention from awestruck pilgrim travelers. The old vault, situated on a hill south of the mansion and overlooking the Potomac River, became a sacred place for visitors. No pilgrimage to Mount Vernon was complete without a visit to the tomb for reflection. After these quiet moments of contemplation, pilgrims surveyed the surroundings for keepsakes that they could take home and show to family and friends. Tree branches, flowers, rocks, and even dirt were considered relics of the memory of Washington, and pilgrims merrily absconded with these objects. As one correspondent in the *National Intelligencer* noted

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<sup>16</sup> *The Diary of William Mercer Green*, 1818, Mount Vernon Archives Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; *Journal of Robert Donaldson*, July 15, 1818, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; *Salem Gazette*, 23 April 1824; *The Journal of Benjamin B. French*, May 23, 1834, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL.

about his fellow pilgrims in 1818, “every one was desirous of taking the smallest relic, if it were but a leaf, or bit of bark of the trees.”<sup>17</sup>

Alexander Graydon shared his 1814 tomb experience with his sister Rachel. “The vault is surrounded with Spruce & from one bush which grew on the vault I broke off the sprig which is enclosed,” he wrote. Graydon instructed Rachel to put the sprig in water, so “it may keep fresh” for some time. Dr. Elias Cornelius, embarking for Mount Vernon in July 1817, performed a similar ritual sending his sister Polly “a sprig of which I enclose with this letter.” While Graydon and Cornelius simply meant to send loved ones a piece of history, their actions represent the wider democratization of the memory of George Washington. These pilgrim rituals of sending objects to family, relatives, and friends expanded the community of believers. By giving more Americans a tangible piece of Washington’s legacy, relics linked travelers and their loved ones to a national identity that revolved around adulation for George Washington.<sup>18</sup>

Major John Reid took a “pilgrimage” to Mount Vernon in November 1815, calling it “a spot rendered sacred to every American bosom by the residence of its former owner.” Walking through the grounds Reid exclaimed, “[e]verything you behold derives a thousand fold interest from being associated with the memory of its venerable proprietor.” The simplistic tomb astounded him, and he chastised Congress for its failure to inter Washington in a more suitable tomb. Reid reasoned that if this was the treatment “the father of his country” merited, “who of thy Sons can ever hope to be remembered!”

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<sup>17</sup> *National Intelligencer*, 19 December 1818, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Graydon III to Rachel Graydon, October 18, 1814, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; Dr. Elias Cornelius to Polly Cornelius, July 22, 1817, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; Robert E. Cray Jr., “Memorialization and Enshrinement: George Whitefield and Popular Religious Culture, 1770-1850,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 10, no. 3 (Autumn, 1990): 339-361.

British Lieutenant Francis Hall also recognized this transfiguration of the property noting, “[t]hat oak, that bank, the winding path and verdant mount are common objects. Why then do we feel a breathless emotion in listening to the description of them from the artless tongue of a slave?” Washington “bequeathed to [Americans] an immortal blessing—He gave them liberty—He made them a nation. What has he received in return? Neglect! Here he lies in a mean and obscure grave, with not one single line to tell his resting place.” Pilgrims vividly articulated the sacredness of Mount Vernon, but the appearance of Washington’s tomb challenged their preconceived memory of the man as a god-like symbol of the republic.<sup>19</sup>

As the memory of Washington the deity clashed with visitor perceptions, pilgrims became the most vocal proponents of giving Washington a more suitable tomb. One gentleman who visited in 1818 recommended that Congress erect a monument at Mount Vernon, as it was “the most proper place, on earth, under all circumstances,” for such a worthy endeavor. This writer argued that, “ingratitude is upon us, until it be removed. The former representatives of the people are to blame, and not the people themselves.” One correspondent for the *Carolina Centinel* lambasted the current condition of the tomb, noting “the sepulchers of our Fathers is dear to us, and to all affectionate hearts it is as *holy* ground.” The author reminded readers that, “[t]he art of Printing has, already, consecrated to immortality the glory of Washington: But we all wish to evince our love and veneration by some other durable memorial.” In order to properly commemorate the country’s adoration for Washington, the federal government needed to purchase an acre

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<sup>19</sup> *New York Daily Advertiser*, 27 February 1818; *Genius of Liberty*, 10 March 1818; Francis Hall, *Travels in Canada and the United States 1816-7* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown, 1818), 337; “Letter 1—No Title: Mount Vernon,” *New England Galaxy and Masonic Magazine*, 19 March 1819; 2, 75, 90.

“of the ground around his tomb at Mount Vernon” and construct a “[p]yramid of Granite” over his grave, a memorial that would last for ages and be seen by “all who in future ages sail on the majestic Potomac.” While a lovely sentiment, the idea lacked fiscal and cultural modesty, two issues that politicians constantly squabbled over when debating Washington’s memorialization.<sup>20</sup>

As the federal government appeared disinterested in saving Mount Vernon for the nation, more pilgrims began to travel to Washington’s tomb, showing reverence for Washington as individuals operating under the auspices of nationhood. The *Savannah Republican* printed the experience of one fortunate gentleman who was permitted to enter Washington’s tomb. There was “no insignia, designating the patriot from the lowest branch in the family,” he wrote. The coffins were “promiscuously heaped together” but his slave guide pointed out Washington’s coffin remarking, “[t]here...is the General.” This gentleman decided to take a flower from “the surface of the tomb,” a reminder of his visit and in his eyes, an item “emblematic of the man. It had already faded—its fragrance parted—its loveliness vanished. But never, no, never will I forget the sensation it occasioned.” While the flower was an otherwise ordinary object, its proximity to Washington’s tomb gave it personal significance and linked this visitor to the great George Washington.<sup>21</sup>

The taking of relics was quickly incorporated into the pilgrim’s ritual for Americans and foreigners alike. Nathaniel Carter, editor of the *New York Statesman*, took “a branch or two of cedar, growing on the summit of the mound, which with a sprig of mountain laurel, a few flowers presented by the gardener...[these] will be carried

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<sup>20</sup> *American Mercury*, 29 December 1818.

<sup>21</sup> *Agricultural Intelligencer, and Mechanic Register*, 24 March 1820 reprint of *Savannah Republican*.



home with me as relics” he wrote. On one excursion to Mount Vernon, the Russian Minister, mimicking American pilgrims, took a branch from a tree growing over the tomb and planned to give it to Russian Emperor Alexander I. A pilgrim in 1824 observed that, “the cedars are nearly stripped of their green boughs by the great number of visitors, who pluck them and carry them away as mementos.” This ritual allowed pilgrims to share their individual experiences with others by infusing the relics with their personal memories of Washington. The growing community of believers transformed these bits of nature into tangible pieces of the memory of Washington. But for the Washington family, these actions were considered much less noble as they gradually contributed to the estate’s declining appearance.<sup>22</sup>

Branches from trees near or above the tomb were easy pickings for relic hunters who wished to possess something linked to Washington. John Finch, traveling through Canada and the United States, made a pilgrimage to Mount Vernon in the early 1830s. “The tomb,” according to Finch, “is a plain vault with a door in front, and covered with earth. It is surrounded by a grove of cedars; the lower branches have been stripped by visitors, as a memento of the place, and with some difficulty I procured a small relic.” A correspondent for the *Farmer’s Cabinet* observed that “several cedar trees” grew above the tomb, but these trees provided little shade for Washington’s repose. Their “branches, to a considerable extent have been lopped off by visitors and carried away as mementos.” “J.S.B,” visiting the site in 1841, “cut from a tree in front of the tomb, a small branch for a cane,” as a souvenir in “remembrance of the place.” This harvesting later compelled

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<sup>22</sup> *Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser*, 14 January 1820; *Agricultural Intelligencer*, 24 March 1820; *Providence Gazette*, 10 August 1820; *Essex Register*, 18 January 1823; *North Star*, 20 February 1823; *City of Washington Gazette*, 28 July 1819; *The National Recorder*, 7 August 1819; *Salem Gazette*, 21 September 1824.

John Augustine Washington III to install “placards” near the tomb, “requesting visitors not to break the trees.” The removal of tree branches became so bad that John Augustine eventually began to sell canes on site in hopes of curbing visitor damage to his trees.<sup>23</sup>

While many Americans emphasized the emotional and patriotic experience of the pilgrimage, the site also attracted unwelcomed guests. These individuals, eager to commemorate Washington in their own way, became a major source of agitation for Bushrod Washington, who otherwise welcomed individuals whom he considered “respectable.” The successful efforts of Washington’s contemporaries to transform him into a national symbol, coupled with the growth of democracy, had also made him an icon for the people. During his visit in 1822 Charles Ruggles noted, “[t]he fame of General Washington is the property of the nation, and individuals appear to consider the mansion and lands which formerly belonged to him, so far public property as to entitle them to run through them and round them without regard.” One opinion piece acknowledged that, “Mount Vernon is a favorite place for American pilgrims to resort...what would be our surprise, while full of such hallowed feelings...find it to be the repository of thieves and pickpockets.” These observations suggest that while elites initially dominated the pilgrimage, the ritual eventually reached beyond class boundaries,

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<sup>23</sup> John Finch, *Finch’s Travels in the United States and Canada, Containing Some Account of their Scientific Institutions, and a Few Notices of the Geology and Mineralogy of those Countries* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1833), 217-218, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library; “Mount Vernon,” *Farmer’s Cabinet*, 12 September 1834; *The Hudson River Chronicle*, 18 May, 1841; William Ferguson, *America by River and Rail: Notes by the way on the New World and its People* (London: James Nesbit & Co., 1856), 174, also in Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL.

drawing non-elite pilgrims who choose to remember Washington by taking a day trip to his estate.<sup>24</sup>

Bushrod's efforts to regulate the pilgrimage continued into the 1820s. In 1823 he permitted only invited guests, a "respectable party of citizens," to celebrate the Fourth of July at Mount Vernon. The occasion featured elderly veterans of the Revolution, a party of ladies, the Marine Corps band, the French Legation, clergymen, distinguished strangers, and citizens. The day consisted of prayer, orations, and former Federalist Governor of Maryland Charles Goldsborough's reading of Washington's Farewell Address, but the march to the vault was the highlight of the occasion. Attendees slowly walked in a mock funeral procession and gathered around the tomb, staring down in silence. "The hearts of all were melted," wrote one witness, "when, they saw a venerable survivor of [Jean-Bapiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de] Rochambeau's army mingling his tears with those of American patriotism." This combination of the Fourth of July holiday, American and French veterans of the Revolution, and the reading of Washington's sage advice all reflected the republican interpretation of Washington. But Bushrod's restriction of the property only applied to the mansion, as visitors continued to wander uninvited onto the grounds and down to the tomb.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Essex Register*, 18 January 1283; Charles H. Ruggles to Sarah C. Ruggles, April 28, 1822, Mount Vernon Ladies' Association Collection, exert featured in *Experiencing Mount Vernon: Eyewitness Accounts, 1784-1865*, ed. Jean B. Lee (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 116-7; Charles also took a "branch of cedar" and sent it with the letter to Sarah; *Providence Gazette*, 5 March 1823; Kathleen Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century German America on Parade," *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 52-3. While Conzen acknowledges that class played into American culture, she argues that the middle class and working class rarely mixed before the 1830s. In terms of my research, it appears that there was definitely a mixture of classes taking the pilgrimage, especially after steamboats made the trip more affordable.

<sup>25</sup> *National Intelligencer*, 9 July 1823; *Richmond Enquirer*, 15 July 1823; Rochambeau was a French nobleman who also fought in the American Revolution and was promoted to the

Washington relics also became ceremonial gifts for foreign dignitaries, as anything associated with Washington served as conduit of American virtue and diplomatic goodwill. Upon finding out that President James Monroe selected him to serve as the American consul to Malaga, George Barrell immediately set out for Mount Vernon. In his letter to his sister Maria Moody, Barrell informed her that he had taken a “rough limb, plucked from a tree shadowing [Washington’s] grave,” and planned to fashion this branch into a decorative cane as a gift for his diplomatic counterpart in Spain. The Marquis de Lafayette received many Washington relics during his visit in 1824-5. In addition to receiving “a ring containing some of the hair of the Father of his Country” and “the masonic sash and jewel formerly belonging to the Great Mason” from George Washington Parke Custis, Americans across the country gave him a collection of commemorative canes cut from historical places that Lafayette and Washington shared during the American Revolution. George Washington Parke Custis’ efforts to further glorify his step-grandfather through relic dispersal extended as far as South America, where Custis sent the liberator Simón Bolívar “a Medal” and a “Portrait of the Father of his country, containing a lock of his hair.” Hoping that Bolívar would accept “the revered reliques” of America’s hero and place them in “the Archives of South American Liberty,” Custis praised the revolutions of the Americas and Bolívar as “the Washington of the South!”<sup>26</sup>

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rank of General. He assisted Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette in their strategy to trap British General Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia; *Essex Register*, 18 January 1823.

<sup>26</sup> George Barrell to Mrs. Maria Moody, December 19, 1817, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; *Alexandria Gazette*, 28 October 1824; *The Farmer’s Cabinet*, 30 October 1824; *Eastern Argus*, 4 November 1824; *Salem Gazette*, 27 August 1824, reprint of the *Boston Patriot*; *Rhode Island Republican*, 16 September 1824; *Salem Gazette*, 28 September 1824, reprint of *New York Commercial Advertiser*, 30 September 1824; *Rhode Island American*, 22 October 1824; *Richmond Enquirer*, 6 September 1825; *Republican*

As more travelers found their way to Mount Vernon, their presence expanded the sacredness of the grounds, and anything associated with Washington became both venerated and desired. Visitors took fruit and flowers from the upper garden near the greenhouse, imagining that Washington himself planted these things. In 1825 Leverett Saltonstall noticed by the tomb that the “branches taken by visitors” were “sacrilegiously sawed off” the trees. Leverett shunned such defacement, opting instead for “two lemons and an orange” from the garden and “some sprigs” for his daughters, Ann and Caroline. Alexander H.H. Stuart sent his wife “a leaf from the lemon-tree which was planted by Washington’s own hand.” Horace Greeley had a similar experience during his visit in September 1841, writing that the “garden is rich in rare and valuable plants; among them are many planted by the hand of the Father of his Country.” While Washington selected the plants and flowers for the upper garden during his lifetime, he did not actually plant any of these things. But the nostalgic power of Mount Vernon often overwhelmed the senses of visitors. It also helped that the gardeners and slaves did not correct these false impressions, as they made small gratuities selling these objects to awestruck visitors.<sup>27</sup>

During his visit in 1839 L. Osgood identified a “lemon tree upwards of fifty years of age.” Osgood chatted with the “old gardener” who seemed quite proud that this place once belonged to Washington. The gardener took “more interest in talking of his former gardening than exhibiting the present,” wrote Osgood. Convinced that Washington

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*Star*, 13 September 1825; *Middlesex Gazette*, 14 September 1825; *New-Bedford Mercury*, 16 September 1825; *Vermont Gazette*, 27 September 1825.

<sup>27</sup> Leverett Saltonstall to Frances Baldwin Stuart, February 20, 1825, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, Fred W. Smith Library; Alexander H.H. Stuart to his wife, June 5, 1841, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; Alexander H.H. Stuart to Frances Baldwin Stuart, June 5, 1841, section 3, folder 12, *The Stuart Family Papers*, Virginia Historical Society; Horace Greeley, “A Visit to Mount Vernon,” September 4, 1841, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL.

planted the lemon tree, he gave the gardener “a quarter for his lemon and cherries and left him to his reflections.” Another gardener persuaded H.C. Westervelt that an “original orange tree,” was “set out by the hands of Gen. Washington,” and Westervelt linked the tree’s vitality with the public’s gratitude for Washington. This tree “continued to increase and prosper like the memory of the immortal man, it has repelled the winds and the shafts of time and has stood boldly out in living verdure to give freshness and fragrance to an honorable fame that can never perish.” Even the plants, paired with the right stories, became Washington relics in pilgrim eyes.<sup>28</sup>

Visitors conjured powerful memories of historical nostalgia, projecting patriotic sentiments on seemingly ordinary natural objects. James Silk Buckingham learned from an “old negro gardener” that “the cultivation of fruits and flowers was a recreation in which his former master both delighted and excelled.” This was the very same garden that “the General took his morning and evening walks through,” and the aura of the garden compelled Buckingham to “take a slip from an orange tree plated by Washington’s own hand.” A Greek visitor, Christophorus Plato Castanis, feasted on one of the sacred oranges, finding it “as sweet as the golden apple of Scio.” He purchased a “nosegay” from the gardener, consisting of “various flowers and plants, similar to those of [his] own country,” remarking that he would “preserve them with reverence.” Despite the perceived sacredness of the garden, visitors could not help but notice the declining appearance of the vegetation. Alvah Crocker “snatched a lemon leaf from a tree planted by Washington’s own hand,” but “like the negro who attended upon it,” all “was going to

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<sup>28</sup> L. Osgood to unknown, June 28, 1839, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library; *The Diary of H.C. Westervelt*, January 9, 1837, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; Accounts discussing these topical plants after 1835 are especially dubious, as a fire destroyed the Mount Vernon greenhouse.

decay.” “Could not a nation,” reasoned Crocker, “owing its birth to this great man, now rich in wealth and resources, purchase and restore the hallowed spot?” Pilgrims, convinced of the ever-expanding holiness of Mount Vernon, became the most vocal proponents of government intervention to save Washington’s home as a national shrine.<sup>29</sup>

Elizabeth Martin, accompanying her husband Morgan to Washington D.C. as a newly elected representative from the Wisconsin Territory, experienced many of the same sentiments as other visitors, but the property’s appearance left her distraught. So much of Washington and Mount Vernon had “been made the subject of oration and poem,” but the estate’s condition said otherwise. Her “inner soul called out ‘shame, shame’ on those who bear the name of Washington!” While the iron bars prevented the tomb’s “mutilation,” “sheep graze above while swine root under it,” remarked Morgan. Despite these criticisms, Morgan declared, “[t]his spot, so holy in its association, so dear to every American—so venerated that to it, pilgrimage is made from ‘earth’s remotest bound.’” Benjamin Rotch agreed, visiting the “deserted and uncared for” tomb in 1848. “We could not help but feel sad...it is not only mournful, it is a disgrace to this people to allow this neglect to manifest itself in so shameful a manner.” Happy to have paid homage, Rotch was equally satisfied “to leave this spot...but never wish to go again.”<sup>30</sup>

Robert Criswell echoed these censures in *Godey’s Magazine and Lady’s Book*, remarking that his party was “somewhat disappointed in the external appearance of the

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<sup>29</sup> James Silk Buckingham, *The Slave States of America* (London, 1842), 2, 564-68, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; Christophorus Plato Castanis, *The Greek Exile or a Narrative of the Captivity and Escape of Christophorus Plato Castanis* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, & Co., 1851), 209, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL; *The Diary of Alvah Crocker*, April 29, 1844, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL.

<sup>30</sup> *The Diary of Elizabeth Martin*, February 28, 1847, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, Fred W. Smith Library; Benjamin S. Rotch to his wife, February 21, 1848, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL.

estate, as almost everything about it seems dilapidated and decaying. The fences are bad, and overgrown with briars, and the brick walls of the large stables and other out-houses are falling down. The mansion itself looks like ‘some banquet hall deserted.’” Criswell lamented the “decay and desecration” of the old tomb, as the “door, and part of the walls, are broken down, and the noble cedars around are withering and dying.” Despite these complaints, Criswell and his party did not hesitate to dig through the “rubbish of the vault,” finding “an invaluable relic,” a small piece of the “original coffin.” “If the acorns, and even pebbles, found at this locality, are carried away as sacred mementoes,” he reasoned, “how much more valuable is this!” Another columnist for the *Virginia Herald* recanted a similar story of entering Washington’s old tomb with the aid of a slave guide. While Washington’s coffin had already been removed to the new tomb, this writer’s party “stood upon the broken boxes and frames that once enclosed the remains of our hero,” and they slowly gathered “some stones and several pieces of the crumbling tomb as relicts” of the journey. Pilgrims were highly critical of the tomb’s appearance and its disrepair, but they did not seem to recognize that their acts of devotion were also contributing to this growing problem.<sup>31</sup>

Criswell was one of many voices that not only declared the space the property of the nation, but also pleaded for the federal government to purchase Mount Vernon on behalf of the American people. A columnist for the *Boston Atlas* maintained that, “[w]e do not believe that any person ever visited this hallowed spot, without going away with the conviction that the purchase of it should be made by Congress. Let the nation own it, and fit it up in a manner worthy of the Republic and of the illustrious dead.” This

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<sup>31</sup> “Mount Vernon,” Robert Criswell Jr., *Godey’s Magazine and Lady’s Book*, October 1849, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, Fred W. Smith Library; *Virginia Herald*, 27 August 1836.



reporter could not resist the urge to condemn Virginia for its inaction, arguing that if Mount Vernon were in “Old Massachusetts” and Washington “her son,” the “spot would be treasured in our hearts and beautified by our hands!” Sectional attitudes were pervasive among Mount Vernon pilgrims, as northern visitors occasionally chastised southerners for their lethargy regarding historical preservation.<sup>32</sup>

Journalist Charles Dana quipped that “[t]he tomb even more than the mansion of Washington bears the marks of neglect and decay.” The paths were “uncared for and overgrown with weeds and brambles,” disturbed only by “the feet of pious visitors.” Dana indicted Congress for its failure to save Washington’s home, remarking that, “American democracy does not pay a very ardent personal devotion to its heroes and sages. But whatever be the reason of this negligence it is none the less painful to every visitor to Mount Vernon, and we cannot but hope that if the matter should continue to be neglected by the Federal Legislature, private persons of liberality and patriotism will come forward” to make “Mount Vernon the property of the people.” The growing community of believers, influenced by the efforts of writers, poets, and artists to democratize Washington, sought some remedy that would officially make Washington and his world the property of the nation. But any Congressional efforts to save Mount Vernon often ran into political partisanship or resistance from the state of Virginia, whose representatives claimed Washington as their own.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Mount Vernon,” Robert Criswell Jr., *Godey’s Magazine and Lady’s Book*, October 1849, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, Fred W. Smith Library; “A Visit to Mount Vernon,” *Boston Atlas*, 2 July 1849, reprint *The North Star*, 3 August 1849, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Dana, *Washington’s Tomb*, 1850, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL.

As the tree branches above the tomb disappeared, visitors scoured the grounds nearby for anything that could be taken as a relic. One visitor in 1832 arrived at the tomb, “the object of my pilgrimage,” and gathered “a few of the pebbles which sprinkle the entire covering” into a handkerchief. On his visit to Mount Vernon in December of 1850, Charles Hale took “one or two sprigs of holly” in commemoration of his journey, but he also observed another traveler taking something much larger. “One gentleman had brought a col’d man with pickaxes, spade, and three empty flour barrels, which he had filled with the sacred soil and carried off!” Julia S. Wheelock, a hospital agent for the Union Army, visited the estate in 1862 and collected “a few pebbles from the vault as sacred relics from a consecrated tomb.” Even with the ongoing war between the North and South, pilgrims completed the ritual by taking something from Washington’s final resting place, remembering times of peace and unity between Americans.<sup>34</sup>

Visitors even took natural objects with the intention of planting them at home in commemoration of their journey and the memory of Washington. Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach traveled to Mount Vernon in 1825. He “picked up some acorns fallen from the trees which shaded the tomb,” and he planned to “plant them” upon his return home. John Burleigh sent “springs” home to his family to plant, as the slave guide informed him that they once grew “directly over the head of Washington.” Union Colonel Charles F. Johnson wrote a letter to his wife in early 1862, enclosing two pieces of wild grape vine “from the top of the grave,” instructing her to “put them in water...and

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<sup>34</sup> “Mount Vernon-Washington,” *New York Mirror*, 1832, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; Charles Hale to his mother, December 22, 1850, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL; Julia Wheelock, *The Boys in White; The Experience of a Hospital Agent in and around Washington* (New York: Lange & Hillman, 1870), 48-49, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL.

try to cultivate them.” The proximity of these objects to Washington’s tomb gave them mystic longevity, and in these instances, even seemed to defy common sense.<sup>35</sup>

As the sacredness of the site grew, visitors left their mark on other parts of the estate with acts of graffiti. The summerhouse, a small gazebo-like structure east of the mansion and close to the river, became a target for the knives of pilgrims. Anna Sargent observed that “the steps were broken away” and the house “was cut in every direction and written on with the names of the thousands of visitors” who frequented “this hallowed spot.” Another visitor echoed these sentiments, remarking that the summerhouse, “a favorite retreat of Washington,” was riddled “with the names of nameless persons.” William Gilmore Simms blamed the “English and the American people” who had carved their names into the structure. They “scrawl uncouth combinations of letters, vowels, and consonants, which in every day language, are the names of every day men.” While the destruction of Washington’s holdings were regrettable, the “nameless persons” and “every day men” who visited Mount Vernon desired to imprint themselves on Washington’s world. For many, the taking of mementoes permitted them to claim a share of Washington lore. As the pilgrimage furthered the notion that Washington belonged to the nation, the carving of names suggests that individuals were attempting to connect to something larger than themselves.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Karl Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach 1825, *Travels through North America during the years 1825 and 1826* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Carey, 1828), 1, 178-179, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2A, FWSL; John Burleigh to friend, March 12, 1833, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; Charles Johnson to Mary Johnson, January 16, 1862, *The Civil War Letters of Colonel Charles F. Johnson: Invalid Corps*, ed. Fred Pelka (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 82.

<sup>36</sup> *The Diary of Anna Sargent*, May 18, 1831, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library; “Mount Vernon-Washington,” *New York Mirror*, 1832, Mount

Batholomew Van Dame of Epping, New Hampshire, followed suit by writing “my name & residence” on the summerhouse. “There was scarcely room so many names were written,” he noted. A correspondent for the *Farmer’s Cabinet* vividly described the decaying summerhouse: “It is covered over from the floor to the ceiling with the initials of the names of visitors, and is rapidly crumbling to pieces.” In order to curb visitor markings, John Augustine Washington III later allowed travelers who entered the mansion to inscribe their personal information into a common book. Visiting in 1853, Robert Lawrence walked into “[t]he first room,” which had a fire, “some common windsor chairs, an old table and in a corner stood a small table having on it some books, in one of which, visitors are desired to enter their names and places of residence.” The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association later extended this policy to prevent visitor desecration of the property, as pilgrims were determined to leave their initials on Washington’s world.<sup>37</sup>

The civic pilgrimage drew thousands of Americans and foreign travelers to Mount Vernon every year. Their presence and devotion confirmed Washington’s importance to the nation’s founding, and revolutionaries and heads of state alike felt obligated to participate in the American rituals of remembrance. The return of Gilbert du Motier de Lafayette to America in 1824 triggered an outpouring of nationalist sentiment across the

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Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; “Washington,” William Gilmore Simms, 1832, Mount Vernon Travelers Account Notebook Volume 2B, FWSL; William Ferguson, *America by River and Rail: Notes by the way on the New World and its People* (London: James Nesbit & Co., 1856), 1743. Ferguson described the summer-house as “in ruins, and a dangerous place.”; Terrance L. Stocker, Linda W. Dutcher, Stephen M. Hargrove, and Edwin A. Cook, “Social Analysis of Graffiti,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 85, no. 338 (Oct.-Dec., 1972): 356-366.

<sup>37</sup> *Journal of Bartholomew Van Dame*, April 29, 1848, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, Fred W. Smith Library; Robert Lawrence to unknown, 1853, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL; “Mount Vernon,” *Farmer’s Cabinet*, 12 September 1834; This book is unfortunately lost, and was probably either sold at some point or transported to John Augustine Washington’s new plantation Waveland in West Virginia.

country unseen since the Battle of New Orleans. The Marquis represented the heroes of a distant past, a man who played a crucial role in achieving American independence and shared intimate friendships with many of the Founders. While Americans were constantly reimagining the Revolution and contesting its many narratives, the visit temporarily quieted these disputes as citizens united to celebrate a shared, national glory.<sup>38</sup>

Thousands came out to witness Lafayette's return, and many more read about his grand tour across the United States over the course of the next year. Arriving on August 14, 1824, Lafayette first stopped at Staten Island and spent the evening with Daniel Tompkins, New York's former governor and James Monroe's Vice President. The next day Lafayette proceeded into the city, where he was received by local politicians and distinguished guests. After his address in New York's City Hall he exited the building to "cheers of a multitude of citizens who had assembled in the Park." One correspondent noted, "[w]herever he moves a crowd is assembled—not half of our citizens have yet been able to obtain a sight of their Benefactor." Lafayette appeared before similar crowds in Boston, where "upwards of one thousand ladies and gentlemen honored him with their company." As Lafayette toured the states, Americans turned out in vast numbers to see the hero and commemorate the Revolution.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Robert P. Hay, "The American Revolution Twice Recalled: Lafayette's Visit and the Election of 1824," *Indiana Magazine of History* 69, no. 1 (March 1973): 43-62. Hay argued that Americans were already looking backwards during 1824 because of the shift in generational politics. The older revolutionary guard was fading as a new generation of leaders came to the political forefront; this transition was already on the minds of American well before Lafayette's visit.

<sup>39</sup> *Norwich Courier*, 18 August, 1824, reprint of the *New York Evening Post*; *Middlesex Gazette*, 18 August 1824; *Boston Commercial Gazette*, 18 August 1824; *Salem Gazette*, 20 August 1824; *Boston Commercial Gazette*, 26 August 1824; Marian Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette 1824-1825* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 11-45.

The most interesting visit that Lafayette made was not to New York, Boston, Philadelphia, or any other major city, but to Washington's tomb at Mount Vernon. Determined to pay his respects to his deceased friend, Lafayette boarded the Virginia steamboat *Petersburg*. On October 17, 1824 he set out for Mount Vernon, and the Washington family received him on the shores of the Potomac. Lafayette's secretary, Auguste Levasseur, chronicled their visit to the tomb: "Simple and modest as he was during life, the tomb of the citizen hero is scarcely perceived amid the somber cypresses by which it is surrounded," he wrote. As they approached the vault, the door was opened, and Lafayette descended into the tomb alone. He emerged several minutes later "with his eyes overflowing with tears." He then took his son and Levasseur into the tomb, where they "knelt reverentially, near his coffin, which [they] respectfully saluted with [their] lips." Overwhelmed with emotion, the three men embraced each other, then left the tomb to receive gifts from George Washington Parke Custis, Washington's step-grandson. Custis gave Lafayette a gold ring that contained a lock of George Washington's hair, along with a masonic sash and medal that formerly belonged to his step-grandfather. Lafayette divided the sash "and distributed [it] to the youths who were present," giving them each a "memento of their departed hero." The pilgrimage complete, Lafayette left Mount Vernon for his next destination, a commemorative celebration of the surrender of Yorktown.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Auguste Levasseur, *Lafayette en Amérique, en 1824 et 1825* (Paris: Imprimerie et Fonderie de Fain, 1829), 1, 391-394; *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825, Journal of a Voyage to the United States*, trans. John D. Goodman (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1829), 1, 181-182; *Republican Star*, 26 October 1824; *Richmond Enquirer*, 26 October 1824; *Independent Chronicle*, 27 October 1824; *Providence Gazette*, 27 October 1824; *Boston Commercial Gazette*, 28 October 1824; *Rhode Island Republican*, 28 October 1824; *Farmer's Cabinet*, 30 October 1824; *Watch-Tower*, 1 November 1824; *Richmond Enquirer*, 2 November 1824; *Eastern Argus*, 4 November 1824; *Weekly Easter Argus*, 9 November 1824, reprint of *National Intelligencer*;

Newspapers and periodicals dispersed the news of Lafayette's visit to the tomb of Washington, and it quickly became one of the most reported events during his time in the United States. Americans were fascinated by the experience, and editors gave their audiences more details to read and share. Building off the nationalist sentiment that Lafayette inspired, they added another layer of myth to the narrative, making it even more memorable for the American public. *The Alexandria Herald* reported that, "an Eagle...hovered over the steamboat Petersburg" and followed the general to Mount Vernon, where the majestic bird was seen "flying over the tomb of Washington" while Lafayette grieved. One columnist for the *Farmer's Cabinet* reprinted the story, but added that "this bird, representing the gratitude of the nation and emblematically the spirit of WASHINGTON, took its final departure from that spot" after the General's visit. "There is no doubt whatever of the fact which we communicate above," the contributor wrote, as hundreds had seen this episode, and "it would be too palpable a story to invent almost in the very face of LAFAYETTE himself." Levasseur never mentioned seeing this majestic eagle, and perhaps the editors preferred their own dramatized version. Filled with nationalist rhetoric and allegory, they connected the visiting hero Lafayette with the memory of Washington, and encouraged readers to seek out Lafayette's aura as he traveled across the country.<sup>41</sup>

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*Vermont Gazette*, 9 November 1824; *North Star*, 16 November 1824; *Saratoga Sentinel*, 17 November 1824; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 26 November 1824. There are a number of translation mistakes in the English version, but Goodman does an adequate job transcribing Lavasseur's version of events; *The Farmer's Cabinet*, 6 November 1824. The celebration took place on October 19, the anniversary of Cornwallis' surrender to the American and French forces. See also Harlow Giles Unger, *Lafayette* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2002) 354-355.

<sup>41</sup> *Eastern Argus*, 28 October 1824; *Farmer's Cabinet*, 30 October 1824; *Weekly Eastern Argus*, 2 November 1824; Auguste Levasseur, *Lafayette en Amérique, en 1824 et 1825* (Paris: Imprimerie et Fonderie de Fain, 1829), 1, 391-394; *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825, Journal of a Voyage to the United States*, trans. John D. Goodman (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea,

The attraction of Washington's tomb appealed to both those who knew him and the next generation of democratic revolutionaries. Lajos Kossuth, leader of the Hungarian independence movement of 1848-9, took in the sights during his exile in the United States. Imprisoned after the failed attempt to overthrow the rule of the Habsburg Dynasty, President Millard Fillmore's administration negotiated the release of Kossuth and a number of his fellow nationalists. Kossuth arrived in New York on December 5, 1851, and headed to Washington D.C. to meet with prominent politicians and citizens. In addition to giving public speeches, attending banquets, and visiting Congress, American correspondents lauded him as the Hungarian George Washington, a man who challenged monarchical rule to establish an independent constitutional government and a nation. Despite the similarities between the two men, Washington had envisioned a republic of independent men governing on behalf of the people. But Kossuth's struggle to bestow democracy to his people resonated with Americans who, thanks to the efforts of Democratic-Republicans, had forgotten Washington's republican principles and remembered him as a democratic revolutionary.<sup>42</sup>

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1829), 1, 181-2; Secretary of War John C. Calhoun also accompanied the party and made no mention of seeing an eagle on the boat or at Mount Vernon. See *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, ed. W. Edwin Hemphill et al. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), 9, 351-3. There is evidence of processions featuring an eagle on display for Lafayette, so it is possible that writers wished to connect these celebrations with the Mount Vernon visit. See *Weekly Eastern Argus*, 2 November 1824; this celebration took place in Washington D.C. There is another mention of an eagle at an Alexandria procession for Lafayette, where Lafayette passed under several arches and a live eagle, sitting atop the last one, spread its wings as the general passed beneath it. See *The Autobiography of Benjamin Hallowell* (Philadelphia: Friends' Book Association, 1884), 100-101. This anecdote is also cited in Douglas Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons Press, 1934), 1, 45-46.

<sup>42</sup> "The Magyar in Washington," *The Weekly Herald*, 10 January 1852; *The Daily Globe*, 13 February 1852. Kossuth was the first foreign dignitary to address Congress since the Marquis de Lafayette in 1824; "Liberation of Kossuth," *Stryker's American Register and Magazine*, 2 January 1852, 5, 583.



On April 16, 1853, Kossuth and his party made their way to Mount Vernon on the *Thomas Collyer* steamboat. The group consisted of “Kossuth and his wife, F. Pulsky, P. Hajnik, and Captain Grecheneck. . . Senator Seward and his wife; Elwood Fisher of *The Southern Press*; Rev. Mr. Bellows, of New York, and wife; Grace Greenwood, and Miss Anna Phillips, of Lynn, Mass.” Kossuth and his wife departed from their party and proceeded to the tomb, where he “struggled to suppress emotion.” Kossuth “grasped the iron railing, rested his face upon his hands, and wept—his whole frame throbbled with emotion.” When he finished his time at the tomb, “he looked more melancholy” than ever before. This columnist could not help but make the comparison more explicit between Washington and Kossuth. He had “aimed as Washington aimed,” aspiring to free his people and bestow the gift of democracy to his nation. The writer also chronicled Kossuth’s tour through the mansion and meeting with John Augustine Washington III. After exchanging pleasantries, Kossuth informed Washington that he “was grieved that Mount Vernon was not the property of the Nation.” Senator Seward quickly interjected, noting that Americans were forming a movement to “secure it as such.” Washington agreed, saying that if “the Nation ever expressed a desire, through its Representatives, to possess the spot, the family would surrender it.” Upon their exit from the mansion, Grace Greenwood completed the pilgrimage by giving Kossuth “a twig of cedar from a tree near Washington’s tomb.” Kossuth thanked her for the relic, promising to cherish it in remembrance of Washington.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to his pilgrimage to Mount Vernon, Kossuth mirrored Lafayette’s visit, traveling across the United States and receiving warm receptions from Americans

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<sup>43</sup> “Kossuth’s Visit to the Tomb of Washington,” *Trenton State Gazette*, 19 April 1852; *Trenton State Gazette*, 20 April 1852.

everywhere. In Trenton, “the crowd in front of the hotel” called loudly for Kossuth. He thanked them for “their kindness and patriotic manner” and their embrace of democratic “principles he had advocated, in behalf of the cause of Hungary.” The crowd “cheered him vociferously, and he retired.” Kossuth traveled to Boston, Philadelphia, New Haven, Annapolis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, New Orleans, St. Louis, and Mobile. While spectators and local politicians treated Kossuth to a hero’s welcome, the Hungarian used these occasions to drum up support for his country’s independence, hoping that the United States might become a military ally and fund his war with the Habsburgs.<sup>44</sup>

Public opinion towards Kossuth began to sour during the spring of 1852, as critics branded him a “foreigner seeking aid.” Kossuth’s pleas for interventionism fell on deaf ears as Americans looked to Washington’s maxims in his Farewell Address. One columnist for the *New York Observer and Chronicle* reminded readers that “the doctrine of “minding our own business” as taught by Washington” prevented any American intervention in the meddling of European affairs. Another writer lambasted Kossuth for his excursion and his intent to convince “the American people to abandon their confidence in the advice and principles of General Washington.” While Kossuth’s pilgrimage to Mount Vernon connected the memory of Washington with a revolutionary

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<sup>44</sup> “Arrival of Gov. Kossuth,” *Trenton State Gazette*, 20 April 1852; “Kossuth in New Jersey,” *The Weekly Herald*, 24 April 1852; “Kossuth in New Jersey,” *Ohio Statesman*, 4 May, 1852; *The Daily Picayune*, 11 May 1852; “Kossuth and his Movements,” *Maine Farmer*, 15 January 1852, 20, 3, 2; “Kossuth in Mobile,” *National Era*, 20 May 1852, 6, 281, 82; “Kossuth at Annapolis, Maryland,” *National Era*, 29 January 1852, 6, 265, 17.

fighting for democracy, contemporaries later identified other motives for Kossuth's visit, and rebuked any future comparison between the two.<sup>45</sup>

The pilgrimages of foreign royalty not only added to the mystique of the journey but also affirmed the idea that Washington's greatness transcended national boundaries and political authority. In early October 1860, Prince Albert Edward of Wales, later King Edward VII, traveled to Canada and the United States on a diplomatic mission. The mayor of Washington D.C., Colonel James Berret, and Secretary of War John B. Floyd, accompanied Edward and his entourage to the United States Capitol, where they saw "the principal points of interest." They then traveled down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Presidential Mansion, where President James Buchanan awaited Edward's arrival. The president gave Edward a tour of the home and introduced him to "members of the cabinet," "officers of the army and navy," and the multitude of "influential citizens." The ceremony of introductions alone took "a half an hour," prompting Edward to grumble that, "his preference would be not again to be so crowded." After dining with guests, fireworks filled the Washington sky to signify the arrival of Prince Albert. In a twist of irony, Americans were celebrating the great-grandson of Washington's sworn enemy, King George III.<sup>46</sup>

The next morning, Edward and his company embarked on a pilgrimage to Mount Vernon with numerous American officials in tow. Secretary of State Lewis Cass, Secretary of the Treasury Howell Cobb, Secretary of the Navy Isaac Toucey, Secretary of

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<sup>45</sup> "Kossuth and the People," *The Independent*, 8 January, 1852, 4, 1, 6; "Kossuth in Politics," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 1 July 1852, 30, 27, 214; "Kossuth or Washington?," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 18 March 1852, 30, 12, 94; "Review No Title," *The Southern Quarterly Review*, July 1852, 6, 11, 221.

<sup>46</sup> "Movements of the Prince of Wales and Suite at the National Capital," *The Sun*, 5 October 1860; *The Farmer's Cabinet*, 10 October 1860; "Progress of the Prince of Wales," *San Francisco Bulletin*, 23 October 1860.

War John Floyd, Secretary of the Interior Jacob Thompson, Postmaster General Joseph Holt, President Buchanan and his niece “Miss Lane,” along with their families, accompanied Edward’s party to Washington’s tomb. Boarding the steamboat, “the Marine band struck up “God Save the Queen,” which was well and appropriately received.” As the boat chugged down the Potomac, officials pointed out the half-finished Washington National Monument, impressing the significance of the man Edward was about to visit. As the boat docked at Mount Vernon, he was received by John Augustine Washington III and the new owners of the estate, the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association of the Union. The party proceeded in a solemn march, listening to the band as it played the “impressive dirge, Trovatare.” After reflecting on the aura of Washington’s grave, the youthful Prince pulled out “several large horse chestnuts” from his pockets, and “with his own hands planted them at the tomb of Washington.” Edward vowed to plant the same acorns “at Windsor, as a memorial of their interesting ever to be remembered visitation of this day.” One of the royal visitors remarked that, “they had experienced no day like it since their arrival on American soil.” The pilgrimage complete, the party returned to Washington D.C. that afternoon.<sup>47</sup>

While the British press lauded the Prince “who so worthily represented a royal race and a great nation,” they also hoped that the “memory of that graceful sight” would

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<sup>47</sup> “A Visit of the Prince of Wales and Suite, and Cabinet Members and Others to Mount Vernon,” *The Sun*, 6 October 1860; “Progress of the Prince of Wales,” *San Francisco Bulletin*, 23 October 1860. The planting of acorns was also reported by this newspaper. After Queen Victoria ascended to the throne in 1837, landscape renovations were underway at Windsor on the Long Walk, as many of these trees were over 160 years old. A commission in the late 1850s decided to use young oaks to replace elms on the central and southern areas because of the poor soil quality. After an outbreak of elm disease in the 1940s, these trees were systematically replaced with horse chestnuts. It is unknown whether Albert actually planted these horse chestnuts, but the Long Walk today does have a large number of horse chestnut trees. See Jane Roberts, *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks of Windsor* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 261-274.

“survive to warn ourselves and our cousins from fratricidal quarrels.” Another British periodical congratulated Edward on demonstrating “what a fund of good feeling in reality exists between the two kindred nations, which speak the same language and enjoy the same freedom.” But one British commentator identified the circuitous twist of the memory of Washington, noting that at Mount Vernon royalty stood and contemplated “the last abode of one who, though once pronounced a rebel and a traitor by the very ancestors of the Prince, now ranks above all kings—the Father of a country second to none.” This publication also stated that Edward planted the horse chestnut “at the request of the Mount Vernon Association,” which perhaps makes the Prince’s actions seem less spontaneous and more out of courtesy. But it also suggests that members of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association (MVLA) were well aware of the traditions of the estate, and by planting another object to commemorate a visit to Washington tomb, it too would become another interesting object of veneration for future pilgrims.<sup>48</sup>

American commentators could not resist writing about the historical irony of a royal family member kneeling at the tomb of George Washington. One writer, “DWB” connected the peculiarity of the event with the exceedingly turbulent political times at hand. “When Kings visit Presidents, when royal princes visit the graves of rebel democrats, may not the Millennium be dawning?” Referring to Washington as a “rebel democrat,” “DWB” acknowledged Washington’s role in the American rebellion from Great Britain, but mistakenly assumed that Washington was a “democrat” in practice. “DWB” asked, “when before has the heir to the proudest throne in the world made a

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<sup>48</sup> “The Prince of Wales at Mount Vernon,” *The Sun*, 10 December 1860, reprint of the *London Globe*; “The Prince’s Tour in America,” *The London Review and Weekly Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Society*, 20 October 1860, 363; “Progress of the Prince of Wales in the United States,” *The Examiner and London Review*, 20 October 1860, 664-665.

pilgrimage to the tomb of a rebel general? The man whose humble tomb the Prince reverently visited, was the chief instrument, in the hands of Providence, in wresting its most brilliant gem from the very crown he is to wear!” Another columnist noted that “[n]o American traveler to foreign lands ever displayed more enthusiastic curiosity or reverential awe, at the grave of royalty or intellectual greatness, than was manifested by this English party of dukes and earls, and the future King of England, at the grave of Washington.” While Edward felt obligated to participate in this American ritual, the symbolic act of a future British monarch visiting Washington’s tomb affirmed Washington’s worldly greatness.<sup>49</sup>

Even as the country descended into chaos during the American Civil War, French royalty embarked on a transatlantic pilgrimage to Mount Vernon, but used the occasion to survey the strength of both sides. Unsure whether to support the United States, recognize the Confederacy, or maintain neutrality, Emperor Napoleon III sent his first cousin, Napoléon Joseph Charles Paul Bonaparte, on a goodwill mission to Washington D.C. The grandiose celebrations and parades devoted to a royal’s visit were now a thing of the past, as Americans fixated their attention on the recent battles between Union and Confederate forces. Newspapers printed that Bonaparte planned to travel to Mount Vernon with Secretary of State William Seward, the French minister, “M. Mercier,” and a “detachment of regular United States infantry as a body guard.” The night before the excursion, Seward recommended that Bonaparte travel “by land, without escort, having the right of a neutral among belligerents.” The Prince and his suite set out “in three carriages at six o’clock” in the morning, and they were expected to return by six that

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<sup>49</sup> DWB, “From our Washington Correspondent,” *The Independent*, 11 October 1860, 12, 619, 1; “The Prince of Wales,” *Circular*, 18 October 1860, 9, 38, 150; DWB, “The Prince’s Visit to Washington’s Tomb,” *Littell’s Living Age*, 3 November 1860, 857, 320.

evening. When the party failed to arrive, rumors spread that Napoleon “had been captured by Secessionists” or that he was being “detained by the rebels.” One newspaper reported that Napoleon had visited “the Confederate Generals at Manassas,” and dined with General Albert Sidney Johnston and Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard.

Napoléon’s detour may just have been out of curiosity, but Union officials could not help but suspect that he was performing reconnaissance for the French Emperor. One columnist remarked, “[t]his step on the Prince’s part *has displeased some of his friends of the government.*” Napoléon’s pilgrimage to Mount Vernon appeared to be nothing more than a ruse, as he traversed pickets and met with prominent Confederate officials.<sup>50</sup>

One of Napoleon’s *aid-de-camps*, Lieutenant Colonel Camille Ferri Pisani, chronicled their journey through the Virginia countryside and published his letters upon their return to Paris. Pisani identified Mount Vernon as a place “devoted by the recognition of Americans as the purpose of a patriotic pilgrimage,” noting the sacredness of the place and its importance to American national identity. Sarah Tracy, appointed by MVLA founder Anna Pamela Cunningham to maintain the estate during her absence, conducted Prince Napoleon and his party through the mansion and across the grounds. “Mme Tracy” took the French group to the tomb, described by Pisani as a “small brick building, very simple, square, one of whose sides is closed by a gate, houses two white marble sarcophagus resting on the ground.” After partaking in a small meal, the party readied their carriages to leave around three o’clock. “As we were leaving, Tracy, through delicate care, put in the carriage of the Prince a small box filled with the earth of

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<sup>50</sup> *The Daily True Delta*, 7 August 1861; *Trenton State Gazette*, 7 August 1861; *Weekly Patriot*, 8 August 1861; *Richmond Examiner*, 12 August 1862; *The Daily True Delta*, 14 August 1861; *The Daily Picayune*, 14 August 1861; *The Sun*, 7 September 1861; *Richmond Examiner*, 10 September 1861.

Mount Vernon and bearing a rare plant, all from near the tomb. This keepsake is destined for Princess Clotilde,” wrote Pisani. While Bonaparte did continue his trip into Confederate territory, he also took with him a relic from Mount Vernon to commemorate his pilgrimage to America’s national shrine.<sup>51</sup>

After the purchase of the estate by the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association in 1858, pilgrims continued to flock to Washington’s tomb as the country veered towards civil war. This war would not only decide the future of the United States of America but also the writing of the past, as relics were viewed as foundational links between both sections’ justifications for their cause. As a private organization, the MVLA maintained a policy of neutrality that applied to state managers, vice regents, and the estate itself. Northern presses printed outrageous rumors that Confederates absconded with Washington’s body and that Mount Vernon was “overrun by bands of rebels.” Anna Pamela Cunningham, Regent of the MVLA, asked George Washington Riggs, the association’s treasurer, if there was any truth to the reported rumors that President Lincoln and the Union Generals vowed to destroy public buildings in the capital before allowing them to fall into Confederate hands. She worried about the Patent Office, which housed “articles once the property of Gen. Washington,” and suggested that these relics be moved to Mount Vernon for protection. After the rumors that rebels had stolen Washington’s body gained traction, Riggs replied that this “report has caused a deal of

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<sup>51</sup> Le Lieutenant-Colonel Ferri Pisani, *Lettres sur les États-Unis D’Amérique* (Paris: Librairie de l. Hachette, 1862), 142-143, 150, 153, trans. Matthew Costello. Pisani also described meeting with the Confederate Generals Beauregard and Johnston, who showed the Prince their regiments and discussed the recent Confederate victory at Bull Run.



excitement and the mere suggestion of such a thing should prevent the administration from consenting to let anything of value go into Virginia.”<sup>52</sup>

With both sides claiming the memory of Washington to further their cause, the MVLA declined to enter the discussion, reaffirming their commitment to preserving George Washington’s world and as an organization above the sectionalism that had divided the nation. Both governments respected the MVLA’s neutrality, as neither attempted to confiscate the property from the ladies. The pilgrimage, however, was eliminated by President Abraham Lincoln’s administration, as steamboat services were suspended indefinitely. Union pickets and checkpoints furthered restricted pilgrim access to Mount Vernon, and as the MVLA’s coffers emptied, the Association struggled to pay its expenses and employees. Cunningham’s secretary and administrator in her absence, Sarah Tracy, labored to restore steamboat service to Mount Vernon. She repeatedly wrote to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, pleading that the steamboat was the only source of income for the Association, and “at present it is a necessity.” She reminded Stanton that there was not a “single instance...of treason, or difficulty in any way, through Mount Vernon.” Stanton continuously denied her request, and Vice-Regent of

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<sup>52</sup> “Washington’s Remains Unmolested,” *Farmer’s Cabinet*, 31 May, 1861; “Mount Vernon-General Scott’s Balderdash,” *The Crisis*, 8 August 1861; *Weekly Patriot and Union*, 5 September 1861; Ann Pamela Cunningham to George W. Riggs, April 30, 1861, Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association Early Records Correspondence, box 23, Fred W. Smith Library; George W. Riggs to Ann Pamela Cunningham, May 16, 1861, Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association Early Records Correspondence, box 23, FWSL. The Patent Office held a number of Washington relics; according to William Taylor Stott, who visited the office in 1864, it held “Washington’s sword, coat, vest, pants, writing case, tent, mess-chest, chair, table, bureau and dishes.” *The Diary of William Taylor Stott*, December 16, 1864, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL. The Washington family sold Mount Vernon to the MVLA in 1858 for \$200,000.

New York Marry Morris Hamilton wrote to Tracy, telling her that she was “grieved at the decision of the Secretary about our boat, as I cannot see any good reason for it.”<sup>53</sup>

Until Lincoln reversed course on Mount Vernon steamboat travel in 1864, most of the visitors to the grounds were Union troops, many of whom were from across the United States. For those who had never traveled very far from their homes or communities, the war gave them the opportunity to see Washington D.C. and the South, and regiments found their way to Mount Vernon to pay homage to Washington. Despite the suspension of private excursions, Union officials did permit government-confiscated steamships of northern soldiers to travel to Mount Vernon. Writing to Foxhall Parker, an executive officer at the Naval Yard in Washington, Sarah Tracy vented her frustration that the MVLA’s boat sat docked in the city while government-run ships had free rein to traverse the Potomac. She asked Parker to convince Stanton to lift the ban and lambasted the steamer “South America” for recently making trips to Mount Vernon. Tracy’s calls for fair use of the river were ignored, as Union officials dismissed her complaints as a necessary wartime measure.<sup>54</sup>

With the suspension of steamboat traffic on the Potomac, the federal government terminated the civic pilgrimage for private citizens. In addition, Union pickets between Alexandria and Mount Vernon prevented visitors from traveling by carriage or horse to Washington’s tomb. Union soldiers, however, traversed these lines with relative ease. In a similar ritualistic vein, soldiers took tree branches, stones, and small keepsakes from

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<sup>53</sup> Sarah Tracy to Edwin Stanton, April 4, 1863, Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association Early Records Correspondence, box 35, FWSL; Mary Morris Hamilton to Sarah Tracy, May 25, 1863, MVLA Early Records Correspondence box 35, FWSL.

<sup>54</sup> Endorsement of Abraham Lincoln for the SS *Thomas Collyer*, March 4, 1864, Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association Early Records Correspondence, box 36; Sarah Tracy to Foxhall Parker, March 6, 1862, Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association Early Records Correspondence, box 35, Fred W. Smith Library.

Washington's tomb. Union Private Robert Sneden and his compatriots visited in March 1862, writing their names in the ladies' registry and visiting both tombs. Sneden "gathered leaves to press for mementoes," and even took "some large acorns" from near the tomb. George Carr Round of the First Connecticut Heavy Artillery journeyed to Mount Vernon to see Washington's tomb in November 1863. Round observed a beautiful magnolia tree, "the seed" of which "was planted by Washington's own hand." He enclosed "a leaf from this tree and also a sprig of box from the flower garden" for his friend, who published Round's account in *The Ladies' Repository*. These objects were certainly mementoes of the journey, but they were also tangible reminders of what northern soldiers were fighting for, to save the country and union that Washington forged with his leadership. Many Union soldiers also participated in the pilgrim ritual of carving names into the brick face of the new tomb, but these acts also symbolized the North's claim of Washington for the Union. As the war carried on two separate nations used Washington as an advocate of their cause. With the civic pilgrimage gone and Washington no longer the property of the nation, Union supporters attempted to untangle the memory of Washington from the Confederacy by lauding him as a strong Constitutionalist and the founder of the Union.<sup>55</sup>

In such a transformative and unstable time, Washington relics provided a sense of stability and continuity between the present and the past. Once artifacts that united Americans were now a source of agitation, as Union officials seized them and Confederates hid them. Outside of Mount Vernon and the Washingtonian objects already

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<sup>55</sup> Robert Knox Sneden, March 8, 1862, *Eye of the Storm: A Civil War Odyssey*, eds. Charles F. Bryan Jr. and Nelson Lankford (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 22-23. Sneden's original diary is located in the Virginia Historical Society's collections; "Thanksgiving Day at Mount Vernon," November 1863, Mount Vernon Traveler Account Volume 3, FWSL. *The Ladies Repository*, 1864, 24, 217-219.

in the federal government's possession, the last major collection of Washington relics resided at George Washington Parke Custis' Arlington House. Custis, the step-grandson of General Washington, had inherited many of these articles over the course of his life. One newspaper columnist referred to Arlington House as "a pilgrim shrine second only to Mount Vernon." Custis died in 1857, bequeathing the plantation to his daughter and her husband Robert E. Lee. Lee left Arlington to join the Confederate cause in April, and on May 23, 1861, Virginians ratified the decision to secede from the United States. Several hours later, Union troops led by General Irvin McDowell crossed the Potomac River and captured the property to prevent an artillery attack on the city of Washington D.C. For the remainder of the war federal troops constructed defensive works and occupied the property. The house became a headquarters for Union commanders, and the government authorized the creation of a free, black community at Arlington for runaway slaves.<sup>56</sup>

In their flight from Arlington, the Custis Lee family took whatever objects they could and hid the rest in a cellar beneath the house. After McDowell took control of Arlington, Mary Ann Custis Lee informed the Union commander that, "the relics of Washington had been removed." But according to several newspaper accounts, "an old domestic" brought McDowell the key to the room, which contained a treasure trove of

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<sup>56</sup> "Arlington Heights," *The Pittsfield Sun*, 2 May 1861. Arlington House, situated on the Virginia side of the Potomac River, sat less than three miles from the center of Washington; *The Sun*, 27 May 1861; as the body count rose, the grounds were eventually turned into a burial grounds for Union troops. As it stands, several hundred Confederate soldiers are in fact buried at Arlington National Cemetery, but the original intention was to turn it into a United States military burial ground. The confiscation of Arlington House was later justified when Congress passed the Confiscation Act of 1861, authorizing the federal government and its agents to seize "property used for insurrectionary purposes." See Bill 288, 37<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 6 August 1861. The Confederacy responded with their own "Sequestration Act," which permitted Southerners to seize "all Yankee lands, tenements, and hereditaments, goods, chattels, rights, and credits." See *Richmond Enquirer*, 3 September 1861; Robert Poole, *On Hallowed Ground: The Story of Arlington National Cemetery* (New York: Walker & Company, 2009), 20-32.

George and Martha Washington mementoes. Officers fawned over the many pieces of chinaware, which were gifts from the Society of Cincinnati and officers of the French Army. The room contained platters, plates, tureens, candelabras, mirror ornaments, vases, and salad bowls. In addition to these dinner pieces, there was “Gen. Washington’s tea table, tent, and articles of furniture,” along with the papers of the Custis family, which included many letters of Washington’s correspondence. Since “the visitors” to Arlington were “so numerous,” along with the constant “changes of troops,” General McDowell recommended removing the “valuable mementoes” for safe-keeping, as some pieces had suspiciously gone missing. Secretary of the Interior Caleb Smith agreed, and ordered McDowell to remove the “Washington relics found at Arlington House” and deposit them either at the Patent Office or the Smithsonian Institution. McDowell tasked Caleb Lyon with organizing and documenting the objects, along with preparing them for removal to Washington D.C.<sup>57</sup>

Northerners applauded the efforts of the federal government to secure the precious relics of George Washington. “These mementoes of Washington,” wrote “JHC” in the *New York Evangelist*, “have a historical interest that will render them valuable after all now on the stage and their children’s children shall have passed away. They are a link between the glorious past and the future, which we hope will remain after all who have

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<sup>57</sup> “The Relics of Washington,” *Hartford Daily Courant*, 27 January 1862; “The Washington Relics at Arlington House,” *The Sun*, 20 January 1862. In this version, the slave is referred to as an “a colored servant”; “Arlington House,” *The Sun*, 17 January 1862; “The Washington Relics at Arlington House,” *The Sun*, 20 January 1862; “Relics of Washington,” *The Farmer’s Cabinet*, 30 January 1862; “Summary,” *German Reformed Messenger*, 29 January 1862, 27, 23, 3; “Scientific and Useful,” *New York Evangelist*, 6 February 1862, 32, 6, 7; *The National Republican*, 25 January 1862; Robert Poole, *On Hallowed Ground: The Story of Arlington National Cemetery* (New York: Walker & Company, 2009), 28-30. The Lee slave, Selina Gray, possessed the keys to the mansion. She reported the Washington relics to McDowell, but the coming and going of Union troops made relic policing impossible.

tried to sever it shall have passed into merited oblivion.” One columnist for *The New York Times* wrote that, “the country is...deeply indebted to Mr. Lyon” for saving such valuable pieces of American history. Southerners did not share this sentiment, and took to hoarding Washington relics. The Freemasons of Alexandria, upon hearing that the relics of Arlington House were now in the possession of the federal government, proposed creating a new lodge behind Confederate lines with the association’s Washington tokens “so that the U.S. officers and soldiers could not get them for their use.” The taking of Washington relics from Arlington House was considered a necessary wartime measure, much to the chagrin of southern Washington enthusiasts and the Custis Lee family.<sup>58</sup>

When Mary Ann Custis Lee failed to appear in person to pay the taxes owed on Arlington House, the federal government authorized the public sale of the estate, along with dozens of other confiscated rebel properties. Federal officials were determined to protect the capital from a Confederate invasion and maintain the growing Freedman’s Village, so they purchased Arlington for “\$27,800.” Union officials not only ransacked the Lee family possessions but also successfully claimed ownership of the mansion and 200 acres surrounding the home of General Robert E. Lee, eventually turning it into a national cemetery. After the war, Mary asked Congress to return the Washington relics to the Custis family. President Andrew Johnson and his cabinet agreed to her request, and Secretary of the Interior Orville Browning informed Mary that “upon being properly identified,” the objects would be given to a designated “agent...authorized to receive” them. While Union officials excused the safeguarding of Washington mementoes as a

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<sup>58</sup> “Camp Life in Virginia,” *New York Evangelist*, 13 February 1862, 32, 7, 2; “News From Washington,” *New York Times*, 26 April 1862, 5; *The Local News Alexandria*, 7 January, 1862.

means of national preservation, this was one of many instances of federal authorities “rescuing” the memory of Washington from Confederate control during the war.<sup>59</sup>

As the war dragged on, Confederate strategy became more defensive, as Union forces pushed harder to break into the South and crush the morale of the military and civilian populations. While Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee’s armies clashed in Virginia, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman advanced on Atlanta, defeating the forces of Confederate General John Hood and razing the city’s railroads, storehouses, telegraph lines, and infrastructure. Continuing eastward, Sherman’s forces torn through the Georgia countryside, seizing supplies from civilians, looting plantations, and destroying anything of strategic value. As Sherman approached Savannah, city officials, aware of the fate that befell Atlanta, decided to surrender on the condition that the city remain intact. Sherman accepted the offer, wiring the triumphant news to President

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<sup>59</sup> “Sale of Lands for Unpaid Taxes in Insurrectionary Districts,” *New York Times*, 6 January 1864, 1; “The Sale of Virginia Lands for Unpaid Taxes,” *New York Times*, 12 January 1864, 1; “The Freedmen at Arlington,” *Friends’ Intelligencer*, 9 January 1864, 20, 44, 692; Mary Custis Lee to Andrew Johnson, February 16, 1869, *Mary Custis Lee Papers*, section 42, Virginia Historical Society Collections; Orville Browning to Mary Custis Lee, February 24, 1869, *Mary Custis Lee Papers*, section 42, Virginia Historical Society Collections. The return of the Washington relics became a point of contention in Congress, as Republicans refused to recognize the claims. They eventually passed a resolution that these relics were “the property of the United States,” and eventually agreed to pay the Custis family for them. See *House Journal*, 40<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., 3 March 1869 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1869), 67, 547. The relics were later moved to the United States National Museum in 1883 after the government paid the Custis and Lewis heirs \$12,000 for the objects. See *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for the Year 1883* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1885), 42, 177. Other instances of Union forces fighting to commandeer Washington objects include the occupation of Pohick Church by Union General Samuel Heintzelman’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Infantry and Union Major General David Hunter’s burning of the Virginia Military Institute. Hunter took a statue of Washington from the military academy back to West Virginia. See Report of Brig. General Samuel P. Heintzelman, U.S. Army, Commanding Division, November 13, 1861, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Harrisburg: The National Historical Society, 1971), Series I, 5, 413-414; “The Captured Statue of Washington,” *The Daily Ohio Statesman*, 20 July 1864; *Daily True Delta*, 20 July 1864; “Arrival of the Statue of Washington,” *San Francisco Bulletin*, 29 July 1864, reprint *Philadelphia Enquirer*, 6 July, 1864; *Hartford Daily Courant*, 3 August 1864.

Lincoln: “I beg to present you as a Christmas gift the City of Savannah with 150 heavy guns & plenty of ammunition & also about 25,000 bales of cotton.” With the city secured, Sherman planned to march his forces northward through the Carolinas after celebrating the holiday.<sup>60</sup>

Confederates, well aware of the Union custom to destroy and take anything of military or historical worth, quickly buried two major Washington mementoes beneath the Chatham Artillery before Sherman’s advance. During his tour of the southern United States, President Washington had visited Savannah in May 1791 and gave the city two cannons captured at the surrender of Yorktown. These cannons were considered landmark mementoes of the history’s city, and Savannah residents feared that the Union Army would seize them and transport them back to Washington. The cannons were rolled into the Chatham Artillery building and quickly buried in the cellar. They remained hidden until Union troops vacated the city in 1872, prompting city residents to unearth the Washington guns and restore them to their proper place on the public square. They found a home east of city hall, and today serve as important historical artifacts that connect George Washington with Savannah’s history. But during the nineteenth century, these were considered precious artifacts in need of protection. While the Northern forces

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<sup>60</sup> Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Towards Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Grimsley argued that Unionist policy regarding Southern civilians and their property evolved during the course of the war. Union officials first advocated for a conciliatory policy, but by the summer of 1862, encouraged confiscation and emancipation. As the war continued, officials reevaluated this policy, opting for a total war strategy in 1864-1865 with the intent to destroy the South’s means of supplies and its morale to fight. Even then, commanders tried to limit pillaging and plundering amongst soldiers, and some were more successful than others in curbing their behavior; Walter J. Fraser Jr., *Savannah in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 339, 344; Jacqueline Jones, *Saving Savannah: The City and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2008), 207-208; W.T. Sherman to President Abraham Lincoln, December 22, 1864, *Sherman’s Civil War: Selected Correspondence of William T. Sherman, 1860-1865*, eds. Brooks D. Simpson and Jean Berlin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 722.



were very successful at commandeering Washington regalia and claiming anything associated with Washington, these cannons escaped that fate.<sup>61</sup>

The confiscation of Washington relics from Arlington House, and the hiding of cannons in Savannah illuminate how both sides sought to preserve and disseminate their own memory of George Washington. These objects linked the sections' cause with the country's most revered founder, but physical possession ultimately gave more gravitas to competing interpretations of Washington's legacy. This was not a new idea, as possession of Washington objects linked individuals with a larger, national identity. Over the course of the nineteenth century, tens of thousands of Americans traveled to Mount Vernon to pay homage beside Washington's tomb. The constant presence of visitors, and their circulated recollections in newspapers, periodicals, and letters, fostered Washington's transition from republican symbol into icon of democracy. These pilgrimages reinforced the notion that Washington belonged to the nation, and in turn travelers trumpeted the claim that every American maintained the right to visit Washington's tomb.

Visitors often took "relics" from the site as tangible reminders of their journey, but the meaning of these objects varied greatly. For many, these were items imbued with Washington's historical greatness. For others, they served as reminders of how Americans should aspire to be more like Washington the ideal citizen. The taking of objects allowed individuals the freedom to define Washington as they wished and connect to a shared sense of national belonging. These small mementos—flowers, sticks, tree branches, stones, bricks, leaves, and soil—were intimately linked to the memory of

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<sup>61</sup> Washington arrived in Savannah on May 13<sup>th</sup> and stayed for two days, leaving on May 15<sup>th</sup>. See *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. Dorothy Twohig, Philander Chase, et al (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987), Presidential Series, 8, 176-194.

George Washington. They embodied the pilgrim's remembered experiences at Mount Vernon, and served as a powerful token of the man who they deliberately sought out for tribute. Some pilgrims even imagined that Washington himself planted these trees and flowers, or placed these stones by hand; while there is no proof that he did (or did not), these recollections redefined these souvenirs as genuine artifacts of American history.

Upon their arrival, American and foreign pilgrims were appalled to find the family vault in such poor condition, and their criticisms of both Bushrod Washington and the government produced discourse over how to properly commemorate Washington. As more pilgrims voyaged to Mount Vernon, the estate was overrun by Americans and foreign travelers. The constant influx of visitors irritated Bushrod and harassed his family so much that they even tried to restrict visitations to "respectable" pilgrims only. But improvements in transportation made the civic pilgrimage possible for more Americans, and as a result strangers descended on the property, taking tree branches, flowers, fruit, pebbles, and even dirt as mementoes of their journey. By commemorating their journey with a piece of Washington's world, they took a tangible piece of a glorified past, affirming the popular belief that Washington belonged to the nation. The outbreak of the civil war, however, restricted the pilgrimage to Mount Vernon, dissolving the fragile relationship between Washington the people.

Union officials and Confederate supporters both employed the memory of Washington to bolster their respective causes. Washington's malleability made him a figure of veneration for North and South, and again, the question of "owning" Washington became vitally important for one section defending its national mythology and another seeking to invent one. While Confederate forces were never really in a

position to seize anything from Washington D.C., southerners understood the importance and value of Washington mementoes. The confiscation of Robert E. Lee's Arlington House demonstrated that Union commanders were willing to engage in aggressive tactics to secure the Union, but they also illuminated Unionist efforts to save Washington artifacts from Confederate control. The later policy of total war encouraged destructive behavior and justified the seizure of anything strategic, both militarily and historically. The city of Savannah learned from these acts, secretly hiding their Washington guns beneath the armory and resurrecting them after the end of Union occupation.

The presence of pilgrims at Mount Vernon and the proliferation of their writings transformed the estate from a private plantation into a public, national shrine. By paying homage to Washington and believing the stories of their guides, they invented the sacredness of the place and called for government intervention to save it from ruin. This imagined hallowedness turned ordinary objects into Washington tokens, and pilgrims voraciously sought these as artifacts for their personal and historical value. Their accounts speak to the wider democratic belief that Washington belonged to the people, and as such all Americans reserved the right to engage in a civic pilgrimage to Mount Vernon and take pieces of Washington's past with them. When neither the federal government nor the state of Virginia answered the call to preserve Washington's world, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association stepped in to restore what was left, but the actions of pilgrims actually contributed to the organization's formation. They were, after all, along with the Washington family, responsible for the estate's decrepit appearance, and by the 1850s the mansion resembled an unpainted and corroded shell of its former self. This was the Mount Vernon that Louisa Cunningham saw as her boat passed in 1853, and

motivated her to write her daughter about this travesty on the Potomac. Ann Pamela Cunningham took her mother's words to heart, vowing to save Mount Vernon for the nation on behalf of the American people.

## Chapter 6

“Guardians of a National Shrine”:

The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association  
and the Legacy of Washington

It is represented that Mr. Washington the proprietor of Mount Vernon, was very unwilling to permit the Young Men’s Convention to visit the tomb of Washington, because it was his rule not to permit any one to land from a Steam Boat. One of the Committee, a Virginian, finally obtained permission for his associates to land as a personal favor to himself. Is it possible such an animal can bear the name of Washington?

*-Rhode Island American, May 23, 1832*

The National Republican Convention of Young Men met in Washington D.C. in early May 1832 to politically mobilize and publicize their support for Henry Clay in the upcoming presidential election. Delegates spent the week orchestrating Republican celebrations and denouncing President Andrew Jackson’s policies and appointments, but the major attraction was Henry Clay’s address to the assembled crowd. Clay thanked the convention for their encouragement and eloquently described his political vision for the country’s future. Near the end of his speech, Clay reminded those in attendance that liberty and Union were vital to the survival of the republic. Liberty was “derived from our ancestors” and the legacy of the Revolution, but Union was “indissolubly connected with it, also derived from the fathers of our country.” Clay beckoned the young men “to decide whether these great blessings of Liberty and Union shall be defended and preserved,” as “the eyes of all civilized nations are intensely gazing upon us.” The audience erupted in applause, and with the conclusion of political business, the

convention's leadership arranged for a ceremonial visit to Washington's tomb to symbolically close the meeting.<sup>1</sup>

On Saturday morning May 12, the convention of 316 men adjourned and traversed down the Potomac on a political rite of passage to Mount Vernon. Accompanied by a band playing solemn music, they proceeded to the tomb to pay tribute to Washington. After the band ceased, they listened to Henry C. Flagg of South Carolina read Washington's Farewell Address. One Republican newspaper applauded the organization's trip and could not fathom a "more imposing spectacle than that exhibited by the numerous representation of the young men—the rising generation of this country, paying a sincere and heartfelt tribute to departed worth, and listening to the parting advice of him who was 'first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.'" The men returned to DC to hear concluding remarks by Unionist Augustus Bradford of Maryland, who maintained that the "pilgrimage to the Tomb of Washington" had not only united the convention in a final act of solidarity, but also removed "all partisan motives" for their actions. While the men might go their separate ways, Bradford pleaded that they not forget the "one common purpose" that unites them, a love for country modeled on the memory of George Washington.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Rhode Island American*, 23 May 1832, reprint of *Boston Advertiser*. The Virginian in question is George C. Powell, who was the Virginia representative on the committee for planning the excursion to Mount Vernon; *The Richmond Enquirer*, 18 May 1832; Proceedings of the National Republican Convention of Young Men, Assembled May 7-12 1832 (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1832), 13-14; Robert Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 377.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings of the National Republican Convention of Young Men, Assembled May 7-12 1832 (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1832), 13-14; "National Republican Convention of Young Men," *Niles' Weekly Register*, 12 May 1832; 42, 1077, 206; *The Richmond Enquirer*, 18 May 1832; Proceedings of the National Republican Convention of Young Men, Assembled May 7-12 1832 (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1832), 19-24; *The Connecticut Mirror*, 19 May 1832; *Newport Mercury*, 19 May 1832; "Young Men's National Republican Convention," *Niles' Weekly Register*, 19 May 1832; 42, 1078, 218; *Norwich Courier*, 23 May 1832; *New Hampshire*

Several weeks after the convention, newspaper articles began to circulate that the unifying pilgrimage was not as joyous as previously reported. John Augustine Washington Jr., who recently denied the federal government's claim to George Washington's remains in February 1832, came under attack for how he received the party. *The New Hampshire Sentinel* reported that John Augustine made it very difficult for the men to land "because they came in a steam boat" and even sent "servants...to prevent their going to the old tomb, or the House!" Other accounts cited the convention's proceedings, where a planning committee had properly coordinated the visit in correspondence with John Augustine Washington earlier in the week. The committee had received permission to visit Washington's tomb, but John Augustine explicitly stated that this would only be recognized so long as guests did not arrive "on the Sabbath or in steamboat parties." Only after they threatened to "publish the correspondence, and a detail of the treatment they had received," did Washington finally consent to their landing. Republican writers lambasted John Augustine, calling him a man "who inherits the name without an iota of the attributes." Another paper insinuated that there was a grand Democratic conspiracy designed by Senator Isaac Hill of New Hampshire and Amos Kendall, both members of Andrew Jackson's famed Kitchen Cabinet who also arrived on a steamboat that day and "were cordially received, and conducted to the mansion," while "Clay's infant school was refused permission to land." According to the final proceedings of the convention, there was no discrepancy between John Augustine

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*Sentinel*, 25 May 1832; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 1 June 1832; Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union*, 377.

and the landing party of Republicans, but the story was politicized to attack him and condemn Democrats who acclaimed Andrew Jackson as the second Washington.<sup>3</sup>

The expansion of universal white male suffrage brought a new generation of politicians and leaders into the political fray in the 1820s. Riding this unprecedented wave of democracy, these men symbolically replaced the passing revolutionary generation, a transformation that both excited and alarmed Americans. Many feared that without the bodily presence of the Founders, the republic would falter and collapse. Others, hungry to assert their visions for the country, picked up the mantle of the Revolution and claimed it as their own, using nostalgia to justify their positions and agendas. The election of General Andrew Jackson, a man of modest means who rose to national prominence through his military service, has frequently been cited as one of the defining moments for American democracy. Jackson was considered “a man of the people” and therefore in his enemies’ eyes, unfit for the presidency.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 1 June 1832; Proceedings of the National Republican Convention of Young Men, Assembled May 7-12 1832 (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1832), 14; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 8 June 1832; *The Connecticut Mirror*, 9 June 1832; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 15 June 1832; Proceedings of the National Republican Convention of Young Men, Assembled May 7-12 1832 (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1832), 14; Clay does not mention if the convention was not properly received or not in his personal papers, and Amos Kendall’s correspondence and papers at the Library of Congress begin in 1835.

<sup>4</sup> Lynn Hudson Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1945). Schlesinger’s work posited that the rise of Jacksonian democracy was because of the emergence of classes, and as such, a more business-minded Hamiltonian party in the Whigs emerged to battle the rural, agrarian Democrats and their supporters. Historical studies of regions and cities have chipped away at this interpretation, as political consciousness and identity was much more complex and multi-layered than just “economic determinism.” See Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Samuel P. Hays, *American Political History as Social Analysis* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980); Ronald Formisano, *The Birth of Mass Political Parties: Michigan, 1827-1861* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); “ethnoculturalists” argued that ethnic and religious affiliations in local circumstances were much more important for understanding Jacksonian democracy’s development, but this interpretation also denied the importance of class in shaping national



His denial of the presidency in 1824 further solidified his political support amongst voters, and in 1828 he trounced incumbent President John Quincy Adams, a Revolutionary heir in his own right. Both sides employed vicious personal attacks in the campaign, but Jackson supporters' primary strategy was to promote his revolutionary heritage, military victories, and his relationship with the people. By proclaiming him the "second Washington," Jackson supporters convinced voters that he was above partisan politics and would protect the rights of the common man. The link between Jackson and Washington comforted some anxious Americans and delivered a decisive victory for Jackson, but it also fostered the growing popular belief that Washington was a man of the people as well. While the debate to move Washington's body was finally settled in 1832, the idea that his memory belonged to the people resonated amongst representatives and citizens in this new age of democratic political expression.<sup>5</sup>

As the political landscape shifted in the nineteenth century, the Revolution and Washington's image became potent political weapons for factions, parties, and individuals. The divisive politics of the day muddled the memory of the American past and dragged its origins into debates concerning governmental authority, slavery, the national bank, internal improvements, and westward expansion. Acknowledged for his

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politics. Other scholars have argued that class formation was the result of democracy, as ideas of republicanism were evoked for labor movements and unionization. See Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Robert P. Hay, "John Fitzgerald: Presidential Image-maker for Andrew Jackson in 1823," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (Summer 1983): 138-150; Robert P. Hay, "The American Revolution Twice Recalled: Lafayette's Visit and the Election of 1824," *Indiana Magazine of History* 69, no. 1 (March 1973): 43-62; Gordon Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 216. Thomas Jefferson regarded Jackson as unfit for the presidency, and his election, coupled with increasing factionalism and sectionalism of the 1820s, soured Jefferson's opinions of the common man and their unwillingness to become more enlightened.

leadership, civic virtue, and his role in cementing the bonds of union, Washington became an instrument for challenging the very government he had fought to establish. By the 1850s, there were different versions of Washington that Americans emulated, furthering the competition between the federal government and the state of Virginia to purchase Mount Vernon and Washington's tomb. By possessing the estate and tomb, the owners could try to define who the real Washington was, but government failures to do so evoked trepidation that Americans had lost their Revolutionary past. This chapter explores the efforts of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union (MVLA), a private organization that took up the cause on behalf of the nation, and did so under incredible political, social, and sectional duress. The MVLA saved Mount Vernon and Washington's grave from ruin in 1858, and while the organization trumpeted patriotism and benevolence in its cause, it also revealed the opportunity to become the exclusive guardians of George Washington's legacy. These women entered the public sphere by redefining their domestic responsibilities as civic duties, and this transference of obligation justified their commitment to make Mount Vernon the property of the nation. They solicited subscriptions and funds from across the country, offering Americans the chance to contribute to saving Mount Vernon, and their success fulfilled the popular belief that the memory of Washington belonged to the American people.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 181-184; Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt and Neuwied, Federal Republic of Germany, 1962). Habermas argued that the public sphere, a counterbalance to state control and authority, manifested in European coffeehouses, salons, and clubs during the eighteenth century. These places fostered rational discussions and facilitated the growth of public opinion as a means to keep the state in check. The actions of the MVLA blurred the public and private spheres of American life, and their extensive use of print periodicals and newspapers to shape public opinion regarding the

Several months after the National Republican Convention of Young Men's visit, John Augustine Washington Jr. passed away at Mount Vernon as a result of a "protracted pulmonary complaint." He was only 43 years old, yet another victim of the Washington family curse that haunted its male members. He left the Mount Vernon and Blakely estates, along with "all my negroes," to his "most dear wife and friend" Jane Charlotte Blackburn Washington. He also gave her the authority to sell Mount Vernon if she deemed it in the best interest for their family, and asked that the "proceeds be laid out in public stock for benefit of my children." A widow the rest of her life, Jane Charlotte did her best to maintain these plantations. "I shall do all in my power to keep it [Mount Vernon] up, if it is possible to do so, without involving my children's estate," she told her confidant Elizabeth Rankin. As the plantation's productivity declined, so did the appearance of Mount Vernon, and visitors were not shy about voicing their concerns for the well being of Washington's home and legacy. She, like the previous owners, did not appreciate their presence or being viewed as "one of the many curiosities" of Mount Vernon, but understood that these visitations were important for fostering nationalist sentiment amongst the people. While she opposed selling the estate, she did believe that the government should offer some form of assistance to the Washington family "to keep up the improvements, and meet the expences we are daily subjected to by the publick."<sup>7</sup>

While the federal and Virginia state governments failed in their attempts to remove Washington's remains, the construction of a new tomb by the Washington family

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purchase of Mount Vernon transformed their efforts as a "public" endeavor despite their private ownership.

<sup>7</sup> *Richmond Enquirer*, 22 June 1832; *Salem Gazette*, 26 June 1832; The Will of John A. Washington, July 8, 1830, Fred W. Smith Library; Jane Charlotte Washington to Elizabeth Rankin, January 4, 1833, FWSL; Jane Charlotte Washington to Augustine and Christian Washington, June 28, 1837, FWSL; Jane Charlotte Washington to George Corbin Washington, May 25, 1840, FWSL.

at Mount Vernon brought some hope that Washington would finally be properly memorialized. The new tomb, however, was very similar in design to the old, unadorned tomb. The front of the vault was composed of roughcast, featured an iron door entrance to the inner vault, and displayed two marble slabs that read “Washington Family” with the words of John 11:25-26; “I am the Resurrection and Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” The humid summers and cold winters, along with tourist vandalism, were especially hard on the exterior. John S. Burleigh visited Washington’s tomb in 1833 and was appalled by its appearance: “The tomb...called new is in a state [of] dilapidation disgraceful to the nation if indeed the nation had anything to do with it.” A contributor to *Family Magazine* noted, “[t]here is a total absence of every thing like parade or circumstance about the resting-place of the Hero and Father.” An English visitor, Godfrey Vigne, remarked in his published account, “I must confess that I was greatly disappointed at the sight of the tomb that contains the ashes of Washington. I did not expect grandeur, but I thought to have seen something more respectable than either the old or the new tomb...I should have taken them for a couple of ice-houses.” Needless to say, the new tomb did little to meet the expectations of patriotic Americans and standards of foreign observers.<sup>8</sup>

By 1835, visitor criticism and vandalism convinced Lawrence Lewis to make the tomb more aesthetically pleasing. He asked his relative by marriage Robert E. Lee, a

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<sup>8</sup> *Lebanon County Republican*, 25 October 1834; Andrew Reed, *A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches by the Deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales*, 1835 (London: Jackson and Walford, 1835), 40; *Farmer’s Cabinet*, 12 September 1834; John S. Burleigh to unknown, March 12, 1833, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, Fred W. Smith Library; *The Family Magazine*, 1837, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 2B, FWSL; Godfrey Vigne, *Six Months in America*, (London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co., 1832); 1, 151-2; John Chapter 11 tells the story of Lazarus and his resurrection performed by Jesus Christ.

recent West Point graduate and lieutenant in the Army Corps of Engineers, to give him an estimate for a walled enclosure that would increase the size of the vault. Lee responded with a plan that required 30,000 bricks to envelop the vault, a new iron gate, and stone tablets, totaling \$560.00. Lewis employed a local Freemason, William Yeaton, to execute the plan and he did so during the summer and fall of 1835. A couple of years later, John Struthers, a marble mason from Philadelphia, proposed to fashion and donate a sarcophagus for Washington's remains. Lewis accepted the generous offer and sent the dimensions of Washington's leaden coffin to Struthers. He completed the sarcophagus in September 1837 and made arrangements to ship it down to Alexandria. It was carved "out of a solid block of Pennsylvania marble," and featured Philadelphia architect William Strickland's design of an "American eagle standing upon a shield" on the marble lid with the word WASHINGTON cut in sunken letters. While the Freemasons may have failed to build a monument of their own over Washington's grave, their brethren were responsible for its frequent repairs and the marble sarcophagus that holds Washington today.<sup>9</sup>

Struthers and Strickland accompanied the sarcophagus to Mount Vernon from Philadelphia in the fall of 1837. Upon their arrival, a "middle-aged mulatto" who

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<sup>9</sup> Robert E. Lee to Lawrence Lewis, May 12, 1835, Fred W. Smith Library; William Yeaton to Lawrence Lewis, May 12, 1835, FWSL. Yeaton also did the brick work for Lewis later in 1839 when repairs and the archway needed to be repaired. Their correspondence and transactions were conducted against George Washington's Estate. See Fred W. Smith Library Tomb Notebook; Lawrence Lewis to John Struthers, February 22, 1837 in William Strickland, *The Tomb of Washington at Mount Vernon*, (Philadelphia, PA: Carey and Hart, 1840), 11-12; John Struthers to Lawrence Lewis, September 18, 1837 in William Strickland, *The Tomb of Washington at Mount Vernon*, (Philadelphia, PA: Carey and Hart, 1840), 16-17; *Rhode Island Republican*, 27 September 1837; Strickland and Struthers also collaborated on a number of government buildings in Philadelphia and had a history of working together on major projects. See *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine*, 3 April 1841; 13,41; *Boston Weekly Magazine*, 3 April 1841; 3, 29.

possessed the keys to the vault let the men into the tomb to configure the placement of the sarcophagus. According to Strickland's account, the tomb was in total disorder. "Decayed fragments of coffins" were everywhere, and the "air of the vault was foul." The wood was "dripping with moisture," and the "mouldy cases of the dead have out a pungent and unwholesome odour." Upon closer inspection, it was determined that the "iron doorway was too small to admit the entrance of the marble Sarcophagus." Strickland and Struthers were mortified, but later made the argument that the inner vault's moisture would destroy the marble coffins and craftsmanship in a short time. They convinced Lewis to build a brick enclosure outside the vault, and did so with the help of local workmen and "a few of the domestics belonging to the household." After the foundation was poured, Strickland, Struthers, Lewis and his son Lorenzo all entered the vault to remove George Washington's remains.<sup>10</sup>

Washington's coffin rested in the rear of the vault, and required the men to "put aside the coffins that were piled up between it and the doorway." The leaden lid had already sunk some "four to five inches" from head to foot, and this pressure had caused the joints to give way and fracture the lower part of the lid. Turning this part over, the party saw "a head and breast of large dimensions, which appeared, by the dim light of the candles, to have suffered but little from the effects of time." Carried by "six men," Washington's coffin was carefully deposited into the marble sarcophagus. The men then set the lid in place and sealed it with cement. This was the last time that George

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<sup>10</sup> Strickland, *The Tomb of Washington at Mount Vernon*, 29-31; James Albert Wineberger, *The Tomb of Washington at Mount Vernon, Embracing a Full and Accurate Description of Mount Vernon, as well as the Birthplace, Genealogy, Character, Marriage, and Last Illness of Washington* (Washington D.C.: T. McGill, 1858), 41-47.

Washington would be moved, and he has remained at Mount Vernon in the enclosure ever since.<sup>11</sup>

On the foot of the coffin, Struthers was sure to inform future visitors of his skill as a mason and generosity as a man. It read: “By the Permission of Lawrence Lewis, Esq., this Sarcophagus of Washington was Presented by John Struthers, of Philadelphia, Marble Mason.” Strickland’s published account, now believed to have been written by Struthers, touted himself as a gentleman “with a spirit of liberality” who “deserves the thanks of the community at large.” Apparently, carving his name on the foot of the sarcophagus was not congratulatory enough for Struthers’ liking. According to Union Second Lieutenant George Round who visited during the Civil War and observed Struthers’ handiwork, “[t]he most charitable opinion I can form of John Struthers and Lawrence Lewis is, that their taste was most wretched.” This decree was later removed from the sarcophagus and replaced with the simple phrase, “George Washington.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Strickland, *The Tomb of Washington at Mount Vernon*, 31-35; Martha was placed into her marble sarcophagus sometime between October 1838 and January 1839, nearly a year after George. This sarcophagus also came from William Struthers. See *Rhode Island Republican*, 9 January 1839. According to several accounts, it was Struthers, Strickland, Hill, Lawrence and Lorenzo Lewis, John Augustine Washington III, Jane Charlotte Washington, George Washington Parke Custis, and a Reverend Johnson who were present for the disinterment. See *Army and Navy Chronicle*, 9 November 1837; 5,19. However, Jane later writes in a letter that she was not present for the removal. The Strickland version of events was also printed in several publications; see *The Knickerbocker*, May 1840; 15,5; *American Masonic Register and Literary Companion*, 6 June 1840; 1,40; *The Boston Weekly Magazine*, 20 June 1840; 2, 40; Wineberger, *The Tomb of Washington at Mount Vernon, Embracing a Full and Accurate Description of Mount Vernon, as well as the Birthplace, Genealogy, Character, Marriage, and Last Illness of Washington*, 41-47; The marble panel on the enclosure reads, “Within this Enclosure Rest the remains of Gen.l George Washington,” was added to the archway after the sarcophagus was placed inside.

<sup>12</sup> Strickland, *The Tomb of Washington at Mount Vernon*, 38; Horatio Hastings Weld, *Pictorial Life of George Washington: Embracing Anecdotes, Illustrative of His Character and Embellished with Engravings* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1846), 220-222; George C. Round, “Thanksgiving Day at Mount Vernon,” *The Ladies’ Repository*, 1 April 1864; 24, 217. The congratulatory carving on the foot of the sarcophagus was removed in the late nineteenth century and placed on the immediate right wall of the tomb.

Newspapers circulated gossip about the transfer of the remains, as Americans were curious about the physical state of Washington's body. One article printed and republished in several newspapers claimed that, "Washington was discovered in a wonderful state of preservation...[he] wore a calm and serene expression; and the lips, pressed still together, had a grave and solemn smile." William Popkin repeated a rumor to Jane C. Washington in a letter dated March 14, 1838: "In a conversation with the Rev. Doctor Berian...he mentioned having lately visited Mount Vernon and stood by the consecrated Tomb," and that upon the request of the family, Washington was exposed and "appeared as perfect as when first interred—unaffected by decay—A striking emblem of the Endurance of his fame on Earth, until Time shall be merged in Eternity." Jane Charlotte corrected this absurd tale in her response, informing Popkin that according to Lawrence and Lorenzo Lewis, "[a]ll was decomposed and fallen—nothing remained as far as they could see except the Skull." Even into the twentieth century, there was one individual who claimed to have seen Washington during the removal. John Lane, a man who died at the age of 88 in 1912, told a story of seeing Washington's face in 1833. He remembered "the Roman nose, the high forehead, the long face, and the snow white mass of hair...[and] a dark blotch on one side of the face." Of course Washington was moved in 1831 to the new tomb and into his sarcophagus in 1837, which questions the validity of Lane's anecdote, but nonetheless people were fascinated by his yarn and labeled him the last living soul to see George Washington's face. Lane's story illuminates another individual's effort to connect to Washington in a meaningful way and achieve some sort of recognition from his memory.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *The Sun*, 18 December 1837; *Richmond Enquirer*, 27 December 1837; *Madisonian for the Country*, 28 December 1837; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 28 December 1837; *Waldo Patriot*, 2



By building new tomb at Mount Vernon the Washington family ensured his body would never be removed, uniting the man, his memory, and the estate as one. The tomb and former possessions had always inspired a sense of sacredness amongst visitors, but by making sure Washington stayed at Mount Vernon permanently, the property itself became an extension of that patriotic holiness. As a result, visitors were not only in awe of the grounds but also offended when they saw the poor condition of the mansion and its outlying buildings. Their printed accounts facilitated the growing public angst that Mount Vernon was falling into total ruin, and that if nothing was done to save it, it could be privately purchased and turned into a place of amusement. The preservation of the estate not only meant saving Washington's home and tomb, but also protecting his memory from manipulation by individuals or organizations motivated by profit. Visitors called on politicians to save Mount Vernon and even published suggestions on how to do so. One writer for the *New York Mirror* recommended, "[t]hese grounds should be the property of the nation, never to be sold; but kept as a summer residence of the President of the United States; of course a place where all could visit without trespassing on private property, which is now done to the annoyance of its owners." A writer for the *Boston Mercantile Journal* concurred arguing that, "Mount Vernon should belong to the country; and then every American who makes a pilgrimage to the banks of the Potomac, could claim that as a right."<sup>14</sup>

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February 1838; *Episcopal Reader*, 10 February 1838; 15; 46; *New York Mirror*, 17 February 1838; 15,34; *Alexandria Gazette*, 19 December 1839; Major William Popham to Jane C. Washington, March 14, 1838, Tomb Notebook, Fred W. Smith Library; Jane C. Washington to Major William Popkin, May 24, 1839, Tomb Notebook, FWSL; *Kansas City Star*, 13 January 1912, reprinted from the *New York Times*, 8 January 1912.

<sup>14</sup> *Virginia Herald*, 25 March 1835, reprint of *New York Mirror*, commentary from the *Boston Mercantile Journal*.

Congressional politicians briefly heard the call and in January 1838, the Committee on Public Lands was instructed to “inquire into the expediency of purchasing the Mount Vernon property...for the Government of the United States,” but interest quickly dissipated and the committee was discharged from the assignment. Visitors to Mount Vernon continued to pester Congressional representatives to intervene and save the site on behalf of the American people. There were “almost sacred associations...between the Father of his country who is gone, and his People who remain to revere his memory,” wrote one columnist, concluding that the “[g]eneral Government” should buy the spot “so that it may be in the possession of the people.” As noble as these aspirations were, representatives found little time to worry about the past when there was so much concern for the future. The expansion of the continental United States had sharpened sectional politics drastically, and as Americans headed westward, the issue of slavery transcended all other anxieties about nineteenth-century America. At another major crossroads of American and worldly crises in 1847-8, representatives reflected on their shared historical past and tried to unite a divisive political order by purchasing George Washington’s home and tomb. The Washington family had never displayed any interest in selling the seat of General Washington, but a new proprietor, John Augustine Washington III entertained that notion all while making Mount Vernon more accessible for all Americans.<sup>15</sup>

Born in 1821 to John Augustine and Jane Charlotte Washington, John Augustine Washington III had spent his early childhood at his parents’ Blakeley plantation but moved to Mount Vernon when Bushrod Washington and his wife passed away in 1829.

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<sup>15</sup> *Senate Journal*, 25th Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 5 January 1838 (Washington D.C.: Blair and Rives, 1837), 28, 110; *The Ladies’ Companion*, January 1840; 103.

John Augustine was much more interested in politics, hunting, and agriculture than schoolbooks or higher education, but Jane Charlotte insisted that he attend college after his father's death. Even as he finished his exams, he asked his mother if he could leave the university early and forgo his graduation ceremony with a "proxy to receive" his degree on his behalf. He graduated from the University of Virginia in 1840, and decided to take up residence at Mount Vernon in September 1841 to improve both the farms and the value of the land. His mother decided to let him run the plantation for her, and a year later he entered into a contract with her to manage the property with twenty-two slaves for five hundred dollars per year for seven years.<sup>16</sup>

As early as 1843 rumors began to circulate that private individuals were interested in purchasing Mount Vernon, sparking fears that the American people might be estranged from Washington. According to a correspondent of the *Troy Whig* the estate, consisting of "1,000 acres of land...under poor cultivation, and the buildings much dilapidated," was now available for \$20,000; this also included the coveted tomb of Washington and his gardens. John Augustine, however, had no interest in selling Mount Vernon, nor was it even his to sell. Jane Charlotte still retained ownership of the property from her deceased husband, and as John Augustine settled in at Mount Vernon, he soon realized how difficult improving the value of the estate would be. John Augustine's primary means of income came from wheat and potato production, woodcutting, selling slaves and outsourcing slave labor, and his herring operation on the Potomac River. Soil denigration, poor harvests, incremental weather, and the devastation of crops by insects

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<sup>16</sup> Bushrod Washington and John Augustine Washington Diary, 16 September 1841, Manuscript, Fred W. Smith Library; Ibid, 15 September 1842, Manuscript, FWSL; John Augustine Washington III to Jane Charlotte Washington, May 9, 1839, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

and pests, however, limited his agricultural returns. While he managed to slow Mount Vernon's financial decline, these endeavors were not enough to stop the downward spiral. In addition to facing these hardships, John Augustine also experienced constant interruptions by sightseers, many of whom wanted to meet the living descendent of General George Washington, see the mansion, and ask the slaves and laborers questions about Washington's life.<sup>17</sup>

At first John Augustine Washington followed precedent with the previous proprietors of Mount Vernon in regards to visitors. In May 1842, he instructed an agent to put "notice in [the] Alexandria-Gazette three times a week for one month" prohibiting visitors, and he also asked the agent to "strike off some handbills for this place, as a notice to trespassers." Unwelcomed guests were considered a nuisance to plantation work, but after he took control of the estate from Jane Charlotte, John Augustine gradually changed his tune. He began developing business strategies and selling objects to extract income from tourists. His mother, though no longer living at Mount Vernon, gently reminded John to "take the gardens into [his] hands." In October 1842, he began collecting the garden sales of his slave gardener Phil Smith and giving these profits to his wife Eleanor Love Selden Washington for household expenses. In the calendar year 1843, Phil gave John Augustine Washington \$75.91 from the garden, nearly a year's wages for a laborer and about half a year's salary for a overseer at Mount Vernon.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *The Sun*, 1 July 1843; *The Daily Picayune*, 8 July 1843; *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine*, 8 July 1843; 16, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Bushrod Washington and John Augustine Washington Diary, May 9, 1842, Manuscript, Fred W. Smith Library; *Ibid*, April 6, 1843, Manuscript, FWSL; *Ibid*, December 3, 1843, Manuscript, FWSL; John Augustine Washington Farm Book July 1847-March 1850, September 22, 1847. John Augustine hired a "Robert Tallot" as an overseer "at the rate of \$150 per year."; Jean Lee, "Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount

John Augustine Washington also initially resisted allowing steamboats from landing directly at Mount Vernon. In one publicized instance in 1845, he denied the military corps Lancaster Fencibles from landing because they had arrived on a steamboat, and only allowed them to land after negotiating “terms unnecessarily rigid and contracted.” One editorial commented, “The truth is, the government should purchase the property, and open it, and preserve it for the benefit of the public.” The federal government took up the request again in 1846-7, and reached out to John Augustine Washington to see if the Washington family would be willing to part with Mount Vernon. After five years of running the estate for his mother and having little to show for it, John Augustine jumped at the opportunity, but gave Congress some serious contingencies on behalf of his mother. First, the government could only buy 150 total acres of land, which included the buildings and the tomb. Second, George Washington and every other family member “shall never be removed from their present resting place.” Third, every living Washington retained the right to be buried at Mount Vernon. Fourth, the government “shall never sell, rent, nor give the whole nor any portion of the property that may be conveyed, to any third person.” Fifth, in the event of “a dissolution of the existing Federal Government, the property shall revert to the heirs of John A. Washington.” Finally, the asking price was \$100,000 cash or “United States six per cent stock, running not less than ten, nor more than twenty years, with interest, payable semi-annually.” While the government wished to secure the property on behalf of the people, these were steep terms, and negotiations quickly dissipated.<sup>19</sup>

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Vernon, 1783-1853,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001): 282-286.

<sup>19</sup> *The Weekly Herald*, 12 July 1845; *The Daily Picayune*, 12 October 1847; *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 21 October 1847; *Prisoner’s Friend*, 22 December 1847;

No previous owner of Mount Vernon was willing to publically entertain the idea of selling the property and tomb to the government, and for Americans who had experienced and seen the deterioration of George Washington's world in person and print, their collective voice clamored for government intervention. One writer for the *Daily Picayune* told the story of the agreement to move Washington's body in 1799, the failure to enact it in 1832, and the now decaying appearance of the mansion and grounds, "trampled down by the thoughtless." In this columnist's mind, John Augustine's terms were feasible, concluding, "[a] property which the people regard as public should belong to the public. The United States should own what the people of the United States use as theirs." While there was little doubt that Washington was the property of the nation, there was much more concern over the growing expansion of the nation's property. After nearly two years of war with Mexico, the United States was entering a new sectional crisis. The unpopularity of the war amplified political tensions between anti-war factions and Democrats in Congress. The land grab of the West brought tremendous possibilities for many Americans, but it also polarized the country over the expansion of slavery. America was in a moment of crisis, and as aggressive rhetoric spoke of war and separation, many Americans looked to the past to ameliorate the present.<sup>20</sup>

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2,51; *New York Evangelist*, 23 December 1847; 18,51; *Niles' National Register*; 22 January 1848; 23; 21. In a letter to John Augustine Washington, a "S.P. Lee" discusses the possibility of selling Mount Vernon and suggests the idea that if the Union dissolves, Mount Vernon should be returned to the Washington heirs. See S.P. Lee to John Augustine Washington, March 15, 1846, Fred W. Smith Library. It is also important to note that Jane Charlotte still held possession of the property, so John Augustine was operating on both his and her behalf. See John Augustine Washington to George M. Dallas et al., December 22, 1846, in "Memorial of Citizens of the United States, Praying the purchase of Mount Vernon by the government," 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., Senate Doc. 82, *Miscellaneous Documents Printed by Order of the Senate* (Washington D.C., 1848), 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> *The Daily Picayune*, 19 November 1847.

In January 1848, memorials began arriving in Washington D.C., advocating for the government to save Mount Vernon. Citizens from Apalachicola, Florida; the District of Columbia; and “the United States” writ large sent memorials to Congress, and these were frequently brought to the floors of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Maryland Democrat Robert McLane presented a statement that called upon Congress to pass legislation that would authorize the sale “in order that the grounds of Washington, with the tomb containing his sacred remains, may be kept in a suitable and proper state of preservation, and no longer left subject to the uncertainties and transfers of private property.” Pennsylvania Whig representative George Eckert’s two petitions specified buying not only the estate of Mount Vernon but also “the tomb containing the sacred remains of General Washington.” Even Vice President George Mifflin Dallas offered a memorial of citizen signatures to his colleagues in the Senate.<sup>21</sup>

These petitions for intervention were delegated to the Committee on Military Affairs, where they were considered but always tabled. For many members of Congress, they could not justify spending public funds to purchase Mount Vernon, especially considering Congress had recently donated the land for the Washington Monument on the National Mall. The cornerstone for the monument was laid that summer on the Fourth of

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<sup>21</sup> *Senate Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 28 January 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 39, 139; *Senate Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 10 March 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 39, 208; *Senate Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 30 March 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 39, 246; *Senate Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 31 March 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 39, 247; *Senate Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 4 April 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 39, 254; *House Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 6 April 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 43, 656-7; *Senate Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 7 April 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 39, 260; Jean Lee, “Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001), 288-290.

July 1848, and House Speaker Robert Winthrop took the occasion to remind fellow citizens that, “[t]he extension of our boundaries and the multiplication of our territories are producing, directly and indirectly, among the different members of our political system, so many marked and mourned centrifugal tendencies, let us seize this occasion to renew to each other our vows of allegiance and devotion to the American Union.”

Winthrop asked the gathered crowd of 15,000-20,000 to recognize our “common veneration for his example and his advice,” and that this future monument embodied the idea that all Americans shared the “name and fame of Washington.” Winthrop maintained that Washington knew neither sections nor factions, and all Americans, regardless of political beliefs or sectional allegiance, had the right to revel in the shared glory of George Washington.<sup>22</sup>

While Washington remained a unifying figure of a common past, these celebrations only provided momentary relief from the turbulent political climate. While Americans envisioned westward expansion as vital to the country’s future, northern and southern politicians disagreed over how to organize, appropriate, and govern such a vast

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<sup>22</sup> *Senate Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 10-13 April 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 39, 264-265, 277; *House Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 14 April 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 43, 683; *Senate Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 24 April 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 39, 294; May 3, 310; May 10, 328; *House Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 27 May 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 43, 838; the resolution authorizing the monument in Washington D.C. was passed in the Senate January 24 and in the House January 26; see *House Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 24 January 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 39, 131; *House Journal*, 30<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 26 January 1848 (Washington D.C.: Wendell and Van Benthuyzen, 1847-8), 43, 298; *The Sun*, 28 January 1848; *Trenton State Gazette*, 29 January 1848; *The Daily Picayune*, 2 February 1848; *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 8 February 1848; *The Sun*, 7 July 1848; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 13 July 1848; *Texian Advocate*, 10 August 1848; John Davis of Massachusetts, Lewis Cass of Michigan, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, Willie Mangum of North Carolina, William Maclay of New York, Samuel Phelps of Vermont, Reverdy Johnson and James Pearce of Maryland, Daniel Sturgeon of Pennsylvania, John Crittenden of Kentucky, Albert Greene of Rhode Island, and Speaker of the House Robert Winthrop of Massachusetts all presented petitions on behalf of their constituents to save Mount Vernon.



territory. Politicians argued over whether the federal government or the state governments maintained the right to determine slavery's future in these nascent territories. For most of 1850, parties and factions in Congress struggled to negotiate and settle the question of slavery in the West. Some extremists even proposed secession, hoping that moderate Democrats would rally to their call. Composed of five separate bills, the Compromise of 1850 was eventually pushed through by Senators Henry Clay of Kentucky and Stephen Douglas of Illinois. Texas relinquished its claim of New Mexico in exchange for federal debt relief; California was admitted to the Union as a free state; the slave trade was banned in Washington D.C.; the Utah and New Mexico territories were permitted to decide slavery's future by popular sovereignty; and southern delegates finally disposed of the Wilmot Proviso, an amendment that called for the prohibition of slavery in the American West. While there was something for everyone to dislike about the Compromise, there was enough done to cool passions between factions for the time being. With another political crisis averted, a "majority of both house of Congress" visited Mount Vernon and they were "delighted with their visit to the tomb of Washington." The Compromise of 1850 saved the country, and politicians celebrated the preservation of the Union by paying homage to one of its most ardent advocates.<sup>23</sup>

As the specter of secession and war continued to grow in the 1850s, more Americans looked to their revolutionary past for solutions or justifications. While

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<sup>23</sup> *The Weekly Herald*, 14 September 1850; *New Hampshire Sentinel*, 19 September 1850; *The Independent*, 19 September 1850; 2,94; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 26 September 1850; Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union*, 730-761; Eric H. Walther, *The Shattering of the Union: America in the 1850s* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2004), xvii-xxiv; John C. Waugh, *On the Brink of Civil War: The Compromise of 1850 and How it Changed the Course of American History* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003); William Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionist at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 487-510.

Jefferson, Madison, Adams, and Hamilton were increasingly remembered as more sectional figures, Washington eluded that distinction for most of the nineteenth century, remaining a national icon. But Washington's iconic status prompted both sides to produce versions of Washington that best suited their own sectional interests and causes. Calls for saving Washington's estate and tomb maintained that such an endeavor could bring stability to the republic and ease political rivalries. One columnist suggested, "[e]stablishing...an Agricultural Bureau" on the spot and using the residence as a government building. Another idea suggested turning the estate into a military asylum, but the calculated cost made such a plan unfeasible in the minds of many representatives. One editorial noted, "[i]f Mount Vernon is selected as the site, what more noble guard could the tomb of Washington have than the old soldiers of the Republic?" Another writer recommended making Mount Vernon the summer residence of the President of the United States, but this also failed to generate serious interest in the chambers of Congress.<sup>24</sup>

Rumors surfaced later that year that buyers had approached John Augustine Washington and made substantial offers to purchase the estate privately. According to one correspondent, John Augustine "informed the President that he had been offered \$200,000 for two hundred acres of the estate including Gen. Washington's tomb, and that he should expect the same from the Government of the United States, should it be purchased for a military asylum." While there is no record of a letter between John

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<sup>24</sup> *The Daily Globe*, 27 February 1851; *House Journal*, 31<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 3 March 1851 (Washington D.C.: Printed for the House of Representatives, 1850-1), 46, 440; *The Sun*, 7 March 1851, reprint of *Alexandria Gazette*; *Daily Ohio Statesman*, 13 July 1853. H.L. Scott suggested turning Mount Vernon into a Military Asylum, and W.A. Bradley wrote to John Augustine to inquire if he would be willing to sell 150 to 200 acres. See W.A. Bradley to John Augustine, June 25, 1852, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library.

Augustine and President Millard Fillmore, the publicized asking price was now double Jane Charlotte's 1847 offer. Real or not, John Augustine did not sell, and two years later New York Whig representative Russell Sage introduced a resolution to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, who first needed to obtain "the consent of the State of Virginia," to inquire about purchasing Mount Vernon. Democrat Thomas Bayly of Virginia attempted to table the resolution but representatives denied this motion in a close vote, 103-97. Representatives began to debate whether or not this was necessary, where the money should come from, and how Washington would have reacted to such a plan. Democrat William Churchwell of Tennessee wondered aloud if Virginia would even allow such a purchase. Bayly designated himself the official spokesman for the Commonwealth and replied, "I can answer...with great confidence, that she [Virginia] will not cede her jurisdiction over any part of her soil to the General Government, except for those purposes which the Constitution provides for; and those purposes are defined in the Constitution." Ohio Whig Lewis Campbell retorted that Bayly was not the "exclusive guardian" of Virginia and questioned his authority to make such bold claims. His Free Soiler colleague from Ohio Joshua Giddings wondered if the Wilmot Proviso might apply to Mount Vernon, touching off another debate over the authority of the government and the regulation of slavery.<sup>25</sup>

Whig representative Richard Yates of Illinois suggested striking out the phrase that asked for Virginia's permission reasoning that, "[t]his is not public property, but private. Let us buy the property first. It belongs to the Union. The fame of Washington belongs to the country." His colleague from Illinois, Democrat William Richardson,

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<sup>25</sup> *Daily Ohio Statesman*, 12 May 1851; *House Journal*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 15 December 1853 (Washington D.C.: Robert Armstrong, 1853), 49, 100; *The Daily Globe*, 15 December 1853.

warned that if the government proceeded with this mission to safeguard historic places, similar treatment would be expected for battle sites and all the residences of former presidents. Richardson argued that this was a slippery slope for government intervention on behalf of the public, one that the Treasury could not afford in the long term. Lewis Campbell of Ohio stood up and asked Richardson if he had previously voted in favor of an equestrian statue for General Andrew Jackson, to which Richardson replied he did not remember. Laughter echoed in the chamber, easing some of the tensions over the proposal. The House tabled the motion and dismissed for the day. While nothing was done, it was enough to convince Virginia Governor Joseph Johnson to call upon his fellow state legislators to consider purchasing Mount Vernon in order to turn it into an agricultural school.<sup>26</sup>

Disputes over constitutional authority, state sovereignty, and federal funding always seemed to doom any and all efforts to secure Washington's tomb for the people of the United States. While Congressional politicians agreed on the significance of Washington to the country, they struggled to overcome the ideological and sectional politics of the 1850s. Oppositional factions began to coalesce against the Democratic Party, and by the end of the decade the Republican Party emerged to challenge it for control of the federal government and the country's future. The polarization of Congress made even the simplest tasks difficult, especially when issues involved the federal government's authority and the sovereignty of an individual state. The repeated failings

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<sup>26</sup> *The Daily Globe*, 15 December 1853; *House Journal*, 33<sup>rd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 20 December 1853 (Washington D.C.: Robert Armstrong, 1853), 49, 120; *The Daily Globe*, 16 December 1853; *The Weekly Herald*, 17 December 1853; *The National Era*, 29 December 1853; 7, 365; Jean Lee, "Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001): 292-293.

of these men, however, gave another organization an opportunity save Mount Vernon for the people and the American nation.

This group, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union, was unencumbered by political or regional allegiances and motivated by patriotism and love for country. These women, however, were not immune to the political rivalries and cultural differences that dominated American society. The story of their triumph illuminates how women moved between private and public roles, arguing that only ladies should possess, preserve, and maintain George Washington's home on behalf of the country. With no political recognition or rights as citizens, they found agency in the public sphere by operating between two centers of political power, the federal government and the state of Virginia. Their negotiation with the Washington family and recognition as a preservation movement gave them both unprecedented autonomy and credibility in pursuit of Washington's home and tomb.

The founder of the movement, Ann Pamela Cunningham, was born August 15, 1816, at Rosemont plantation in South Carolina. As a member the South Carolina gentry, Ann received the "proper" education and etiquette training for a soon-to-be southern lady. She was particularly fond of horseback riding, but after being thrown from her horse in her adolescence, Ann experienced chronic discomfort and bodily pain for the rest of her life. She frequently received medical treatments for her spinal injury from Dr. Hugo Hodge in Philadelphia, and her mother Louisa often accompanied her on these long trips. In 1853, Louisa was traveling back to South Carolina on a steamship and awoke to the tolling of the ship's bell in the middle of the night. She looked outside her window and saw Mount Vernon in such a terrible state that she later wrote to her daughter, "I was

painfully distressed at the ruin and desolation of the home of Washington, and the thought passed through my mind: Why was it that the women of his country did not try to keep it in repair, if the men could not do it?" Determined to overcome her own bodily anguish and find purpose in her life, Ann Pamela took up her mother's cause to save Mount Vernon.<sup>27</sup>

Cunningham first called on the ladies of the American South to step forward and save George Washington's home. In her December 1853 letter to the *Charleston Mercury*, she encouraged the women of the South to purchase Mount Vernon and give it to the state of Virginia. Signed "A Southern Matron," Cunningham remained anonymous in her cry, but she framed the effort as a patriotic duty, one that southern women must pursue on behalf of the people. Citing her belief in what Linda Kerber has called republican motherhood, Cunningham argued that women were vital to the stability and prosperity of the country, as they educated and distilled a sense of patriotism to future citizens. The governmental failures to save George Washington's home signified a breakdown in this ideology, and in order to correct the imbalance, women needed to step beyond their homes, churches, and schools and onto the national stage. Preservation of Washington's home meant more than simply saving a series of dilapidated buildings and a crumbling tomb; it meant redeeming the place that so many Americans cherished as a

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<sup>27</sup> Elswyth Thane, *Mount Vernon is Ours: The Story of its Preservation* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1966), 16; Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 6-7; Dorothy Muir, *Presence of a Lady: Mount Vernon, 1861-1868* (Washington D.C.: Mount Vernon Publishing Company, 1948), 7-8; Scott Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine* (New York: Hill and Wang Press, 2008), 69; Jean Lee, "Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001): 293; Paul Wilstach, *Mount Vernon: Washington's Home and the Nation's Shrine* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1916), 254-259.

site of their national history. It was now considered a civic responsibility to do so, and southern women rallied to the Southern Matron's proclamation.<sup>28</sup>

As Cunningham began to coordinate fundraising ventures, she reached out to John Augustine Washington's wife Eleanor Love Seldon, using the unsubstantiated rumors of sale as an excuse to inquire as an equally interested potential buyer. As soon as she had heard "Mount Vernon was to pass into the hands of capitalists," she was compelled to write the Washington family directly and describe her appeal to the "Southern ladies." In her own assessment, "[c]ould any act be more interesting than the ladies of his land, consecrating as it were, his home and grave, installing sanctity and repose around it forever!" Eleanor was touched by Cunningham's sentiments, but informed her that her husband John Augustine Washington "thinks there are practical difficulties in the execution of the plan" proposed. Eleanor mentioned that the state of Virginia was

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<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 124-125. Cunningham's letter is dated 2 December 1853, *Charleston Mercury*; Joseph Johnson to John H. Gilmer, June 7, 1854, Manuscript, Fred W. Smith Library. Gilmer was also acting on behalf of Cunningham, who remained in South Carolina during the first convention. See John H. Gilmer to Ann Pamela Cunningham, June 21, 1854, Manuscript, FWSL; Jean Lee, "Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001): 299-300; for more on republican motherhood, see Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 11-12, 200; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 243, 295-299. While more recent scholarship has challenged the idea that women were believers in such an ideology, Cunningham used it as an argument to justify her entrance into the public sphere, which was not a new phenomenon. Women advocates of various causes such as suffrage, abolitionism, postmillennialism, and temperance used the idea of republican motherhood to challenge the existing political and social order in the nineteenth century, and assert their place in the public sphere as actors shaping policy and legislation. See Margaret Nash, "Rethinking Republican Motherhood: Benjamin Rush and the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 171-191; Cynthia Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Pauline Schloesser, *The Fair Sex: White Women and Racial Patriarchy in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

currently considering the purchase of Mount Vernon, and her husband thought it disrespectful to “entertain offers from any other quarter, until Virginia shall have decided what course she shall pursue, and should she decline it, it is improbable under existing circumstances that he would feel inclined to dispose of the property, unless to the Government of the United States.” Denied but not deterred, Ann Pamela realized that an informal coalition of women would not receive the attention they deserved. Cunningham needed the power of an organized association, one composed of dedicated women who could fundraise within their own communities and states, increase access to membership, shape public opinion, and secure patronage from local and state politicians.<sup>29</sup>

Cunningham originally appealed to southern women with anti-North rhetoric, warning that if nothing were done, Mount Vernon would be vulnerable to speculation and exploitation. She connected these capitalistic impulses to the commercial Northeast, and labeled representatives in the national government as pawns of industry fixated on profits instead of patriotism. Only the virtuous, caring, selfless women of the South could save Mount Vernon, and as such Cunningham exclusively sought the sectional support of southern women. Inspired by Cunningham’s message, groups of women began meeting

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<sup>29</sup> Ann Pamela Cunningham to Eleanor Love Selden Washington, December 19, 1853, Manuscript, Fred W. Smith Library; Eleanor Love Selden Washington to Ann Pamela Cunningham, January 10, 1854, Manuscript, FWSL. Rumors of a private sale began to circulate in the summer of 1853. See *The Sun*, 16 June 1853; *The Daily Picayune*, 21 June 1853; *New Hampshire Patriot*, 22 June 1853; *Weekly Herald*, 13 August 1853; *Farmer’s Cabinet*, 1 September 1853; The Virginia Legislature’s Special Committee on Mount Vernon informed John Augustine that they would purchase the estate for \$200,000, but over a period of four years. In a response, John declined, remarking that such a proposal would lose him \$18,000 in interest. See Virginia Legislature to John Augustine Washington, January 10, 1854, and John Augustine Washington to Virginia Legislature, January 16, 1854, Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library. They then offered \$182,000 on his financing terms, but John declined. See John Augustine Washington to Arthur Taylor, January 19, 1853, MVLA Collection, FWSL. For more on the private offers, see John Augustine Washington to Lewis McKenzie, January 6, 1854, MVLA Collection, FWSL; for more on transitioning to a business organization, see John Gilmer to Ann Pamela Cunningham, August 4, 1854, MVLA Collection, FWSL.



in Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina by the summer of 1854. The first official meeting of the Virginia Mount Vernon Association took place that year on July 12 in Richmond, Virginia. Those present elected Julia Mayor Cabell as chair, and John H. Gilmer as Corresponding Secretary, directing him to open communications with John Augustine Washington and Virginia Governor Joseph Johnson. Gilmer sent the meeting's proceedings and the association's constitution for John Augustine's review, hoping to entice the proprietor to consider selling to this nascent organization. John Augustine denied the proposed sale later that year, informing Gilmer that he worried that a private organization might turn Mount Vernon into a "great battle ground for pro and anti-slavery" factions. John Augustine much preferred that the Virginia legislature buy the property so his great-grand uncle would "forever rest secure under the Flag of his prime."<sup>30</sup>

As northern presses and publications printed the appeal of the southern ladies, women of the North began their own appeal to Cunningham for inclusion. Elizabeth Whitney Milward of Philadelphia applauded the early efforts of the southern ladies, as she herself feared that "Mount Vernon with the sacred ashes our Washington," might be "permitted to pass into the hands of speculating private individuals." She asked Ann,

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<sup>30</sup> West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, 8-9; Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*, 125; Wilstach, *Mount Vernon: Washington's Home and the Nation's Shrine*, 258; *The Sun*, 27 July 1854; "Minutes of Formative Meeting of the Virginia Central Mt. Vernon Association," July 12, 1854, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; John H. Gilmer to John Augustine Washington, July 14, 1854, Manuscript, FWSL; John H. Gilmer to Ann Pamela Cunningham, August 4, 1854, Manuscript, FWSL; John Augustine Washington to John H. Gilmer, August 21, 1854, Manuscript, FWSL; *The Sun*, 15 December 1854; *The Daily Globe*, 20 December 1854; *Trenton State Gazette*, 20 December 1854; *Weekly Patriot and Union*, 30 December 1854; In one letter, John Augustine mentions that he has received Ann's letters of September 30 and October 21, asking if he would be willing to sell Mount Vernon. Again, he maintained that he only wished to sell to either the state of Virginia or the United States government. See John Augustine Washington to Ann Pamela Cunningham, October 28, 1854, Manuscript, Fred W. Smith Library.

however, for “subscription papers with directions how to proceed in procuring aid” for the cause. She assured Cunningham that the women of the North could be valuable to her crusade, as she had recently discussed such involvement with “a lady from Albany, New York...she is a lady of position and influence, and when in possession of the requested papers will proceed in the good work.” Milward articulated that these women shared a revolutionary past, one where “[o]ur fathers fought side by side in a common cause, and why should we strive to destroy the rich legacy transmitted to us” in such a worthy cause. While some southern women disagreed with the decision, Cunningham opted to include northern women in the campaign to save Mount Vernon. Gilmer warned that working with northern women would be perceived as an “unholy alliance” and would “open the flood gates of sectional animosity,” but Cunningham ignored his opinions. Perhaps it was more out of financial necessity than anything else, but she quickly realized that northern women had the ears of the same greedy capitalists she indicted in her original declaration. By democratizing membership to the MVLA, Cunningham reinforced the belief that Washington belonged to all Americans and not just southern women.<sup>31</sup>

Cunningham began to craft an organizational hierarchy that ironically resembled the federalist system that she (and the South writ large) had come to detest. Each state would create its own committee and elect a president as its national representative. This woman would be responsible for fundraising, soliciting new members, and reporting their

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<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Whitney Milward to Ann Pamela Cunningham, June 14, 1854, Manuscript, FWSL. The underlined portions are featured in Milward’s letter; West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums*, 10; John H. Gilmer to Ann Pamela Cunningham, June 21, 1854, Manuscript, Fred W. Smith Library; Gilmer also advised Cunningham to let him handle the negotiations with John Augustine Washington, but eventually she went directly to Mount Vernon to discuss a sale. See John Gilmer to Ann Pamela Cunningham, August 9, 1854, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, FWSL.

progress to the authoritative “Central Committee of the Union” led by Cunningham. Appealing to the “[s]isters of the Union,” Cunningham’s next public statement as the *Southern Matron* was much more inclusive of all women, stating “[w]hile we express our heartfelt appreciation of these acts, we embrace this opportunity of publicly announcing, we neither desire nor intend sectionality.” The South, she argued, felt obligated by female civic virtue to intervene and save Mount Vernon, but the outpouring of support from patriotic northern women convinced her that a national movement was not just possible but necessary. “We feel none [sectional animosity] to those whose patriotism knows no North, South, East, or West. We extend a cordial welcome to all such who approve our undertaking as placed before them and desire to aid in its success, and hope to see them from the remotest sections of our country gathered within the folds of this ‘glorious enterprise!’” By opening the organization to northern women and allowing them to vote for their national representatives, Cunningham’s semi-democratic movement gained traction and attracted women from across the country to participate in saving Mount Vernon for all Americans.<sup>32</sup>

While committees of women grew in the north and west, the Virginian chapter of ladies misunderstood Cunningham’s efforts to reorganize the Central Committee. They believed that Cunningham had made their Richmond contingent the Central Committee, and drew on their newly delegated authority to draft a new constitution and elect

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<sup>32</sup> Ann Pamela Cunningham, “An Appeal for Mount Vernon by the Mount Vernon Association of the Union,” *Washington Circular*, 24 November 1854, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, FWSL; Ann Pamela Cunningham, ““The Southern Matron’s Letter to Virginia,” Addressed to Mr. Gilmer, Corresponding Secretary of the Mt. Vernon Association,” *Southern Literary Messenger*, May 1855; 21, 5; 318-325; Jean Lee, “Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001): 296; In a letter, Cunningham herself even compared the Central Committee to the structure of the federal government. See Ann Pamela Cunningham to John Gilmer, January 29, 1855, MVLA, FWSL.

representatives. Cunningham intended that the Central Committee would include her own appointees and herself at the helm. She chastised the Richmond ladies for their misinterpretation, forcing them to nullify their constitution and form a state committee instead. As the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association began to take shape, Cunningham proposed seeking a legislative charter from the state of Virginia. This political recognition would not only make the association more credible but also ensure that Mount Vernon forever remained out of the hands of politicians. This was also done to appease fears that nationwide donations would go to the Virginia treasury instead of the association for the purchase. Cunningham credited John McPherson Berrien of Georgia with the idea, but he did not live to see the charter's final draft. Unionist James Louis Petigru of South Carolina assisted in finishing the proposal, and he strongly urged Cunningham to consider adding the phrase "of the Union" to the association's title. Ann agreed, and the Virginia legislature received the application in March 1856.<sup>33</sup>

While donations from across the country trickled into the association's coffers, Cunningham directed her established colleagues in Virginia to promote the mission of the organization amongst local and state politicians. Virginia State Committee Vice President Susan Pellet and Central Committee Vice President Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie were instrumental in securing political support for the association and the state charter. Ritchie, a nationally acclaimed actress and wife of William Ritchie, editor of the

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<sup>33</sup> Ladies of the Mount Vernon Central Committee to Ann Pamela Cunningham, July 18, 1855, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*, 126-127; West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, 11-12; Wilstach, *Mount Vernon: Washington's Home and the Nation's Shrine*, 259; By summer 1855, more and more associations of women were sprouting up in Northern communities. See *The Pittsfield Sun*, 23 August 1855; *The Trenton State Gazette*, 20 October 1855; *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 31 October 1855; *Farmer's Cabinet*, 6 December 1855.

*Richmond Enquirer*, operated extensively within her husband's political circle for support and funds on behalf of the organization. In February 1855, she informed Cunningham that, "Mr. Mage and Mr. Thompson (Editor of Literary Messenger) are both expected to deliver our address" to the wider public, a service that was "very important for it will call attention to the efforts" of the ladies. In a letter to Cunningham, Ritchie quipped about Pellet's willingness to make "capital out of my name (Ritchie I mean) whenever we found ourselves amongst democrats." As the charter found its way to the floor of the Virginia legislature, the Ritchies decided to throw a social, inviting many legislators to their home for dinner and conversation. Ritchie and Pellet reminded the guests, most notably former Governor John Floyd, of the association's purpose, and that their political support for recognition could determine the fate of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. By playing the game of political deference, the ladies maintained that the organization only wished to secure Mount Vernon for the American people.<sup>34</sup>

On March 17, 1856, the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate confirmed the charter of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union, incorporating it as a Virginia organization authorized to purchase Mount Vernon. This charter permitted the ladies to charge twenty-five cents per visitor over the age of ten, allowed the Washington family to retain the right to family burials, and agreed to cede the site to the state of Virginia in the event that the association disbanded, a clause that denied any possibility that the federal government might someday own Mount Vernon. Money for the purchase

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<sup>34</sup> Anna Cora Ritchie to Ann Pamela Cunningham, February 19, 1855, Manuscript, Fred W. Smith Library. Cunningham appealed to Ritchie to use her talents in the cause. See Ann Pamela Cunningham to Anna Cora Ritchie, January 4, 1855, Mount Vernon Ladies Collection, FSWL; Anna Cora Ritchie to Ann Pamela Cunningham, June 18, 1855, Manuscript, FWSL; Anna Cora Ritchie to Ann Pamela Cunningham, March 17, 1856, Manuscript, FWSL; Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*, 129.

would reside in the State Treasury, and the Governor of Virginia was authorized to appoint a board of five commissioners to work with the MVLA. “The said association is hereby declared and made a body politic and corporate,” proclaimed the charter’s final section. Julia Mayo Cabell, President of the Virginia State Committee, conveyed her excitement and exhaustion to Cunningham, “I never worked harder in my life to accomplish a purpose than I did for that.” Despite these political successes, John Augustine Washington III rejected the charter in April 1856, maintaining his position that he would not sell to a private organization. One columnist accused Washington of “cold speculation” from the start, pitting governments and their offers against one another to drive up his asking price. “The Ladies’ Mount Vernon Association are compelled to deal with a huckster for the privilege of consecrating the burial-place of Washington,” lamented the *Charleston Mercury*. With the first goal of political recognition achieved, the MVLA turned their attention to fundraising and persuading John Augustine to reconsider his stance.<sup>35</sup>

Cunningham solidified her control of the Association in April 1856, unanimously selected as President of the Central Committee in Richmond. Her second in command, Anna Cora Ritchie, was chosen as one of nine vice presidents, most of whom hailed from the state of Virginia and were the wives of prominent Virginia politicians and editors. In addition to Ritchie’s *Richmond Enquirer*, the ladies also had the attention of the *Southern Literary Messenger*. The editor, Benjamin Blake Minor, was the husband of Virginian

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<sup>35</sup> *Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia: Passed in 1855-6, in the Eightieth Year of the Commonwealth*, 17 March 1856 (Richmond: William Ritchie, 1856), 209-210; *The Daily Globe*, 24 March 1856; *The Sun*, 24 March 1856; *The Daily Picayune*, 14 April 1856; “Editor’s Table: The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association of the Union,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine*, June 1856; 52, 557; Julia Mayo Cabell to Ann Pamela Cunningham, April 18, 1856, Manuscript, Fred W. Smith Library; *The Weekly Herald*, 26 April 1856; *The Charleston Mercury*, 1 May 1856.

Maury Otey, one of Cunningham's handpicked vice presidents. They also secured future publication of their progress in the monthly periodical *Godey's Lady's Magazine*, which boasted a circulation of 150,000 readers by 1860. The editor of *Godey's*, Sarah Josepha Hale, publicized the association to more American women and invited its readers to contribute to "this grand effort of national patriotism." The ladies circulated pamphlets and appeals for distribution as well, hoping to reach as many subscribers as possible. This effort to market the cause to all Americans resonated with the people, as they took up collections, gave donations, and solicited aid on the organization's behalf.<sup>36</sup>

With the organization in place and their mission marketed to more women than ever before, the MVLA continued to use political networks to garner support from prominent orators and politicians. The most famous was Edward Everett, a well-respected pastor, statesman, and previous President of Harvard University. In 1853, Everett fully agreed that, "Mount Vernon ought to become public property." As the Virginian women were preparing for the upcoming vote on their charter, they invited him to give his oration on the "Life and Services of Washington." He gave his speech "before the Ladies' Mount Vernon Association" at a local Baptist church on March 19, 1856, two days after the Virginia legislature approved the association's charter. Ritchie's *Enquirer* remarked that Everett came from Washington by the fine steamer "Mount Vernon, passing the home and grave of Washington. This is a beautiful coincidence, taken in connection with the holy purpose of Mr. E's visit to this city." This was the first meeting

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<sup>36</sup> "Editor's Table: The Ladies' Mount Vernon Association," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, August 1855; 51, 177; Kathleen L. Endres, Therese L. Lueck, *Women's Periodicals in the United States: Consumer Magazines* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1995), 113-117.; Elizabeth Walton to Ann Pamela Cunningham, February 14, 1856, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, FWSL.

of Everett and Cunningham, and she persuaded him to not only give more lectures across the country but also donate the proceeds of his lectures to the ladies.<sup>37</sup>

For several years in the late 1850s Everett traveled the country giving his oration, imploring spectators to show deference to Washington's memory by donating to the MVLA. His speeches were eloquent and passionate, and critics gave him rave reviews for his performances. Shortly after his speech in Richmond, Everett was invited to give the same address in Albany, New York. By spring 1857, he had delivered his oration "eighteen times for the exclusive benefit of the Mount Vernon fund." In one Boston performance, he raised "\$1,263.37" for the cause. In Brooklyn New York, he netted \$1,150. At St. Louis, his speech secured "more than One Thousand Dollars." In Cleveland Ohio, he gave his lecture "to the largest audience that ever assembled in Cleveland, to hear any lecturer." One newspaper columnist calculated that his lectures had raised "nearly \$14,000" for the ladies, but Everett was not done yet. By July 1857, one newspaper estimated that he had procured nearly "\$25,000 to be devoted to the purchase of the Mount Vernon estate." In sum, Everett lectured 137 times during these three years and published 53 articles in the *New York Ledger* to promote the crusade. His ticket sales and earnings amassed to \$69,024—a staggering amount and more than a third

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<sup>37</sup> *Daily Alabama Journal*, 22 August 1853; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 28 February 1856; *Trenton State Gazette*, 1 March 1856; *The Sun*, 13 March 1856; *The Sun*, 19 March 1856, reprint of *Richmond Enquirer*; *The Sun*, 28 March 1856; "Editor's Cable," *The Southern Literary Messenger*, April 1856; 22, 4, 317; Ronald Reid, *Edward Everett: Unionist Orator* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990), 147-173; Paul Varg, *Edward Everett: The Intellectual in the Turmoil of Politics* (London: Associated University Presses, 1992), 126-139, 177-180; Richard Katula, *The Eloquence of Edward Everett: America's Greatest Orator* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2010), 94-107; Edward Everett, *Orations and Speeches on Various Occasions*, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1868), 4, 3-6; Wilstach, *Mount Vernon: Washington's Home and the Nation's Shrine*, 260.



of John Augustine's \$200,000 asking price. Cunningham also persuaded Everett to personally reach out to John Augustine and consider selling the property to the MVLA.<sup>38</sup>

Cunningham had some reservations about using Everett to drum up popular support for the MVLA. She feared that once men heard Everett's appeal and contributed to the sale, they would be more inclined to enter the fray as competitors for control of the association. Anna Cora Ritchie disagreed with her mentor, arguing that a male presence further legitimized the movement and gave the association a greater ability to reach more potential subscribers, both male and female. Everett's orations were creating networks of donors across the country, and so long as he continued to secure funds for the association,

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<sup>38</sup> *The Daily Globe*, 6 December 1856; *The Sun*, 6 December 1856; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 19 March 1857; *The Farmer's Cabinet*, 26 February 1857, reprint of information from *Richmond Enquirer*. This article maintained the "Everett has already placed in hands of the trustees, \$12,008 at 7 per cent interest, and \$5000 at 6 per cent—the proceeds of his oration—for the benefit of the Mount Vernon fund." See also "Editorial Melange," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing*, 21 March 1857; 12, 12, 191; *Charleston Mercury*, 19 May 1857. This is an invite for Everett to speak in Charleston, South Carolina; "Article 1—No Title," *The Southern Literary Messenger*, May 1857; 24, 5, 393; Nicholas Umsted, "Edward Everett: Man and His Inventions," *Ohio Farmer*, 24 October 1857; 6, 43, 170; *Times-Picayune*, 17 July 1857; Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*, 129-130; In *A Historical Sketch of Ann Pamela Cunningham "The Southern Matron,"* they estimate Everett's donations as \$69,064. See Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union, *A Historical Sketch of Ann Pamela Cunningham "The Southern Matron,"* (New York: Marion Press, 1903), 9. Everett's articles were procured by Robert E. Bonner, owner of the *New York Ledger*, for \$10,000, which was given to the MVLA. See *The Sun*, 13 November 1858; *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 17 November 1858; *The Daily Confederation*, 22 November 1858; *The Sun*, 27 November 1858; West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, 16-17; In addition to Everett, William Lowndes Yancy, Cunningham's cousin and ardent secessionist, also contributed sales from his lectures to the Mount Vernon Fund. In a letter between Pellet and Cunningham, Pellet tells her that Yancy sent \$1024.75 in the month of August 1857. See Susan Pellet to Ann Pamela Cunningham, August 29, 1857, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library. His orations were more sectional in nature, as he promoted the idea that the South produced the heroes of the Revolution and it was their duty to protect the memory of their brethren from Northern manipulation. Everett and Yancy's versions of Washington were crafted for their audiences, and serve as good examples of the early memory warfare that both sides employed during the Civil War; Reid, *Edward Everett: Unionist Orator*, 147, 179; Katula, *The Eloquence of Edward Everett: America's Greatest Orator*, 96-97; William Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 528; Edward Everett to Ann Pamela Cunningham, December 26, 1856, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library.

he remained an integral part of the fundraising process. He highlighted Washington's virtue and love for country, striking a nostalgic nerve in the hearts of Americans everywhere. The cause was not solely for the benefit of the ladies or even George Washington himself, but for the American people and the nation, "North, South, East, and West." During a dinner in Boston in July 1858, Everett reminded his fellow "citizens of Boston" that Washington reluctantly took command of the army and fought "to restore to our fathers their ancient and beloved native town." In Everett's opinion, it was time to return the favor, as Washington's voice "calls upon us, East and West, North and South, as the brethren of one great household." Near the end of his lecture, Everett always reminded audiences that, "Washington in the flesh is taken from us; we shall never behold him as our fathers did; but his memory remains, and I say, let us hang to his memory." His ability to use nostalgia to connect his audience with Washington was unparalleled, and without his lectures the MVLA would have struggled mightily in their quest.<sup>39</sup>

While Everett and the ladies promoted democratic participation in saving Mount Vernon, sectional politics dominated the halls of Congress. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 had not only opened the western territories of the continental United States for settlement, but it also left the pressing question of slavery to the states. Popular

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<sup>39</sup> Anna Cora Ritchie to Ann Pamela Cunningham, May 18, 1856, Manuscript, FWSL; "Aid to the Mount Vernon Fund," *Lady's Home Magazine*, July 1858; 12, 52; "Miscellaneous: Another Eulogy on Washington," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 15 July 1858; 36, 28, 221; Reid, *Edward Everett: Unionist Orator*, 147, 173; Katula, *The Eloquence of Edward Everett: America's Greatest Orator*, 83-85. While Everett's tours made purchasing Mount Vernon possible, he also became a target of attack from both northern and southern presses. Northern presses assailed him for helping southern ladies, and southern presses branded him as a radical abolitionist. See Edward Everett to Anna Cora Ritchie, June 25, 1856, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library. Cunningham encouraged him to tour in the South as well; see Ann Pamela Cunningham to Edward Everett, September 1856, MVLA, FWSL.

sovereignty was especially attractive to southern and western delegates in Congress and the issue split the northern Democratic contingent in favor of the legislation. By opening the lands and leaving slavery's fate to residential voters, pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers rushed into the territories, hoping to acquire property and decide the slavery question themselves. Violence broke out between factions, and territorial governors struggled to keep the peace between citizens. Word of the atrocities reached Washington D.C. and opponents of the bill, most notably Horace Greeley, branded the turn of events as "Bleeding Kansas." This marked a turning point for sectional politics, one that nullified the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and resulted in a short preview of what laid ahead for America.<sup>40</sup>

In the Virginia legislature another sectional conflict weakened the association's network of political patronage. The Democratic Party of Virginia was split into two factions, one led by Governor Henry Wise and the other by Senator Robert Mercer Taliaferro Hunter. Wise was considered the leader of the party in the 1850s, and he had actively supported the MVLA in their cause. Hungry to usurp Wise, Hunter positioned himself against the Governor and attacked him and the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association in the press. Roger Pryor, the editor of *The South* and avid Hunter enthusiast, criticized the Association for asking for public funds to pay for Mount

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<sup>40</sup> Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Elizabeth Varon, *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 266-268; Peter Knupfer, *The Union As It Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 202-207; Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionist at Bay, 1776-1854*, 536-565; Eric H. Walther, *The Shattering of the Union: America in the 1850s* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2004), 39-60; Don E. Fehrenbahr, *The South and Three Sectional Crises* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 45-65; David Potter, *The South and the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 138-140.

Vernon. He branded it a “Mount Vernon humbug,” accusing John Augustine Washington and the ladies of exploiting patriotism to make a profit. Pryor pounced on the revised charter submitted to the Virginia Legislature by the ladies in 1858, which proposed that the state pay Washington the \$200,000 and would be repaid by the Association in installments. He also lambasted Everett’s speaking tour, reminding readers of his abolitionist ties to the North’s fanatical wish to destroy the southern way of life. While the organization had advocated for national inclusion, Pryor accused the organization of embracing Everett’s political beliefs and betraying Washington’s true memory as a Virginian.<sup>41</sup>

The failure of the revised charter in the Virginia legislature can be credited to both the loss of political allies and Pryor’s negative criticisms in the press. However, this ensured that if the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association of the Union procured the funds, they would possess the estate and tomb in perpetuity. The better news was that the failure of the revised charter convinced John Augustine that Virginia was too enmeshed in factional rivalry to follow through, and he agreed to sell Mount Vernon directly to the ladies, signing a contract with the Association on April 6, 1858. In his reply to Cunningham, Washington regretted the disappointments of Virginia and the United States to secure possession of the estate, but felt reassured that, “[t]he women of the land will be the safest—as they will certainly be the purest—guardians of a national shrine.”

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<sup>41</sup> *The South*, 26 January, 1858; *The South*, 1 February, 1858; *The South*, 11 February, 1858; Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*, 130-131; West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums*, 20-23; William Link, *The Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 168-176; Craig Simpson, *A Good Southerner: The Life of Henry A. Wise of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). Wise refused to assist the organization in any way going back to 1855. See H.C. Harrison to Ann Pamela Cunningham, December 11, 1855, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library.

Commentators praised the ladies for their efforts and for giving “the American people the privilege of making the Home and Grave of Washington *property of the nation!*”

Washington negotiated the terms of the contract with two male representatives of the association, William Mcfarland and Augustus Alexandria Chapman. The association agreed to pay \$200,000 with interest for “two hundred acres of land, including the mansion, gardens, landing place, and, above all, the tomb.” They paid him \$18,000 as a down payment, the rest to be paid in four annual installments with the option to pay off the balance early. Even with her goal accomplished, Cunningham began thinking beyond the sale and more about how Mount Vernon might be used to preserve the faltering Union. “Our country can be saved,” she wrote, “one and indissoluble forever, for woman has become her guardian spirit.” While the MVLA could not prevent civil war, its leaders articulated that Mount Vernon was the saving grace of a dying union, a sacred place that could reunite Americans and remind them of their shared heritage and national founding.<sup>42</sup>

While most Americans were relieved that Mount Vernon would be saved, criticism of John Augustine Washington continued until he vacated the home of his illustrious ancestor. One correspondent for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted, he “[g]ets a

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<sup>42</sup> *The Daily Globe*, 5 April 1858, reprint of *Richmond Enquirer*; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 8 April 1858; *The Daily Ohio Statesman*, 9 April 1858; *The Sun*, 15 April 1858; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 19 March 1858, printed response of John Augustine Washington to Ann Pamela Cunningham, 19 March 1858; *The Charleston Mercury*, 26 April 1858; the charter was eventually passed by the Virginia Legislature on March 22, 1858, but Virginia’s failure to pass the initial bill convinced John Augustine Washington that the best course of action was to sell to the MVLA. The charter passed when the state’s role was minimized in the purchase thanks to Pryor and Hunter’s politicking. See *Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth, 1857-1858* (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia, 1828-) 437, 463, 479. It was originally rejected 29-57 by representatives, and then passed on March 17, 1858. The state Senate approved the measure on March 22, 1858. See Susan Pellet and Ann Pamela Cunningham to John Augustine Washington, March 3, 1858, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library.

thousand dollars an acre for land not intrinsically worth twenty...then retains possession and occupancy of the premises until the last dollar of the purchase money is paid...so that he is to live rent free at the mansion...[and] gets fifty thousand dollars more in the shape of interest.” The columnist concluded, “[i]f this is not trafficking in the sacred dust of his ancestor, I know not what else to call it.” Another editorial for the *Charleston Mercury* printed a rumor that Washington planned to “remove the remains” of George Washington to sell them to “some curious anatomist” before the ladies acquired the tomb. While there was no truth to this accusation, another correspondent reassured readers that the agreement between the MVLA and Washington had secured possession of the remains, and any effort to remove them would bring legal consequences to the Washington family and its reputation.<sup>43</sup>

The MVLA also offered affordable incentives for potential donors to aid the cause of restoration. Copies of the “oil Portrait of the Father of his Country” by Gilbert Stuart were offered in exchange for one dollar and club registration with the state auxiliaries. Mrs. Mary Rutledge of Nashville, Tennessee reported to Cunningham in January 1857 that she had sold 275 portraits and hoped to order more. A month later Mrs. C.P. Speed sold 200-275 pictures on behalf of the Association in Lynchburg, Virginia. Spontaneous groups of men and women, united in reverence, could join the MVLA as a smaller chapter under the jurisdiction of the state’s vice regent. The association also began publishing *The Mount Vernon Record* in Philadelphia, a monthly periodical designed to sustain public interest in Washington, educate the populace about Washington’s life, and articulate the new organizational goal of preservation. These reports also printed the

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<sup>43</sup> *The Charleston Mercury*, 1 May 1858, reprint of *Philadelphia Inquirer*; *Charleston Mercury*, 2 August 1858; *Weekly Patriot and Union*, 5 August 1858.

names of contributors and their donations, an expression of public gratitude that signified a bond between the ladies and the American people. Subscription to the publication and membership to the organization was only \$1 for adults and 50 cents for children, further expanding the organization's base of support amongst the American people.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to these nascent clubs and chapters, funding for the ladies poured forward from all sorts of Americans. In October 1858, Commodore Silas Stringham took up a collection from "military and civil officers and others attached to the Navy Yard" for subscriptions. He enclosed \$358 and sent it to Vice Regent Louisa Greenough of Massachusetts on behalf of the men. The Seventh Regiment of New York "presented \$2,000 to the Ladies' Mount Vernon Association." The Masonic Harmony Lodge of Newton, New Jersey, contributed fifty dollars for the cause. Beyond military and fraternal organizations, more money came from local women who threw fundraisers and benefits on behalf of the association. In New York, ladies organized a four-day festival "at the Academy of Music," and featured a "full-dress ball," evening concerts, "and a combination of orations." "The Ladies of Springfield" planned a "grand Social Festival" at city hall "for the benefit of the Mount Vernon fund." Another benefit in San Francisco took place at the Lyceum Theater and featured "the band of the Sixth Infantry of the U.S. Army." Local women were instrumental in organizing fundraising drives within their

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<sup>44</sup> Mary Rutledge to Anna Pamela Cunningham, January 27, 1857, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; Mrs. C.P. Speed to Susan Pellet, February 22, 1857, MVLA Collection, FWSL; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 23 September 1858; *The Farmer's Cabinet*, 29 September 1858; *Daily State Gazette and Republican*, 13 December 1858; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 21 October 1858.

own communities, and their success allowed the organization to put forward its first scheduled payment of \$57,000 to John Augustine.<sup>45</sup>

As the MVLA approached its goal of making Mount Vernon public property, John Augustine Washington prepared to vacate Mount Vernon in February 1860 to his new property, Waveland plantation. Many members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives were invited to witness the event, a symbolic transfer of property and power from the Washington family to the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union. Accompanied by the Marine Band, the company spent "an hour viewing the grounds and various interesting relics." At twilight, those present gathered "about the tomb," while the band executed in fine style "Washington's Grave." Before departing, these visitors took "some token of remembrance of their visit," and politicians stood in awe as these ladies achieved what they and their previous colleagues never could: save George Washington's home and tomb for the American people. The *Godey's Lady Book and Magazine* triumphantly declared, "Mount Vernon now belongs to the American nation." The organization would forever bear "the stamp of patriotism, and is the happy harbinger of faith in the permanence of our National Union." Despite its success, the MVLA had little time to savor victory and embrace their place in American history.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *The Daily Picayune*, 31 October 1858; *The Daily Picayune*, 18 March 1859; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 9 December 1858; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 17 February 1859; *Daily Evening Bulletin*, 21 February 1859; *The Daily Globe*, 11 December 1858; *Daily State Gazette and Republican*, 13 December 1858; *The Daily Confederation*, 16 December 1858; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 16 December 1858;

<sup>46</sup> *The Daily Confederation*, 10 March 1860; *The Farmer's Cabinet*, 14 March 1860; *The New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 14 March 1860; *The Wisconsin Daily Patriot*, 3 April 1860; *The Daily Statesman*, 16 March 1860; "Editor's Table: Children Concerning Children. American Thanksgiving in Prussia," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, March 1860; 60, 272; Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 73-74; the ladies also used Washington's relationship with the Masons to facilitate giving to the cause. See Susan Pellet to Ann Pamela Cunningham, August 15, 1857, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library.



As a legally recognized political entity, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association became trapped between two hostile nations during the American Civil War. The election of President Abraham Lincoln, an Illinois Republican and outspoken opponent of slavery's expansion in the West, triggered a series of secessions led by South Carolina in December 1860. Americans quickly forgot about the patriotism of the ladies as both sections justified their actions with historical precedents. For the North, military intervention was necessary to save the Union and preserve the Constitution, a model of government bestowed by the Founders for future generations. For the South, they identified the war as one of independence from tyranny, channeling the spirit of the American Revolution and its heroes. Cunningham found herself in a political bind; as the "Southern Matron" and driving force behind Mount Vernon, she was expected to side with the Confederacy and her home state of South Carolina. Cunningham had returned to Rosemont after her father's death in late 1860, but the firing on Fort Sumter that spring ensured that she stayed in Confederate territory for the rest of the war. While Cunningham was sympathetic to South Carolina and the South, she also understood that if the MVLA chose a side, the federal government or the Confederacy might confiscate Mount Vernon during the war. Convinced that the MVLA was and always would be above sectional fanaticism, she advocated a policy of neutrality and directed her vice regents to follow suit.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, 31-33. Cunningham did invest some of the association's funds in Confederate bonds, which seems to suggest that while she did privately support the Southern cause, she did not want to lose the property by supporting the South publically. See Grace King, *Mount Vernon on the Potomac: History of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), 207; Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 82. Cunningham actively supported Southern resistance, as she was involved in the Ladies' Confederate Navy Association. However she was always very careful to avoid

In order to maintain the appearance of neutrality, Cunningham brought together a southern man and a northern woman to guide Mount Vernon through the war. She hired a Virginian named Upton Herbert as superintendent of the property. As her proxy while she remained in South Carolina, Cunningham arranged for her secretary Sarah Tracy of New York to take over administrative duties. While Upton focused on the restoration of the estate, Tracy labored to defend Cunningham in the press, who was accused of “sympathy with the rebels,” and more importantly, secure assurances from both the federal government and the Confederacy that Mount Vernon would not be seized as a prize of war. The federal government had already confiscated a number of steamboats and suspended waterfront traffic on the Potomac as a wartime measure. Without the influx of visitor admissions, the association’s funds began to shrink significantly, delaying preservation and construction projects. While Tracy had secured Union General Winfield Scott’s promise that Union troops would not occupy Mount Vernon, conflicting information from the Virginia countryside prompted him to write an order dated July 31, 1861, which denounced the rumored presence of Confederate forces at Mount Vernon. These “bands of rebels” had overrun the grounds and trampled “the Constitution” and “the Ashes of Him to whom we are all mainly indebted for those mighty blessings.” Scott directed Union forces to show more restraint in the event that they find themselves near Mount Vernon and acknowledge the neutrality of the Association.<sup>48</sup>

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publically attaching her name to anything that might denigrate the MVLA or give Northern columnists proof of her Southern sympathies; Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861*, 517-534.

<sup>48</sup> Susan Pellet to James Tuthill, July 11, 1859, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library. Herbert arrived in July 1859; Anna Pamela Cunningham to Sarah Tracy, July 14, 1860, MVLA Collection, FWSL. Cunningham hired Tracy the following summer with an annual salary of \$400; *The Crisis*, 8 August 1861, reprint of the *Intelligencer; Weekly Patriot and Union*, 8 August 1861; “Desecration of Mount Vernon,” *The Independent*, 8

Afraid of repeat incidents, Tracy made her way to Washington D.C. to meet with Union officials to discuss Mount Vernon's neutrality and obtain a pass that would allow her to pass through Union lines. In October 1861, Scott granted her a pass that gave her the authority to move through the lines of the United States "to her residence at Mount Vernon and thence to and from Alexandria and Washington." Tracy also asked for passes for black freemen working at Mount Vernon, but Major General George McClellan denied her request arguing that, "no servants could be trusted." On her many trips Tracy was frequently accosted by Federal troops who questioned the validity of Scott's pass. When he later refused to give her another pass, she demanded an audience with President Lincoln. Lincoln listened to Tracy's objections, wrote her a note to take to McClellan, and ordered him to rectify her situation and assist the MVLA. Only Tracy could accomplish this delicate peace with northern leaders, as Herbert was a known Virginian and southern sympathizer. One northern columnist branded Herbert and Cunningham as "secessionists" with "treasonable proclivities," calling upon the federal government to confiscate the property because of fraud committed against the American people. The following spring Lincoln temporarily allowed the steamboat to run service to Mount Vernon, bringing much needed income to the MVLA.<sup>49</sup>

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August 1861; 13, 662, 4; "Course of Events," *New York Evangelist*, 8 August 1861; 32, 32, 5; *Daily State Gazette*, 5 September 1861; The federal government eventually allowed some steamboats access to Mount Vernon, but this was only after Tracy went directly to Lincoln and his administration to plead the MVLA's cause; Casper, *Sarah Johnson's Mount Vernon: The Forgotten History of an American Shrine*, 77-78; Muir, *Presence of a Lady: Mount Vernon, 1861-1868*, 8-11; 26-27. Also present was Mary McMakin, a friend of Tracy's from Philadelphia whose duty was to make sure that nothing improper happened between Tracy and Herbert.

<sup>49</sup> General Winfield Scott to Sarah Tracy, October 2, 1861, Mount Vernon Ladies Association Collection, Fred W. Smith Library; Muir, *Presence of a Lady: Mount Vernon, 1861-1868*, 53-54; Sarah Tracy to Mrs. Comegys, October 9, 1861, in Dorothy Muir, *Presence of a Lady: Mount Vernon, 1861-1868* (Washington D.C.: Mount Vernon Publishing Company, 1948), 49-50; 54-57; 63-64; *Wisconsin Daily Patriot*, 1 October 1861; *San Francisco Bulletin*, 21 October 1861; Order Relating to Commercial Intercourse, 28 February 1862, *The Collected*

One rumor that spread through the northern press was that Washington's remains were removed from Mount Vernon to prevent them from falling into Union hands. In May 1861, one newspaper cited a "reliable source" that Washington's body was taken by Colonel John Augustine Washington, who was now serving as an aid-de-camp to Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Another paper reported that the ladies of the "Mount Vernon Society" did not "have any knowledge of the reported removal of the remains of Washington," but assured readers that John Augustine had "no legal right to remove the dust of the 'Father of his Country' to any other locality." A columnist for the *Chicago Tribune* was horrified to learn of the rumor, that the South intended to "violate the National treasure containing the bones of Washington." The editorial concluded, "[t]he North will never release its right to own in common with the South, the sacred remains of Washington." As the rumor gained traction in the press, Sarah Tracy moved quickly to squash such defamatory gossip:

Never, since first laid in this, his chosen resting place, have the remains of our Great Father reposed more quietly and peacefully than now, when all the outer world is distracted by warlike thoughts and deeds. And the public, the owners of this noble possession, need fear no molestation of this *one national spot* belonging alike to North and South. Over it there can be no dispute! No individual or individuals has the *right*, and surely none can have the inclination, to disturb this sacred deposit. The Ladies have taken every necessary precaution for the protection of the place, and their earnest desire is, that the public should feel confidence in their faithfulness to their trust, and believe that Mount Vernon is *safe* under the guardianship of the Ladies of the *Mount Vernon Association of the Union*.

Tracy reminded readers that even though the country was engulfed in a war of barbarism, the MVLA remained steadfast in their commitment to the American people to save Mount Vernon and Washington's place of repose for future generations. Visitors who

managed to slip past checkpoints and sentries confirmed that these rumors were false, noting that “every thing [was] untouched” and the tomb “had not been molested.”<sup>50</sup>

The MVLA struggled to control the public memory of Washington during the Civil War as both sides furthered their claim to the Father of his Country in order to inspire residents to take up arms. It was no coincidence that Jefferson Davis, the newly elected President of the Confederacy, took his presidential oath beside the statue of George Washington in Richmond on Washington’s Birthday February 22, 1862. Davis reminded those in attendance that “we have assembled to usher into existence the permanent government of the Confederate States. Through this instrumentality, under the favor of Divine Providence, we hope to perpetuate the principles of our Revolutionary fathers. The day, the memory and the purpose seem fitly associated.” The Confederacy later adopted the seal of the Richmond monument for its new government, which featured Washington on horseback pointing forward and surrounded by the agricultural products of the South; cotton, corn, wheat, tobacco, rice, and sugar cane. The shield read, “The Confederate States of America: 22 February 1862; Deo Vindice,” translated as “Under God, Vindicator” or “With God as Judge.” Southern politicians framed this as a holy war

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<sup>50</sup> *The Farmer’s Cabinet*, 17 May 1861; *The Sun*, 17 May 1861; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 23 May 1861; *Chicago Tribune*, 21 May 1861; *The Farmer’s Cabinet*, 24 May 1861, reprint *New York Tribune*; *Chicago Tribune*, 21 May 1861; *The Farmer’s Cabinet*, 31 May 1861; Sarah Tracy to the *National Intelligencer*, April 1861, Muir, *Presence of a Lady: Mount Vernon, 1861-1868*, 24-25; *The Sun*, 23 May 1861; *The Wisconsin Daily Patriot*, 31 May 1861; Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred Knopf Press, 2008), 32-60. Faust’s study of death in the Civil War highlights these themes of male savagery and atrocity, as the American public was introduced to death on a massive scale unseen before in American history.

of independence and grounded their new nation's foundations in Protestant Christianity and George Washington.<sup>51</sup>

Aware of the inauguration planned at Richmond, President Lincoln issued his own proclamation: "It is recommended to the People of the United States that they assemble in their customary places of meeting for public solemnities on the twenty-second day of February instant, and celebrate the anniversary of the birth of the Father of His Country by causing to be read to them his immortal Farewell address." A competing celebration was orchestrated in the national capital, and Washington's Farewell Address was read to both houses of Congress. Local celebrations of Washington the Constitutionalist sprung up across the North. In New Hampshire, Americans gathered at "Concord, Dover, Nashua, Keene, and many other places." In Southington Connecticut, the "hall was filled to overflowing, and many [were] left unable to gain admittance." In Cleveland, New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, citizens met to commemorate Washington's birth and did so with orations, salutes, military drills, and illuminations. According to one columnist, "[n]ever, in the history of the nation, has the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, the birth-day of the Father of his Country, been so extensively observed as the recent anniversary." The author noted that the many instances of "flags flying, bells ringing, cannon firing, and large local meetings" were all testaments to Washington, but they were also occasions to reinforce northern remembrance of Washington. Speeches

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<sup>51</sup> *The Daily True Delta*, 23 February 1862; *The Sun*, 26 February 1862; *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, 5 March 1862; Jefferson Davis' Inaugural Address, February 22, 1862, *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, ed. Lynda Lasswell Crist et al. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 8, 55; Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South: Northern Nationalism and American Identity in the Antebellum Era* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 162-163; Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 24-27; François Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of the Nation* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2006), 99-101.

highlighted Washington's "devotion to the Constitution, the Union and the laws," leaving out his slave-owning past and Virginian heritage.<sup>52</sup>

In these lean years, Sarah Tracy and Upton Herbert relied on the same practices that John Augustine Washington employed during his tenure at Mount Vernon. Tracy sold items out of the garden directly to customers on site and sent excess flowers and fruit to market. Visitors could purchase bouquets "at 25 cents each," and guests of distinction were permitted to go inside the mansion so long as they had a letter of introduction. According to Benjamin French, Commissioner of the Public Buildings in Washington, seeing Washington's bedroom cost an additional twenty-five cents, which his party gladly "paid for the privilege." Even as the country descended into chaos and experienced unprecedented loss of human life, Americans ventured to Mount Vernon to remember what they were fighting for beside Washington's grave. While many issues instigated the war, many of which related either directly or indirectly to slavery, civilian and military morale was crucial for sustaining the war effort. By reimagining the American past to define the country's future and promote their section's cause, both sides interpreted Washington in opposition to the other. The MVLA, attacked by Northern and Southern pundits for their neutrality, refused to acknowledge the competing Washington legacies or acquiesce anything to either government.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> "Proclamation for Celebration of Washington's Birthday, February 19, 1862," *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953); 5, 136; *Hartford Daily Courant*, 21 February 1862; *The Farmer's Cabinet*, 27 February 1862; *Hartford Daily Courant*, 27 February 1862; *Weekly Patriot and Union*, 27 February 1862; *The Pittsfield Sun*, 27 February 1862; *Evening Bulletin*, 6 March 1862.

<sup>53</sup> Caro Tracy Arnold, "Memoirs of Mount Vernon During the Civil War," Mount Vernon Traveler Account Volume 3, Fred W. Smith Library; Benjamin B. French, May 4, 1862, Mount Vernon Traveler Account Volume 3, FWSL; *The Civil War Letters of Lewis Bissell*, September 5, 1863, Mount Vernon Traveler Account Volume 3, FWSL; George Carr Round, "Thanksgiving Day at Mount Vernon," 1863, Mount Vernon Traveler Account Volume 3, FWSL, also published

After John Augustine Washington denied the federal government's request in 1832 to move George Washington's remains, Mount Vernon took on new meaning for Americans in the nineteenth century. While many visitors acknowledged the sacredness of the site, Washington's tomb (and by extension the presence of his body) is what made it sacred. Efforts to inter Washington in a separate place fell by the wayside and were replaced with directives to purchase Mount Vernon, a solution that avoided offending sensibilities about disinterment and advocated for government intervention. However, the very idea that one government might come to possess Mount Vernon coincided with a rising sectionalism that divided representatives, parties, and communities. While all could agree that Mount Vernon should be saved, both the federal government and the state of Virginia claimed the right to do so. These debates revolved around constitutionality, funding, proper memorialization, etc., but for many politicians memory sovereignty transcended these ideas. National politicians, primarily from the North, argued that Mount Vernon should become the property of the nation and that the federal government should take possession on behalf of the American people. Virginian representatives, both in Congress and in the state legislature, countered with their belief in states' rights, which transcended federal laws and extended to Washington's remains. Washington was one of them, and they refused to surrender Mount Vernon in any way to the federal government.

John Augustine Washington III saw the merits in both arguments, but his decision to sell was not nearly as ideological as it was financial. He repeatedly offered both governments the opportunity to purchase Washington's home and tomb, but these failed

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in *The Ladies Repository*, 1864; 24, 217-219; George W. Clymans, 11 May 1865, Mount Vernon Traveler Accounts Volume 3, FWSL; Muir, *Presence of a Lady: Mount Vernon, 1861-1868*, 85.



to generate serious offers. In fact, it seems that each side only became interested when it appeared the other was taking action to save Mount Vernon. Well aware of the accusations against him as a speculator of his great-grand uncle's memory, he refused Ann Pamela Cunningham's proposition to sell several times in the mid 1850s, hoping that one of the governments would step in and save him from selling to a private organization. John Augustine believed that government ownership would be the only way he could escape the predicament with his reputation intact, but the failures of both legislatures compelled him to sell to the MVLA.

At every point, Cunningham and her agents were cognizant of the societal boundaries placed on women, but it was these limitations that became integral to the MVLA's claim to restore Mount Vernon. Men, tarnished by politics and special interests, no longer possessed the civic virtue to do what was right for the common good. Women on the other hand were expected to maintain household morality and educate future citizens of the republic, and while this idea of republican motherhood intended to prevent women from entering the public sphere, it was this very idea that gave the earlier reform movements traction among female Americans. Women were not handicapped by the political rivalries that defined the 1850s, and who better to save the home of Washington than those who knew the home so well? The MVLA constantly preached that it was above the sectionalism that distorted men's patriotism, and in doing so they promoted the superiority of feminine patriotism. Beneath their eloquent marketing and public relation campaigns, the MVLA was as sectional as any other major organization or political entity in the lead up to the American Civil War; however, it was Cunningham's

decisive leadership and recognition of northern vice-regents that fostered this myth of completely united women.

As both sides braced for the bloodiest war in American history, Mount Vernon became an island of neutrality under the stewardship of Upton Herbert and Sarah Tracy. These two secured assurances from both the federal government and the Confederacy that Mount Vernon would not be violated or confiscated, a feat in hindsight that seems as impressive as the fundraising campaign itself. While the country was in disarray, Tracy and Herbert maintained the estate to the best of their abilities, offering visitors a place of tranquil escape from the war so long as they were willing to follow the Association's rules of etiquette. Their efforts sparked the beginnings of an American preservation movement, one that brought women into the public sphere as politic agents operating as moral guardians of the past. More importantly, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association gradually expanded access to its cause, allowing men and women the opportunity to contribute in saving Mount Vernon. Building on the idea that Washington belonged to the nation, they advocated for Americans to step forward and save their collective past, successfully raising over \$200,000 and making Mount Vernon the property of the American people.

## Conclusion

### Washington of the People, By the People, For the People

A great democratic revolution is taking place among us: all see it, but all do not judge it in the same manner. Some consider it a new thing, and taking it for an accident, they still hope to be able to stop it; whereas others judge it irresistible because to them it seems the most continuous, the oldest, and the most permanent fact known in history.<sup>1</sup>

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Commissioned by the new French monarch Louis-Philippe I to explore the penitentiaries of the United States, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont traversed the Atlantic on a mission to study the American criminal justice system. Tocqueville was fascinated by “the equality of conditions” he saw in America, and his work on prisons quickly evolved into an examination of the growth and evolution of democracy in the United States. Born into a noble French family in 1805, de Tocqueville lived through the reigns of Napoleon Bonaparte, Louis XVIII, Charles X, and the 1830 July Revolution that brought Louis-Philippe to the throne. Unlike many of his aristocratic peers, de Tocqueville never feared democracy, as he believed it was both irresistible and irreversible. De Tocqueville believed that the forces of liberty, equality, and fraternity unleashed by the French Revolution made democracy inevitable. As such, he aimed his work at conservative politicians, aristocrats, monarchists, clergy, and the military, charging them to accept these democratic changes instead of suppressing them. De Tocqueville’s fascination with democracy stemmed from his own country’s

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<sup>1</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, eds. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3; Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* (Paris: Librairie de C. Gosselin, 1835).

vacillation between that form of government and monarchy, and this curiosity prompted his voyage to the United States in order to explore a country that he believed had successfully transitioned from a republic to a democracy.<sup>2</sup>

While de Tocqueville did visit a number of American prisons, he and de Beaumont spent most of their time studying American society, detailing consumption and material well-being, race relations, economic markets, and the political and legal systems that promoted democratic individualism. De Tocqueville returned to France in 1832, publishing the first volume of his study in 1835 and the second in 1840. Critics in the United States complimented de Tocqueville's work, applauding him for his tribute to American democracy and the country's social and political progress. One editorial for the *New-Bedford Mercury* exclaimed, "[t]his book is one of inestimable value, and ought to be read by every inhabitant of the Union." A columnist for the *Madisonian for the Country* noted, "[t]he work of de Tocqueville is full of sensible and important remarks."<sup>3</sup> With a text so rich in description and intellectual reasoning, however, writers tended to focus on specific clauses to further their own political arguments.

As sectional politics grew more inflamed in the 1850s, Americans pondered the longevity of the Union's existence. It comes as no surprise that publisher Alfred Barnes and Company, eager to capitalize on the political climate, dismembered de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* by eliminating the contentious second volume in its entirety. The

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<sup>2</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, eds. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3. Tocqueville's belief in the "equality of conditions" was strictly an observation of white men and their place in society. While Native Americans, free blacks, slaves, and women were excluded from political democracy, the idea of universal male suffrage was considered radical compared to many Western European nations. While many scholars have critiqued de Tocqueville's views on democracy, his work remains one of the most important political tracts of the nineteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> *New-Bedford Mercury*, 29 November, 1838; *Madisonian for the Country*, 20 November 1839.

company renamed the first volume *American Institutions and their Influence*, offering readers a Frenchman's observations of the many merits of American society, government, and its people. In order to reflect the work's admiration of American institutions, the editors added frontispieces to the text with references to George Washington and vivid portraits of Mount Vernon. Washington, now gracing the first pages of de Tocqueville's work, was literally bound to one of the nineteenth century's greatest proponents of American democracy.<sup>4</sup>

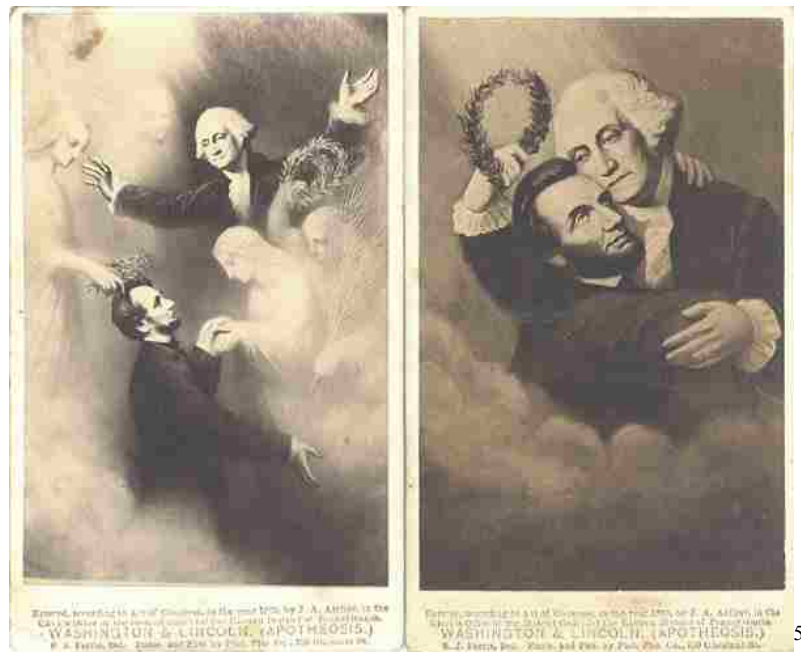


<sup>4</sup> Paul C. Nagel, *One Nation Indivisible: The Union in American Thought, 1776-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 93-94; Matthew Mancini, *Alexis de Tocqueville and American Intellectuals: From His Times to Ours* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006), 87-88; Alexis de Tocqueville, *American Institutions and their Influence; with notes, Hon. John C. Spencer* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co. 1851), digitized by Cornell University. A.S. Barnes reprinted *American Institutions* 1854, 1855, and 1860. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *American Institutions and their Influence; with notes, Hon. John C. Spencer* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co. 1854); Alexis de Tocqueville, *American Institutions and their Influence, with notes, Hon. John C. Spencer* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co. 1855); Alexis de Tocqueville, *American Institutions and their Influence, with notes, Hon. John C. Spencer* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Burr. 1860).

By the 1850s the publishers at A.S. Barnes & Company did not give this frontispiece a second thought, as the association between George Washington and American democracy seemed natural. For them, a sketch of Mount Vernon, the home and final resting place of George Washington, perfectly supplemented a volume that praised the virtues of political democracy. The belief that Washington not only approved of democratic government but also encouraged its growth, however, was a fifty-year myth in the making. As democracy transformed politics, religion, popular culture, and the economy, a similar revolution had reshaped the memory of George Washington. Often referred to as “the property of the nation,” Washington became an object to possess, a weapon to wield, an agent of product marketing, and an icon to mold. During the course of the nineteenth century, Americans cultivated the popular belief that Washington championed democracy. Travelers to Mount Vernon, politicians, poets, musicians, writers, storytellers, and the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association shaped this collective memory by claiming him for themselves and for the nation, transforming Washington into a man of the people, by the people, and for the people.

As the nineteenth century progressed Americans frequently looked back to the American Revolution for guidance. Washington was never far from the minds and hearts of Americans, as he came to embody the economic, cultural, religious, and social transformations brought on by the advent of political democracy. As a symbol, Washington was malleable for a variety of causes and purposes, but his body remained the definitive means to define the man. When the federal government and the state of Virginia failed to acquire his remains, the memory of Washington was left in the hands of the people. Some worshipped Washington; some developed strategies to profit from his

memory; others sought to protect him from commercialization and exploitation; and still others used Washington as a form of protection or social ascendency. By leaving Washington in the hands of the people, their collective efforts to reclaim Washington transformed him from a republican aristocrat to a democratic self-made man. This collective cultural process, fueled by the growth of universal white male suffrage and political democracy, brought Washington down from the clouds to reside beside ordinary Americans.



If Washington's presence in de Tocqueville's *American Institutions and their Influence* was not obvious enough, the use of Washington imagery after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865 made his connection to democracy even more explicit. Lincoln, who was influenced by Mason Locke Weems' *Life of Washington* as a

<sup>5</sup> Washington & Lincoln (Apotheosis), 1865, S.J. Ferris, Philadelphia Photography Company, accessed December 5, 2015, <http://www.hcauctions.com/lot-31105.aspx>.

boy, embodied many of the same attributes as Washington. After his death, contemporaries linked the two men as leaders of the people, one who created the Union and the other who fought to preserve it. Both men gave everything in their power to secure the Union and protect the interests of the country, and as the nation mourned the tragic loss of President Lincoln, Americans linked the bodily sacrifice of Lincoln with Washington's endless public service. As Merrill Peterson argued in his work *Lincoln in American Memory*, Americans remembered Lincoln as the savior of the Union, the Great Emancipator, the man of the people, and the self-made man. More importantly, Lincoln was one of the greatest leaders in American history, and his rise to the presidency a direct consequence of American democracy. Circulated by publisher S.J. Ferris, one of the most popular mourning prints featured George Washington and angels welcoming Lincoln to heaven with a brotherly embrace and a laurel for his services. Washington's acceptance of Lincoln facilitated his apotheosis into a national pantheon of democratic heroes, connecting the recently slain man of the people with Washington.<sup>6</sup>

The democratization of George Washington's memory in the nineteenth century made his tomb accessible, his legacy affordable, and recast him in popular culture as a social equal with ordinary Americans. The transportation revolution brought more Americans to Washington's grave than ever before. This development encouraged the belief that all Americans possessed the right to visit Washington's grave, a right that many visitors trumpeted during their visits to Mount Vernon. The market revolution transformed Washington's memory into an inexpensive commodity, allowing more Americans to purchase a piece of nostalgia to solidify their connection to the man. These

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<sup>6</sup> Merrill Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 26-27.



tangible objects linked ordinary Americans to Washington, permitting them to remember him as they pleased and identify with a glorified national past. Finally, Washington's democratization meant all Americans possessed the freedom to reimagine Washington for their own purposes. Mason Locke Weems' biography of George Washington laid the groundwork for this larger democratic myth, making Washington more common in his upbringing and relatable to ordinary Americans. By bringing Washington down from his pedestal, Weems' narrative gained traction in popular culture, linking Washington intimately with the people. Its popularity spoke to the wider belief that Washington, his remains, and his former possessions belonged to all Americans.

The history of how Americans remembered George Washington tells us more about how we have continuously struggled to define and connect to significant figures of our national history. By constantly recasting Washington, Americans attempted to keep him relevant to the crises at hand, to inspire future citizens, to use his wisdom for political purposes, and to promote shared religious beliefs. The contentious efforts of these groups and individuals illuminate Washington's importance in how we define who we are as Americans, and the malleability of his memory speaks to the paradoxes of the American character. Memory studies often emphasize how social groups remember the past, but an integral part of this process is how groups determine what is remembered and what is forgotten. The memory of the republican Washington served its purpose during the early Republic, but as the country democratized Americans reimagined this symbol to fit the rapidly changing present. The democratic Washington came from humble origins, lacked a formal education, and tirelessly labored to achieve greatness in politics and personal wealth. This Washington appealed to nineteenth-century Americans, as many

faced the same circumstances, conditions, and obstacles in their own lives. With so much in common, it did not take much to convince Americans that Washington had also supported the rights of all men.

While our historical sources remain mostly intact, how we conceptualize the past speaks to the challenges we face in the present and the uncertainties of the future. This evolution in memory continues today, as Americans often cite the Founders' writings to justify their political positions, personal beliefs, or demonize their opponents.

Washington's words have been used to criticize the growing national debt, foreign policy decisions, and background checks for firearms. They have also been used to promote the protection of religious freedom, the Second Amendment, and the legalization of marijuana. These attempts are often filled with errors, inconsistencies, and historical ignorance, but however misinformed or distorted the memory of Washington brings gravitas to the cause at hand. The battle to reclaim George Washington continues, as Americans, much like their nineteenth-century counterparts, deliberately choose to remember a Washington that comforts their anxieties, affirms their beliefs, and adheres to their worldviews.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 149-166; Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 11, 64, 123.

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## APPENDIX A

## 1832 Senate Vote to Move George Washington's Remains

*Senate Journal*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Duff Green, 1831), 21, 131.

On February 13, 1832, the Senate voted in favor 29-15 to move Washington to the Capitol crypt. I organized the vote by section and political party. The first two columns divide the vote according to the future sections that emerged during the American Civil War. Of the 29 yeas, 25 came from states that were either pro-Union or border-states during the American Civil War. Of the 15 nays, 11 came from the future Confederate states. In the last three columns I separated the vote in terms of political affiliation, as there were varying factions that did not fit neatly into a two-party system. The result is Anti-Jacksonians, Jackson Democrats, and Nullifiers. These affiliations are abbreviated as the following: Anti-Jacksonian (AJ), Jackson Democrat (J), and Nullifier (N). Senators are listed in alphabetical order of their last name, the party they identify with, and the state they represented in 1832.

Yeas (29)	Nays (15)
Samuel Bell (AJ-New Hampshire)	Alexander Buckner (J-Missouri)
George Bibb (J-Kentucky)	George M. Dallas (J-Pennsylvania)
Henry Clay (AJ-Kentucky)	John Forsyth (J-Georgia)
John Clayton (AJ-Delaware)	Felix Grundy (J-Tennessee)
Mahlon Dickerson (J-New Jersey)	Robert Hayne (N-South Carolina)
Charles Dudley (J-New York)	Isaac Hill (J-New Hampshire)
Thomas Ewing (AJ-Ohio)	William R.D. King (J-Alabama)
Samuel Foot (AJ-Connecticut)	Willie Mangum (J-North Carolina)
Theodore Frelinghuysen (AJ-New Jersey)	William Marcy (J-New York)
William Hendricks (AJ-Indiana)	Stephen Miller (N-South Carolina)
John Holmes (AJ-Maine)	Samuel Smith (J-Maryland)
Josiah Johnston (AJ-Louisiana)	Littleton Tazewell (J-Virginia)
Elias Kane (J-Illinois)	George Troup (J-Georgia)
Nehemiah Knight (AJ-Rhode Island)	John Tyler (J-Virginia)
Gabriel Moore (J-Alabama)	Hugh Lawson White (J-Tennessee)
Arnold Naudain (AJ-Delaware)	
George Poindexter (AJ-Mississippi)	
Samuel Prentiss (AJ-Vermont)	
Asher Robbins (AJ-Rhode Island)	
John Robinson (J-Illinois)	
Benjamin Ruggles (AJ-Ohio)	
Horatio Seymour (AJ-Vermont)	
Nathaniel Silsbee (AJ-Massachusetts)	

Peleg Sprague (AJ-Maine) John Tipton (J-Indiana) Gideon Tomlinson (AJ-Connecticut) George Waggaman (AJ-Louisiana) Daniel Webster (AJ-Massachusetts) William Wilkins (J-Pennsylvania)	
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## Appendix B

## 1832 House of Representatives Vote to Move George Washington's Remains

*House Journal*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 13 February 1832 (Washington D.C.: Duff Green, 1831), 25, 340-342.

On February 13, 1832, the House of Representatives voted in favor 109-76 to move Washington to the Capitol crypt. Much like the Senate instance, I organized votes along sectional and political party lines. Of the 109 yeas, 90 came from states that were either pro-Union or border-states during the American Civil War. Of the 76 nays, 43 came from the future Confederate states, which suggests that the vote in the house was less sectional and more partisan. By breaking down the vote according to party allegiance, Anti-Jacksons and Jackson Democrats united to support the measure, accounting for 96 of the 109 yeas. The majority of nays came from Jackson Democrats, who provided 64 of the 76 negative votes; in short, Jackson Democrats in the House were divided over the issue (43 for, 64 against). Parties are abbreviated as the following: Anti-Jacksonian (AJ), Jackson Democrat (J), Nullifier (N), and Anti-Mason (AM). Representatives are listed in alphabetical order of their last name, the party they identify with, and the state they represent in 1832.

Yeas (109)	Nays (76)
John Quincy Adams (AJ-Massachusetts)	Mark Alexander (J-Virginia)
Chilton Allan (AJ-Kentucky)	Robert Allen (J-Virginia)
John Anderson (J-Maine)	William Angel (J-New York)
Nathan Appleton (AJ-Massachusetts)	John S. Barbour (J-Virginia)
William Archer (J-Virginia)	Robert Barnwell (N-South Carolina)
William Armstrong (AJ-Virginia)	Gamaliel Barstow (AM-New York)
Thomas Arnold (AJ-Tennessee)	James Bates (J-Maine)
William Ashley (J-Missouri)	John Bergen (J-New York)
William Babcock (AM-New York)	Lauchlin Bethune (J-North Carolina)
John Banks (AM-Pennsylvania)	James Blair (J-South Carolina)
Noyes Barber (AJ-Connecticut)	John Blair (J-Tennessee)
Daniel Barringer (J-North Carolina)	Joseph Bouck (J-New York)
Isaac Bates (AJ-Massachusetts)	Thomas Bouldin (J-Virginia)
Samuel Beardsley (J-New York)	John Carr (J-Indiana)
John Bell (J-Tennessee)	Samuel Carson (J-North Carolina)
Ratliff Boon (J-Indiana)	Nathaniel Claiborne (J-Virginia)
George Briggs (AJ-Massachusetts)	Clement Clay (J-Alabama)
John C. Brodhead (J-New York)	Augustin Clayton (J-Georgia)
John Bucher (J-Pennsylvania)	Richard Coke Jr. (J-Virginia)
Henry Bullard (AJ-Louisiana)	John Collier (AM-New York)
George Burd (AJ-Pennsylvania)	Richard Cooper (AJ-New Jersey)

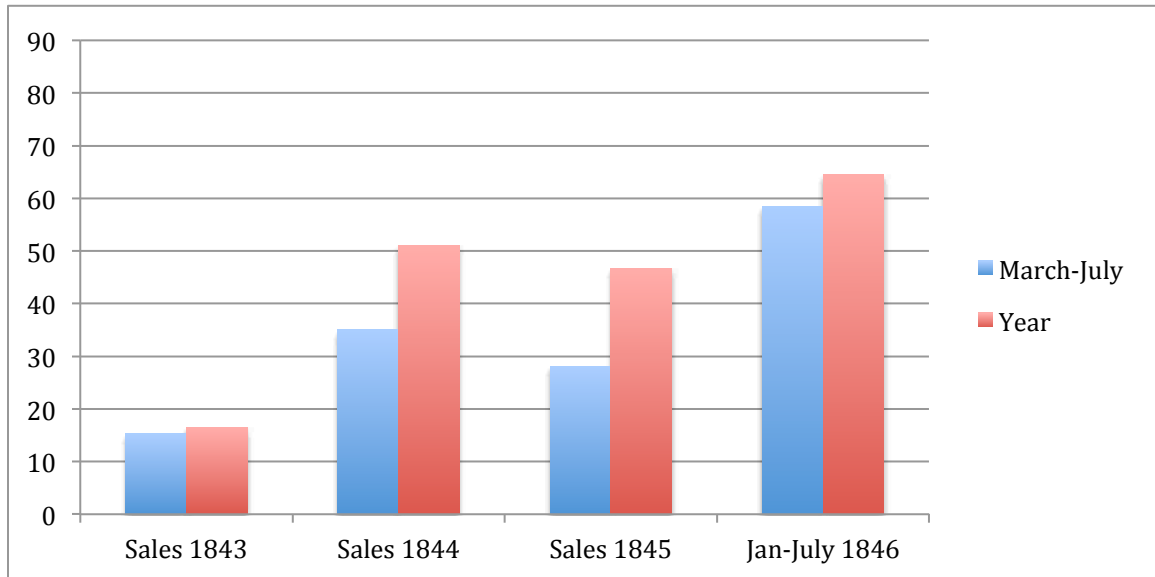
Tristram Burges (AJ-Rhode Island)	Thomas Davenport (J-Virginia)
William Cahoon (AM-Vermont)	Warren R. Davis (N-South Carolina)
Churchill Cambreleng (J-New York)	Charles Dayan (J-New York)
Rufus Choate (AJ-Massachusetts)	Lewis Dewart (J-Pennsylvania)
Lewis Condict (AJ-New Jersey)	Ulysses Doubleday (J-New York)
Silas Condit (AJ-New Jersey)	Horace Everett (AJ-Vermont)
Henry Connor (J-North Carolina)	John M. Felder (J-South Carolina)
Eleutheros Cooke (AJ-Ohio)	Thomas Foster (J-Georgia)
Bates Cooke (AM-New York)	Nathan Gaither (J-Kentucky)
Thomas Corwin (AJ-Ohio)	William Gordon (J-Virginia)
Richard Coulter (J-Pennsylvania)	John Griffin (N-South Carolina)
Robert Craig (J-Virginia)	Thomas H. Hall (J-North Carolina)
Joseph Crane (AJ-Ohio)	William Hall (J-Tennessee)
Thomas H. Crawford (J-Pennsylvania)	Albert Hawes (J-Kentucky)
William Creighton (AJ-Ohio)	Micajah Hawkins (J-North Carolina)
John Davis (AJ-Massachusetts)	Michael Hoffman (J-New York)
Henry Dearborn (AJ-Massachusetts)	Henry Horn (J-Pennsylvania)
Harmar Denny (AM-Pennsylvania)	Jacob Isacks (J-Tennessee)
John Dickson (AM-New York)	Freeborn Jewett (J-New York)
Philip Doddridge (AJ-Virginia)	Cave Johnson (J-Tennessee)
William Drayton (J-South Carolina)	Charles C. Johnston (J-Virginia)
William Ellsworth (AJ-Connecticut)	Adam King (J-Pennsylvania)
George Evans (AJ-Maine)	John King (J-New York)
Edward Everett (AJ-Massachusetts)	Henry Lamar (J-Georgia)
William Fitzgerald (J-Tennessee)	Gerrit Lansing (J-New York)
John Gilmore (J-Pennsylvania)	Joseph Lecompte (J-Kentucky)
George Grennell (AJ-Massachusetts)	Dixon Lewis (J-Alabama)
Joseph Harper (J-New Hampshire)	Chittenden Lyon (J-Kentucky)
William Heister (AM-Pennsylvania)	Joel Mann (J-Pennsylvania)
James L. Hodges (AJ-Massachusetts)	Samuel Mardis (J-Alabama)
William Hogan (J-New York)	John Mason (J-Virginia)
Cornelius Holland (J-Maine)	Lewis Maxwell (AJ-Virginia)
Benjamin Howard (J-Maryland)	Johnathan McCarty (J-Indiana)
Thomas Hughes (AJ-New Jersey)	William McCoy (J-Virginia)
Jonathan Hunt (AJ-Vermont)	Robert McCoy (J-Pennsylvania)
Jabez Huntington (AJ-Connecticut)	George McDuffie (N-South Carolina)
Peter Ihrie (J-Pennsylvania)	Rufus McIntire (J-Maine)
Ralph Ingersoll (AJ-Connecticut)	Daniel Newnan (J-Georgia)
Leonard Jarvis (J-Maine)	William Nuckolls (J-South Carolina)
Richard M. Johnson (J-Kentucky)	John Patton (J-Virginia)
Edward Kavanagh (J-Maine)	Job Pierson (J-New York)
Joseph Kendall (AJ-Massachusetts)	James K. Polk (J-Tennessee)
Henry King (J-Pennsylvania)	Edward Reed (J-New York)
John Kerr (AJ-Maryland)	Abraham Rencher (J-North Carolina)
Humphrey Leavitt (J-Ohio)	John Roane (J-Virginia)
Robert Letcher (AJ-Kentucky)	Erastus Root (J-New York)



<p> Thomas A. Marshall (AJ-Kentucky)  Thomas McKennan (AM-Pennsylvania)  Charles F. Mercer (AJ-Virginia)  John Milligan (AJ-Delaware)  Thomas R. Mitchell (J-South Carolina)  Henry Muhlenberg (J-Pennsylvania)  Thomas Newton Jr. (AJ-Virginia)  Dutee Pearce (AJ-Rhode Island)  Edmund Pendleton (AJ-New York)  David Potts (AM-Pennsylvania)  John Reed (AJ-Massachusetts)  William Russell (J-Ohio)  William B. Shepard (AJ-North Carolina)  William Slade (AM-Vermont)  Samuel A. Smith (J-Pennsylvania)  Isaac Southard (AJ-New Jersey)  John Spence (AJ-Maryland)  William Stanbery (AJ-Ohio)  Philander Stephens (J-Pennsylvania)  Andrew Stewart (AM-Pennsylvania)  Joel Sutherland (J-Pennsylvania)  John W. Taylor (AJ-New York)  Francis Thomas (J-Maryland)  Philemon Thomas (J-Louisiana)  Christopher Tompkins (AJ-Kentucky)  Phineas Tracy (AM-New York)  Joseph Vance (AJ-Ohio)  Gulian Verplanck (J-New York)  Samuel Vinton (AJ-Ohio)  Aaron Ward (J-New York)  Daniel Wardwell (J-New York)  John Watmough (AJ-Pennsylvania)  James M. Wayne (J-Georgia)  Samuel Wilkin (AJ-New York)  Elisha Whittlesey (AJ-Ohio)  Frederick Whittlesey (AM-New York)  Campbell P. White (J-New York)  Edward D. White (AJ-Louisiana)  Charles Wickliffe (J-Kentucky)  Richard Henry Wilde (J-Georgia)  John T.H. Worthington (J-Maryland)  Ebenezer Young (AJ-Connecticut) </p>	<p> Augustine H. Shepperd (J-North Carolina)  Nathan Soule (J-New York)  Jesse Speight (J-North Carolina)  James Standifer (J-Tennessee)  William Storrs (AJ-Connecticut)  Wiley Thompson (J-Georgia)  John Thomson (J-Ohio)  Grattan Wheeler (AM-New York)  Lewis Williams (AJ-North Carolina) </p>
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## APPENDIX C

## Mount Vernon Garden Sales, 1843-1846



I compiled this data from the diary and farm book of John Augustine Washington III, the last private owner of Mount Vernon. The blue bars represent sales between the months of March and July, and the red bars represent the total sales for the year in question. Between the years 1843 and 1845, John Augustine tracked the sales from the garden in his diary by asking the slave gardener, Phil Smith, for all profits earned. In the year 1843, John asked on eight occasions for the sales, amounting to \$16.55. In 1844, he asked Phil twenty-three times for garden sales, accounting for \$51.06. In 1845, he asked twenty-eight times, reporting sales of \$46.25. In January 1846, John Augustine hired a white gardener named George Kerr, and requested monthly payments from his gardener. The wide discrepancies in revenue suggest that Phil was possibly pocketing some of the sales prior to Kerr's arrival.

The last set of bars are based on incomplete data, as John Augustine Washington only recorded garden sales in 1846 from January to the end of July. But by comparing the average sales reported by Phil Smith in the months April, May, and June, here lies the discrepancies in reported income from the garden. With Kerr working in the garden, sales between March and July more than doubled from \$28.11 to \$59.01. This could possibly be attributed to increased tourism, multiple gardeners selling objects, etc. But

Kerr also recorded the sales for each individual item for the months of March and April, allowing John Augustine Washington an exact breakdown of the sales. Such organization would not have been possible with Phil Smith, who as a slave was most likely illiterate. Unfortunately, only one torn page of Kerr's inventory survived and is located in the back of John Augustine Washington's 1842-1845 farm book after his ledger recording all payments received and paid to Kerr in 1846.

Garden Sales	Amount	Year	Sales March-July	Total Sales
JAW Diary February 1842-November 1845				
April 27, 1842	2.50			
October 5, 1842	6.00	1842	2.50	8.50
April 6, 1843	1.25			
June 8, 1843	1.80			
June 26, 1843	3.45			
June 27, 1843	1.30			
June 30, 1843	2.33			
July 6, 1843	2.00			
July 21, 1843	3.12			
October 24, 1843	1.30	1843	15.25	16.55
January 16, 1844	1.50			
February 26, 1844	1.25			
March 8, 1844	0.75			
April 27, 1844	6.53			
May 11, 1844	4.83			
May 20, 1844	3.23			
May 22, 1844	1.47			
May 27, 1844	3.16			
May 29, 1844	2.81			
June 3, 1844	2.45			
June 10, 1844	1.12			
June 11, 1844	2.87			
June 24, 1844	1.39			
June 28, 1844	0.75			
July 1, 1844	1.36			
July 7, 1844	1.06			
July 30, 1844	1.24			
Aug 11, 1844	1.64			
Aug 17, 1844	3.18			
October 14, 1844	1.70			

November 2, 1844	1.47			
November 17, 1844	1.80			
December 3, 1844	3.50	1844	35.02	51.06
February 3, 1845	1.61			
February 24, 1845	0.75			
March 6, 1845	1.62			
March 8, 1845	1.12			
March 13, 1845	1.60			
March 24, 1845	2.68			
April 5, 1845	2.06			
April 14, 1845	2.00			
April 17, 1845	1.37			
April 26, 1845	0.75			
May 5, 1845	0.85			
May 24, 1845	5.25			
June 13, 1845	1.85			
June 17, 1845	1.40			
June 24, 1845	1.37			
June 25, 1845	0.62			
July 4, 1845	1.87			
July 8, 1845	0.85			
July 14, 1845	0.85			
September 1, 1845	5.95			
September 3, 1845	0.50			
September 8, 1845	1.25			
September 10, 1845	1.2			
September 13, 1845	-2.4			
September 18, 1845	1.0			
September 2,3 1845	0.7			
October 9, 1845	1.5			
October 22, 1845	3.6			
November 25, 1845	2.92	1845	28.11	46.69
Garden Account (1846)				
<b>Jan. 1846-July 1846</b>	63.96			
Data only available for January to July		1846	58.46	64.51

## APPENDIX D

Using the online databases *Readex America's Historical Newspapers* and Proquest's *American Periodicals*, I searched their contents using the keywords "Mount Vernon," "Washington," and "tomb" for the years 1799-1865. Using the returned results (Readex 654 results, Proquest 460 results), I organized the returns by publication, location, date, a short description of the content, and then recorded if the source mentioned the words "relic(s)," "pilgrim(s)," "pilgrimage," and "sacred/holy/hallowed." While some of these newspaper articles and periodicals are reprints, the description of the source denotes this if it is the case. I then created three tables of the results: Table A chronicles the returns of Readex newspaper results; Table B specifically focuses on visitor accounts to Mount Vernon (Readex newspapers only); and Table C lists the returns of Proquest's periodicals. For the sake of formatting, the locations of the publications for the periodicals have been omitted, but are easily accessible online at <http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/.com>. While I have not quantified the results, these charts at the very least illuminate the longevity of religious language used by travelers and observers to describe Mount Vernon, Washington's tomb, and anything associated with Washington. There are also a small number of African-American newspapers included in this list from *Accessible Archives*.

Table A demonstrates that after Washington's death in 1799, newspapers and visitors did occasionally mention the sacredness, holiness, or hallowedness of Mount Vernon. After the War of 1812 however, the words "relic(s)," "pilgrim(s)," and "pilgrimage" became much more common in these accounts and discussions over Mount Vernon's future. These words, for the most part, were consistently used to describe objects associated with Washington, travelers to Mount Vernon, and the journey as a rite of passage.

Table B focuses exclusively on visitor accounts, whereas Table A included every newspaper article that mentioned "Washington," "Mount Vernon," and "tomb." Again, in the early years after Washington's death these words were not regularly employed, but after 1818, the religious-laden language appears and consistently appears in the traveler accounts published by newspapers.

Table C tabulates the periodicals that reference "Washington," "Mount Vernon," and "tomb." Since this search returned 460 results, many of which were repeats, I decided to sift through those that were original and reprints. Many of these are also visitor accounts, but some do discuss the debates over moving Washington's body, the need to purchase Mount Vernon, etc. While there are few results before 1815, again the same pattern emerges. After the War of 1812, Americans visiting Mount Vernon or discussing Washington employ the same religious rhetoric to describe their experiences and the significance of saving Washington's home.

## APPENDIX D

TABLE A

(Readex America's Historical Newspapers, keyword search: "Mount Vernon," "Washington," and "tomb")

Newspaper	Place of Publication	Date	Observations	Relic(s)	Pilgrim(s)	Pilgrimage	Sacred/holy/hallowed
Centinel of Liberty	Georgetown, DC	12/20/1799	Funeral procession				
Constitutional Diary	Philadelphia, PA	12/20/1799	Funeral procession (reprint)				
Maryland Herald	Elizabethtown, MY	12/26/1799	Funeral procession (reprint)				
Columbian Centinel	Boston, MA	01/01/1800	Funeral procession				
Constitutional Telegraph	Boston, MA	01/01/1800	Funeral procession (reprint)				
Massachusetts Spy	Worcester, MA	01/01/1800	Funeral procession (reprint)				
Philadelphia Gazette	Philadelphia, PA	01/04/1800	An eulogy				X
Farmer's Weekly Museum	Walpole, NH	01/06/1800	Funeral procession (reprint)				
Norwich Courier	Norwich, CT	01/08/1800	Funeral procession (reprint)				
Telescope	Leominster, MA	01/09/1800	Funeral procession (reprint)				
Massachusetts Spy	Worcester, MA	02/19/1800	Eulogy, political Savior (Captain Dunham)				
The Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	02/28/1800	Eulogy, (Mr. Fisher Ames)				
Federal Galaxy	Brattleboro, VT	03/08/1800	Eulogy, political Savior (Captain Dunham) reprint				
Massachusetts Spy	Worcester, MA	03/12/1800	Eulogy, (Mr. Fisher Ames) reprint				
Independent Chronicle	Boston, MA	03/20/1800	Thoughts on Mr. Fisher Ames' eulogy				
Federal Gazette	Baltimore, MY	03/26/1800	Future generations will repair to his tomb				
Maryland Herald	Elizabethtown, MY	04/03/1800	A dream of Columbia at the tomb	X			
Centinel of Liberty	Georgetown, DC	06/10/1800	John and Abigail Adams visit Mount Vernon, tomb				
Philadelphia Gazette	Philadelphia, PA	06/13/1800	John and Abigail Adams visit Mount Vernon, tomb				
The Maryland Herald	Elizabethtown, MY	06/19/1800	John and Abigail Adams visit Mount Vernon, tomb				
Carlisle Gazette	Carlisle, PA	01/28/1801	Washington is gone but we still have Jefferson!				
Boston Commercial Gazette	Boston, MA	02/12/1801	Even the French worship heroes, give the man a mausoleum				

Commercial Advertiser	New York, NY	07/03/1801	Play that features Washington's tomb and ghost				
Massachusetts Mercury	Boston, MA	08/06/1802	Jefferson's visit to Mount Vernon and the tomb, negative				
New York Evening Post	New York, NY	08/10/1802	Jefferson's visit; insults to Washington; violate the sanctity				X
New York Evening Post	New York, NY	08/11/1802	Jefferson's visit, weeping at the tomb				X
New York Evening Post	New York, NY	08/14/1802	Jefferson's visit, weeping at the tomb (reprint)				X
Gazette of the United States	Philadelphia, PA	08/17/1802	Jefferson's visit to Mount Vernon and the tomb, Martha				
New York Herald	New York, NY	08/18/1802	Jefferson's visit to Mount Vernon and the tomb, Martha				
Republican	Baltimore, MD	08/20/1802	Jefferson's visit, divinity of Mount Vernon				X
Washington Federalist	Georgetown, DC	08/23/1802	Jefferson's visit, divinity of Mount Vernon (reprint)				X
Republican	Baltimore, MD	08/25/1802	Jefferson's visit to Mount Vernon and the tomb, Martha				
Philadelphia Gazette	Philadelphia, PA	08/27/1802	Jefferson's visit, weeping at the tomb (reprint)				X
Gazette of the United States	Philadelphia, PA	08/27/1802	Jefferson's visit; insults to Washington; violate the sanctity				X
The Balance	Hudson, NY	08/31/1802	Jefferson's visit; insults to Washington; violate the sanctity				X
The Balance	Hudson, NY	09/07/1802	Jefferson's visit; insults to Washington; violate the sanctity				X
Newport Mercury	Newport, RI	09/14/1802	Jefferson's visit; insults to Washington; violate the sanctity				X
Courier of New Hampshire	Concord, NH	09/16/1802	Jefferson's visit to Mount Vernon and the tomb, Martha				
Newport Mercury	Newport, RI	09/21/1802	Jefferson's visit; insults to Washington; violate the sanctity				X
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	09/25/1802	Jefferson's visit, divinity of Mount Vernon (reprint)				X
Farmer's Weekly Museum	Walpole, NH	10/12/1802	Jefferson's visit to Mount Vernon and the tomb, Martha				
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	10/20/1802	Jefferson's visit, weeping at the tomb				X
Providence Phoenix	Providence, RI	03/15/1806	Letter of a visit to Mount Vernon, General Barton asks GW for help				

New York Gazette	New York, NY	03/04/1809	Jefferson's visit, weeping at the tomb, hypocrite				
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser	Philadelphia, PA	01/07/1811	A veteran soldier visits, "My God Where Would They Bury Me?" Spirit of 76				
Farmer's Repository (National Intelligencer)	Charles Town, WV	05/17/1811	GWPC sainted sire, no monument is shameful, republics forget heroes				X
The Balance	Albany, NY	05/21/1811	GWPC sainted sire, no monument is shameful, republics forget heroes				
Newport Mercury	Newport, RI	05/25/1811	Jefferson's visit, weeping at the tomb, call for an equestrian statue				
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	05/31/1811	Jefferson's visit, weeping at the tomb, call for an equestrian statue				
National Intelligencer	Washington D.C.	05/16/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Boston Commercial Gazette	Boston, MA	05/25/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser	Philadelphia, PA	05/28/1812	Bushrod for President, "The Bones of Washington"				
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	05/29/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser	Philadelphia, PA	05/29/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Merrimack Intelligencer	Haverhill, MA	05/30/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Portland Gazette	Portland, ME	06/01/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	06/08/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Northern Whig	Hudson, NY	09/21/1812	GWPC "The Spirit of Federalism...the Tomb of Mount Vernon"-Lingan				
Independent American	Ballston Spa, NY	09/22/1812	GWPC "The Spirit of Federalism...the				



			Tomb of Mount Vernon"-Lingan				
The Constitutionalists	Exeter, NH	09/22/1812	GWPC "The Spirit of Federalism...the Tomb of Mount Vernon"-Lingan				
Bennington News-Letter	Bennington, VT	09/23/1812	GWPC "The Spirit of Federalism...the Tomb of Mount Vernon"-Lingan				
Providence Patriot	Providence, RI	02/12/1814	Arm the black population, holy procession to the tomb of Washington				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	07/28/1814	Americans go to the tomb, call on the spirit of GW to help us				
Alexandria Gazette	Alexandria, VA	02/28/1815	Story of British passing Mount Vernon during the war, silence				X
The Evening Post (Virginia Patriot)	New York, NY	03/15/1815	John Randolph, fear that British wanted the body of Washington	X	X		X
Western Monitor	Lexington, KY	03/31/1815	John Randolph, fear that British wanted the body of Washington				
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	02/17/1816	Virginia, Bushrod, to move body to Richmond, Charles Mercer				
The Albany Daily Advertiser	Albany, NY	02/22/1816	Leave Washington where he is, both governments wrong to do so	X			X
The Albany Daily Advertiser	Albany, NY	02/24/1816	Leave Washington where he is, both governments wrong to do so	X			X
Rhode Island Republican	Newport, RI	02/28/1816	Virginia should do it, "Virginia Argus" make up for federal failure				
The Burlington Gazette	Burlington, VT	03/01/1816	Leave Washington where he is, both governments wrong to do so	X			X
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	03/19/1816	Leave Washington where he is, both governments wrong to do so	X			X
New York Daily Advertiser (Baltimore Federal Republican)	New York, NY	11/11/1817	Editor Baltimore FR Alexander Hanson-buy Mount Vernon, property nation				X
American Beacon	Norfolk, VA	11/14/1817	US government should buy it, put a monument over it, Shakespeare	X			X
Newburyport Herald	Newburyport, MA	11/18/1817	Editor Baltimore FR Alexander Hanson-buy Mount Vernon, property nation				X

Massachusetts Spy	Worcester, MA	11/19/1817	Editor Baltimore FR Alexander Hanson-buy Mount Vernon, property nation				X
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	11/21/1817	Editor Baltimore FR Alexander Hanson-buy Mount Vernon, property nation				X
Connecticut Journal	New Haven, CT	12/02/1817	Poetry, monument to Washington at Mount Vernon	X	X		X
Berkshire Star	Stockbridge, MA	12/04/1817	Editor Baltimore FR Alexander Hanson-buy Mount Vernon, property nation				X
City of Washington Gazette	Washington D.C.	01/26/1818	Several revolutionary officers plan to visit the tomb				
The New York Columbian	New York, NY	02/02/1818	Several revolutionary officers plan to visit the tomb				
Boston Patriot and Daily Chronicle	Boston, MA	02/02/1818	Several revolutionary officers plan to visit the tomb				
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	02/06/1818	Several revolutionary officers plan to visit the tomb				
Essex Register	Salem, MA	02/07/1818	The tomb is closed				
Genius of Liberty	Leesburg, VA	02/10/1818	Several revolutionary officers plan to visit the tomb				
The Times	Hartford, CT	02/10/1818	Several revolutionary officers plan to visit the tomb				
American Advocate	Hallowell, ME	02/21/1818	Several revolutionary officers plan to visit the tomb				
American Beacon	Norfolk, VA	02/25/1818	Poetry, Revolutionary veterans visit the tomb				X
New York Daily Advertiser	New York, NY	02/27/1818	Visit to the tomb by Major John Reid, letter dated November 16, 1815	X		X	X
Genius of Liberty	Leesburg, VA	03/10/1818	Extract of John Reid's account, mentions General Jackson	X		X	X
American Beacon	Norfolk, VA	06/05/1818	A foreigner letter, Jerusalem and Mecca			X	X
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	06/30/1818	A foreigner letter, Jerusalem and Mecca			X	X
American Beacon	Norfolk, VA	09/22/1818	English observer, visits Mount Vernon and the tomb, slave guide				
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser	Philadelphia, PA	12/04/1818	Goldsborough argues to erect a monument where the tomb is				
American Mercury (Richmond Enquirer)	Hartford, CT	12/29/1818	Extract of letter of visitor to Mount Vernon	X			X
Alexandria Herald	Alexandria, VA	02/15/1819	Monument over the tomb debate in the Senate, Forsyth,				

			Fromentin				
National Intelligencer	Washington D.C.	02/18/1819	Congress should buy an acre around the tomb and build a pyramid				
Newburyport Herald	Newburyport, MA	02/19/1819	Buy an acre, holy ground, pyramid is a good idea				
Newbern Sentinel	New Bern, NC	02/20/1819	Buy an acre, holy ground, pyramid is a good idea				X
Camden Gazette	Camden, SC	03/04/1819	Congress should buy an acre around the tomb and build a pyramid				
New England Galaxy	Boston, MA	03/19/1819	Visit to MV, German gardener, Lieut. Francis Hall 1816-7, mentions a theft				
Alexandria Gazette	Alexandria, VA	06/25/1819	College students visit, recite poem "To the Tomb of Washington"				X
City of Washington Gazette	Washington D.C.	07/28/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Baltimore Patriot	Baltimore, MY	07/30/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
New York Columbian	New York, NY	07/31/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
The Northern Whig	Hudson, NY	08/03/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Boston Patriot & Daily Chronicle	Boston, MA	08/03/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Norwich Courier	Norwich, CT	08/04.1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
City Gazette and Daily Advertiser	Charleston, SC	08/04/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Boston Commercial Gazette	Boston, MA	08/05/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
The Yankee	Boston, MA	08/05/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Berkshire Star	Stockbridge, MA	08/05/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Independent Chronicle	Boston, MA	08/07/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Franklin	Charlestown,	08/07/1819	Russian minister on a				

Monitor	MA		visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Providence Gazette	Providence, RI	08/07/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Ostego Herald	Cooperstown, NY	08/09/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Cherry-Valley Gazette	Cherry Valley, NY	08/10/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
New Bedford Mercury	New Bedford, MA	08/13/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Town Gazette	Clarksville, TN	08/30/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Illinois Intelligencer	Vandalia, IL	09/01/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser	Philadelphia, PA	01/14/1820	Visit to the tomb, inside the tomb and a creaky door				X
Alexandria Gazette	Alexandria, VA	02/28/1820	George Washington Parke Custis oration, Washington commemoration Feb 22		X		X
Agricultural Intelligencer (Savannah Republican)	Boston, MA	03/24/1820	Visit to the tomb, inside the tomb and a creaky door				X
New York Daily Advertiser	New York, NY	06/26/1820	George Washington Parke Custis oration, Washington commemoration Feb 22		X		X
Ostego Herald	Cooperstown, NY	07/03/1820	Visit to the tomb, inside the tomb and a creaky door				X
Portsmouth Oracle	Portsmouth, NH	08/05/1820	Visit to the tomb, inside the tomb and a creaky door				X
Providence Gazette	Providence, RI	08/10/1820	Visit to the tomb, inside the tomb and a creaky door				X
Rhode Island Republican	Newport, RI	08/16/1820	Visit to the tomb, inside the tomb and a creaky door				X
Essex Register	Salem, MA	07/31/1822	Miss Cole, independence celebration, lowly tomb				
Essex Register	Salem, MA	01/18/1823	Editor of New York Statesman visits Nathaniel H. Carter	X	X	X	X
Columbian Centinel	Boston, MA	02/19/1823	William B. Walter, poem inspired by the visit		X		X
North Star	Danville, VT	02/20/1823	Editor of New York Statesman visits	X	X	X	X

			Nathaniel H. Carter				
Providence Gazette	Providence, RI	03/05/1823	Pickpockets and thieves, favorite place for pilgrims		X		X
Newburyport Herald	Newburyport, MA	07/15/1823	Fourth of July Celebration, oration at tomb by George H. Richardson				
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	07/15/1823	Fourth of July Celebration at Mount Vernon, more detailed, Pleyel's Hymn				X
Middlesex Gazette	Middletown, CT	07/17/1823	Fourth of July Celebration, oration at tomb by George H. Richards				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	07/19/1823	Fourth of July Celebration, oration at tomb by George H. Richards				
Haverhill Gazette	Haverhill, MA	08/30/1823	Baptist General Convention, Reverend Elon Galusha	X			X
Watch-Tower	Cooperstown, NY	09/08/1823	Baptist General Convention, Reverend Elon Galusha	X			X
Eastern Argus	Portland, ME	04/20/1824	The stealing of Washington's body, Congress should buy Mount Vernon				X
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	04/23/1824	Extract of a letter to the editors of N.Y. American, gardener, names on door			X	X
North Star (Claremont Spectator)	Danville, VT	06/22/1824	Grand Lodges Masons wants to erect a monument, over the tomb, theft				X
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	08/27/1824	News that GWPC is having a ring made for Lafayette, made by G. Gaither				
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	08/27/1824	News that GWPC is having a ring made for Lafayette, made by G. Gaither				
Trenton Federalist	Trenton, NJ	09/06/1824	News that GWPC, also mentions the tent of Washington at Baltimore				
Providence Gazette	Providence, RI	09/08/1824	Tomb will be repaired before Lafayette visits				
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	09/21/1824	Extract of letter, gentleman traveling in Virginia				X
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	10/22/1824	Lafayette gets Washington cane at Navy Yard relick, steam boat Petersburg	X			
Vermont Gazette	Bennington, VT	10/26/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, eagle hovered story				
Republican	Easton, MY	10/26/1824	Eagle follows	X			X

Star			Lafayette to Mount Vernon, its true we swear				
Providence Patriot	Providence, RI	10/27/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, eagle hovered story				
Providence Gazette	Providence, RI	10/27/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb				
Independent Chronicle	Boston, MA	10/27/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb				
Independent Chronicle	Boston, MA	10/27/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, eagle hovered story				X
Boston Commercial Gazette	Boston, MA	10/28/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, eagle hovered story				X
Rhode Island Republican	Newport, RI	10/28/1824	Lafayette's progress, sash divided and given to the youth, Capt. Crocker				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	10/30/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, eagle story; GW's masonic sash and jewel	X			X
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	11/01/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb; sash and medal given, formerly GW's				
The Watch-Tower	Cooperstown, NY	11/01/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb; sash and medal given, formerly GW's				
Saratoga Sentinel	Saratoga Springs, NY	11/01/1824	Lafayette's progress, sash divided and given to the youth, Capt. Crocker				
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	11/01/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, eagle hovered story				X
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	11/02/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, very detailed, GWPC speech, Lafayette tears		X		
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	11/03/1824	Lafayette's visit, then Yorktown, Washington's tent				X
Ithaca Journal	Ithaca, NY	11/03/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, eagle hovered story				X
Essex Register	Salem, MA	11/04/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, very detailed, GWPC speech, Lafayette tears		X		X
Eastern Argus	Portland, ME	11/04/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, very detailed, GWPC speech, Major Ewell				X
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	11/05/1824	Lafayette's visit, then Yorktown, Washington's tent				X
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	11/08/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, very detailed, GWPC speech, Lafayette tears		X		X
Vermont Gazette	Bennington, VT	11/09/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, very		X		X

			detailed, GWPC speech, Lafayette tears				
Eastern Argus	Portland, ME	11/09/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, very detailed, GWPC speech, Lafayette tears		X		X
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	11/09/1824	Tent of Washington, 10-15 thousand attend, Cornwallis' wax candles				X
North Star	Danville, VT	11/16/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, very detailed, GWPC speech, Lafayette tears		X		X
Saratoga Sentinel	Saratoga Springs, NY	11/17/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, very detailed, GWPC speech, Lafayette tears		X		X
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	11/26/1824	Lafayette's visit to the tomb, very detailed, GWPC speech, Lafayette tears		X		X
Eastern Argus	Portland, ME	12/16/1824	Monument to Washington; Mason lodges want to put money forward				
Eastern Argus	Portland, ME	02/01/1825	Monument at Mount Vernon; Grand Lodge of Maine \$1,000				
Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	07/21/1825	Entombment in Capitol would have been good, Masons good too				
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	09/06/1825	Letter to Bolivar from GWPC, Washington's medal, portrait and hair	X			
Republican Star	Easton, MY	09/13/1825	Letter to Bolivar from GWPC, Washington's medal, portrait and hair	X			
Middlesex Gazette	Middletown, CT	09/14/1825	Letter to Bolivar from GWPC, Washington's medal, portrait and hair	X			
New Bedford Mercury	New Bedford, MA	09/16/1825	Letter to Bolivar from GWPC, Washington's medal, portrait and hair	X			
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	09/20/1825	Poetry on the tomb, the obelisk should pierce the sky		X		X
Vermont Gazette	Bennington, VT	09/27/1825	Letters to Bolivar, GWPC, Lafayette, Washington's medal, portrait and hair				
Norwich Courier	Norwich, CT	01/04/1826	Monument, make Mount Vernon property of the nation				X
Essex Register	Salem, MA	02/16/1826	Poetry, relics of Washington	X			
Baltimore Patriot	Baltimore, MY	05/17/1826	Party of 30 Congress goes to MV, refused			X	

			by Bushrod, steam boat Enterprise				
Baltimore Patriot	Baltimore, MY	05/19/1826	Party of pleasure, Sabbath, written by E.L.				X
Eastern Argus	Portland, ME	05/23/1826	Party of 30 Congress goes to MV, refused by Bushrod, steam boat Enterprise			X	
American Mercury	Hartford, CT	05/23/1826	Party of 30 Congress goes to MV, refused by Bushrod, steam boat Enterprise			X	
Eastern Argus	Portland, ME	05/23/1826	Party of 30 Congress goes to MV, refused by Bushrod, steam boat Enterprise			X	
Boston Commercial Gazette	Boston, MA	05/25/1826	Party that visited, visitors always welcome except on Sundays				X
Haverhill Gazette	Haverhill, MA	05/27/1826	Party of 30 Congress goes to MV, refused by Bushrod, steam boat Enterprise			X	
Watch-Tower	Cooperstown, NY	05/29/1826	Party of 30 Congress goes to MV, refused by Bushrod, steam boat Enterprise			X	
Republican Star	Easton, MY	05/30/1826	Bushrod's response to the editors of the Alexandria Gazette				
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	05/30/1826	Bushrod was objecting to the steam boats, Mr. Herbert				
Republican Star	Easton, MY	05/30/1826	Bushrod's response to the editors of the Alexandria Gazette				
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	05/30/1826	Bushrod's threat to sue in 1822, forbid pleasure parties				
Norwich Courier	Norwich, CT	05/31/1826	Bushrod was objecting to the steam boats, Mr. Herbert				
Middlesex Gazette	Middletown, CT	05/31/1826	These men violated the Sabbath				
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	07/31/1826	Funeral oration for Jefferson by Virginia Governor Tyler, Monticello will be like Mount Vernon				X
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	12/12/1826	Monument for Washington's mother				X
Middlesex Gazette	Middletown, CT	01/10/1827	Captain Partridge and cadets Military Academy at Georgetown	X			X
Connecticut Courant (NE Galaxy)	Hartford, CT	01/29/1827	Traveler to Mount Vernon with Captain Partridge			X	
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	02/03/1827	Traveler to Mount Vernon with Captain Partridge			X	
Norwich Courier	Norwich, CT	02/14/1827	Traveler to Mount Vernon with Captain Partridge			X	



Republican Star	Easton, MY	04/03/1827	Traveler to Mount Vernon with Captain Partridge			X	
Vermont Gazette	Bennington, VT	09/23/1828	Splendid Views of American Scenery, #7 Tomb, T.K. Greenbank in Philadelphia				
New Bedford Mercury	New Bedford, MA	12/04/1829	Death of Bushrod, Mount Vernon should be bought by government	X			X
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	12/04/1829	Moving Bushrod's body home, Washington's relics	X			
Newport Mercury	Newport, RI	12/05/1829	Mrs. Washington dies, tomb refers to the relics of the progenitor	X			X
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	11/25/1831	Mr. N.P. Willis of NY Mirror, visit to MV, decrepit old family servant	X		X	
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	02/18/1832	Virginian delegates response to the proposed removal				X
Connecticut Courant	Hartford, CT	02/21/1832	Washington's remains should stay where they are				X
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	02/24/1832	Protect the sacred remains of the Father of his Country, granite for protection	X			X
Portsmouth Journal	Portsmouth, NH	02/25/1832	Reminder of the attempt to steal Washington's remains, Lawrence				
New York Mercury	New York, NY	02/29/1832	VHD passed approval of John's actions, Virginia's duty to guard the body				
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	03/01/1832	Congressional debate, Senate vote 29-15	X			X
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	03/02/1832	Burges argues for removal, long monologue	X		X	X
Republican Star	Easton, MY	03/06/1832	Virginian delegates response to the proposed removal				
Essex Gazette	Haverhill, MA	03/10/1832	Virginian delegates response to the proposed removal				
Eastern Argus	Portland, ME	03/23/1832	George Washington's boyhood home, GWPC		X		X
The New York Mercury	New York, NY	04/25/1832	Visit to Mount Vernon, shame on Virginia, dialogue of a slave guide, Fisher				X
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	05/18/1832	National Republican Convention, want to visit tomb, suggested by Halsey				X
Connecticut Mirror (National Intelligencer)	Hartford, CT	05/19/1832	Young Men's National Republican Convention, visit the tomb			X	

Newport Mercury	Newport, RI	05/19/1832	About 300 members of the NRC of Young Men				
Connecticut Courant	Hartford, CT	05/22/1832	Young Men's National Republican Convention, visit the tomb			X	
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	05/23/1832	Did Washington not allow the YMNRC to visit the tomb?				
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	06/01/1832	Young Men's National Republican Convention, visit the tomb			X	
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	06/01/1832	Servants sent to prevent the YMNRC from visiting the old tomb or house				
Connecticut Mirror	Hartford, CT	06/09/1832	John Washington is ignorant, inherited the name and none of the attributes				
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	06/15/1832	Senator Hill, and Auditor Kendall with their landing party, steam boat				
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	06/26/1832	John Augustine Washington dies, age 43, pulmonary complaint				
Salem Gazette (National Gazette)	Salem, MA	09/14/1832	Mr. Vigne's visit to Mount Vernon, Six Months in America			X	
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	01/08/1833	Washington's birthplace, will it become a place for pilgrims?		X		
Portsmouth Journal of Lit and Politics	Portsmouth, NH	02/16/1833	Mr. Vigne's visit to Mount Vernon, Six Months in America			X	
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	03/05/1833	All Americans should visit Mount Vernon, the holder of Washington's remains				
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	01/07/1834	Kneel at the tomb of Jackson like they do at Washington's	X			
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	07/04/1834	Poetry in honor of Lafayette's death, Washington, Jefferson, Adams	X	X		X
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	09/12/1834	Female slave at gate, things uninteresting compared to tomb, tree branches				
Haverhill Gazette	Haverhill, MA	04/23/1836	Editor goes to MV, aged slave gives directions, servant boy, women in tomb	X			X
Connecticut Courant	Hartford, CT	08/29/1836	Editor goes to MV, aged slave gives directions, servant boy, women in tomb	X			X
The Colored American	New York, NY	11/09/1839	"Which has worn with the pressure of pilgrim sandals, around the grave"				

Haverhill Gazette	Haverhill, MA	04/24/1841	Visitor to MV in 1841, new tomb, steam boats, tree boughs (Jeremiah Spofford)				X
Hudson River Chronicle (NY Express)	Sing-Sing, NY	05/18/1841	Visit led by aged servant woman, branch for a cane!			X	X
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	05/25/1841	Visitor to Mount Vernon in 1841, new tomb, steam boats, tree boughs				X
The Log Cabin	New York, NY	09/11/1841	Tour by a communicative black man, Bill Smith, T. Struthers for sarcophagi				X
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	10/26/1841	"Monuments of Washington's Patriotism" for sale, publication				
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	11/26/1841	Monticello and Mount Vernon, University of Virginia				
Daily Madisonian	Washington D.C.	12/24/1841	The papers should be considered relics	X			
Daily Madisonian	Washington D.C.	05/27/1842	Lieutenant Shuttleworth poetry	X			X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	09/13/1842	The Mount Vernon Guard, military regiment				
Barre Gazette	Barre, MA	09/23/1842	Moving body is in poor taste, look at the French and Napoleon				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	10/28/1842	John Dillon Smith's visit to Mount Vernon	X			X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	03/14/1843	Washington Association, toasts and songs				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/01/1843	Mount Vernon for sale? \$20,000				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	07/08/1843	Mount Vernon for sale? \$20,000				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	11/20/1843	Steam boat captain and first mate give tour on boat, moment of silence				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	03/21/1844	Mr. Joshua Wells' turns a piece of a locust tree, cane for General Scott				
Weekly Herald	New York, NY	03/01/1845	Obituary for Samuel Anderson, a negro of Washington's aged 100				
Weekly Herald	New York, NY	05/31/1845	President Polk plans to visit, big company, something about removals			X	
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	06/19/1845	Visit, John Struthers made the sarcophagus, nothing denoting his greatness			X	X
Weekly Herald	New York, NY	07/12/1845	Lancaster Fencibles visit, denied entry, too many visitors,				X

			govt. should buy				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	04/17/1846	Powhattan steam boat, harmonious singers and "Washington's Grave" song				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	04/27/1846	As the spring thaws, throngs of visitors descend on Mount Vernon			X	
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	04/30/1846	Powhattan steam boat, harmonious singers and "Washington's Grave" song				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/12/1847	A man wants to buy, colony of foreigners on the estate, German or Swiss		X		X
Farmer's Cabinet (NY Journal Commerce)	Amherst, NH	07/29/1847	Rev. J.N. Danforth's visit, very religious, Chateaubriand				X
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	10/12/1847	Sale of Mount Vernon, Vice President Dallas, JAW, terms of sale, a Turk				X
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	11/19/1847	Details on the destruction of MV, asylum for disabled seamen or refugees				
The National Era	Washington D.C.	04/06/1848	The death of Altamont, the 94 year old ex-Washington slave				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	04/25/1848	Memorials from across the country asking the govt. to buy Mount Vernon				
The North Star	Rochester, NY	05/05/1848	The death of Altamont, the 94 year old ex-Washington slave				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/04/1848	Steam boat Columbus, many hundreds of strangers, 50 cents a passenger				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	08/21/1848	Fundraiser for St. Peter's Church, take a boat ride				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	02/21/1850	Death of Washington's pallbearer, George Coryell, mason, last of carriers to die				
Savannah Republican	Savannah, GA	03/02/1850	Death of Washington's pallbearer, George Coryell, mason, last of carriers to die				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	04/15/1850	More steam boats, Alice and Mrs. Ann Chase				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	08/19/1850	DC announcements, steam boats				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	08/23/1850	Two Pleasure trips,				

			on the Thomas Collyer				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	09/13/1850	Mention of new marble at the tombs? Now more accessible thanks to boats				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	09/14/1850	Light Infantry went to MV, perfectly silent, perform music at the tomb				
The Weekly Herald	New York, NY	09/14/1850	Members of both houses visit MV on the Thomas Collyer steam boat				
The National Era	Washington D.C.	09/19/1850	Government should buy MV and turn it into a Congressional cemetery				
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	09/19/1850	Members of both houses visit MV on the Thomas Collyer steam boat				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	09/26/1850	Members of both houses visit MV on the Thomas Collyer steam boat				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	09/26/1850	A Patron reading a letter of a traveler to Mount Vernon		X		X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	09/26/1850	Four Mount Vernon trips, MWF and Saturday, refreshments at city prices				
The Daily Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	11/19/1850	GWPC and Edmond Lafayette visit the tomb	X	X	X	X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	01/06/1851	Lord Carlisle's Lecture on America in England, mentions visit to tomb				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	01/10/1851	Corrections to Carlisle's lecture, the part about moving the body				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	02/14/1851	The Thomas Collyer will make trips, spend time around the tomb				
The Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	02/27/1851	Turn Mount Vernon into an agricultural school, heal wounds at tomb		X		X
The Sun (Alexandria Gazette)	Baltimore, MY	03/07/1851	A bill proposed to establish an asylum for old soldiers, why not MV?				
Daily Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	05/12/1851	Mr. Washington informs President he's been offered \$200,000 for MV				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/12/1851	Burning of the national archives, but respect showed by British to tomb				X
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	04/19/1852	Visit of Kossuth to the tomb				X
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	04/20/1852	Who Might Have Been the Washington			X	

			of Hungary, Full account				
Pennsylvania Freeman	Philadelphia, PA	04/22/1852	Kossuth's visit, emotional, retires to the woods				X
Frederick Douglass Paper	Rochester, NY	04/29/1852	Kossuth's visit, dialogue			X	X
The Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	05/04/1852	Recap of Kossuth's visit				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/22/1852	New School Presbyterian Assembly in DC, tomb visit to inspire Congress				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/25/1852	General Assembly of the Presbyterians, Thomas Collyer with Capt. Gedney				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/29/1852	Parties of Pleasure, Railroad Office, tickets \$2 round-trip, Samuel Gedney				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	06/17/1852	Visit to Mount Vernon, R.J. Turner vocalist sings, relics, Captain Gedney	X			X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/07/1852	Steamer George Washington, Capt. Corson, Union Fire Company, Linhardt's band				
The National Era	Washington D.C.	07/08/1852	A poem to the tomb of Washington, by I.H. Julian				X
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	07/22/1852	Stories of the Revolution, end of story failure of govt. to buy home and tomb				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/22/1852	Chartering of the Steamer Jewess				
Frederick Douglass Paper	Rochester, NY	09/03/1852	A poem to the tomb of Washington, by I.H. Julian				X
Frederick Douglass Paper	Rochester, NY	10/29/1852	Mount Vernon a Human Stock Farm!				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	11/13/1852	Masonic visit to Mount Vernon, centennial anniversary of joining the Masons				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	03/15/1853	Estimate of how many people are visiting per month				
Daily Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	07/13/1853	Mount Vernon is in a state of ruin, a summer home for the President?				X
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	09/01/1853	"Old Negro", relics of Mount Vernon for sixpence	X			X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	11/26/1853	The Washington Grays, 1832 excursion, lock of hair from GWPC, set in medals				

The Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	12/15/1853	Legislative debate over the purchase of Mount Vernon		X		
The National Era	Washington D.C.	12/29/1853	Opinion piece on course of events, 1799 resolution the true one			X	X
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	03/07/1854	Remains of Washington, quotes Martha on her deathbed, key to receptacle		X		X
Frederick Douglass Paper	Rochester, NY	03/10/1854	Mount Vernon's assessed value is not higher than \$30,0000				
The Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	05/02/1854	The American Scientific Association visits, band in tow, about 300 people	X			X
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	05/11/1854	The American Scientific Association visits, band in tow, about 300 people				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	06/17/1854	Steamer George Washington, MWF round-trip \$1, 75 cents Alexandria				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/15/1854	Mayor Addison, Senators, Congressmen, invited visit, 5,000 people since Jan.				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	07/21/1854	Mayor Addison, Senators, Congressmen, invited visit, 5,000 people since Jan.				
Delaware State Reporter	Dover, DE	12/19/1854	JAW turns down the request of ladies' association to sell Mount Vernon, only Virginia or federal government				
Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	12/20/1854	JAW turns down the request of ladies' association to sell Mount Vernon, only Virginia or federal government				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	01/18/1855	Convention of the Soldiers of 1812, visit the tomb				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	02/24/1855	Spring travel has commenced, everyone who visits Washington seeks the tomb				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	04/29/1855	Pennsylvania friend, Thomas Collier, canes	X		X	X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	04/30/1855	President Franklin Pierce visits, Thomas Collier			X	
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	05/09/1855	President Franklin Pierce visits, Thomas Collier			X	

The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	05/24/1855	President Franklin Pierce visits, Thomas Collier			X	
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	06/22/1855	Thomas Collier, T and Fri, Captain Samuel Gedney				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	06/29/1855	Steamer George Washington, discount for those who take the railroad				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/03/1855	Fourth of July excursion on the George Washington, RR discount				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	08/28/1855	Visit to Mount Vernon and the sights to see, very specific		X	X	X
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	12/06/1855	Ladies association wants to purchase MV and preserve it, New Hampshire				X
Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	12/07/1855	VA Governor's message, Joseph Johnson, asks delegates to buy MV	X			X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	12/17/1855	Veterans celebration, War of 1812, recalling visits to the tomb		X	X	X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	12/19/1855	The Amoskeag Veterans visit the tomb, steamer George Washington				X
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	12/27/1855	The Amoskeag Veterans visit the tomb, steamer George Washington, Vannerson				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	12/27/1855	The Amoskeag Veterans visit the tomb, steamer George Washington			X	X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	02/27/1856	A tourist is crying over an ice house, mistook it for the tomb				
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	03/01/1856	A tourist is crying over an ice house, mistook it for the tomb				
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	03/20/1856	A tourist is crying over an ice house, mistook it for the tomb				
Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	03/24/1856	MVLA of the Union, JAW wants \$200,000 and its being raised				
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	04/05/1856	JAW's reply, Mount Vernon not for sale				
Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	04/08/1856	If we can't buy MV, use the raised funds to preserve the mansion, grounds				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	04/14/1856	Resolutions of 98', Virginia can't appropriate the funds, MVLA give \$ to Virginia to buy it				



Weekly Herald	New York, NY	04/26/1856	MV not for sale, JAW publically announces it, use the \$ to help the estate				
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	05/01/1856	Critical analysis of JAW's management of the estate				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/03/1856	The Marion Rifles, Captain Samuel Harvey, visit				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/07/1856	About 5,000 people visit MV per year, big gathering for Fourth around tomb				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/07/1856	Steamer Alice Price, Captain Parker, Corson on Washington, Gedney Collier				
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	10/21/1856	Irving's Life of Washington tomb featured on steel engravings				
Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	01/16/1857	Agricultural institute at Mount Vernon				
Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	03/16/1857	Legislative debate over MV now that TN has purchased Hermitage				
Barre Gazette	Barre, MA	04/10/1857	JAW will only sell 200 acres, \$200,000, reserve the right to tomb and half acre				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	05/28/1857	Don't modernize Mount Vernon, foreigners might turn it into a business	X			X
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	06/09/1857	Letter to the Mount Vernon Ladies Association				X
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	06/13/1857	Southern Matron, daughter of SC with Virginia blood in her veins				X
Weekly Herald	New York, NY	06/27/1857	Masons visit the tomb, St. John's Day, christening of two children, named Wash				
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	06/30/1857	Call to women of Charleston to raise money for Mount Vernon				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/22/1857	Western guests, Hail Columbia, music and marches				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/23/1857	Western guests, Hail Columbia, music and marches				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/27/1857	The Cabinet at Mount Vernon, Water Witch government steamer				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	08/15/1857	Masons want to purchase Mount Vernon, then give it to Virginia				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	10/08/1857	Columbia Masons visit Mount Vernon,				X

			says June 24, 1837				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	01/05/1858	Washington Canes, JAW, James Crutchett of Washington DC				
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	03/09/1858	South Carolina Masons want to purchase Mount Vernon, 250,000 Masons				X
Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	04/23/1858	JAW's terms to the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association				
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	04/26/1858	Southern Matron, property of the nation, full terms by JAW				
Daily Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	04/28/1858	Southern Matron, JAW agreed to sell, Ann Pamela Cunningham				
Barre Gazette	Barre, MA	04/30/1858	Southern Matron, JAW agreed to sell, Ann Pamela Cunningham				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	05/01/1858	Paper claims the land isn't worth 1/10 of that, criticizes JAW				X
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	05/06/1858	Terms of sale, property of nation				
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	05/11/1858	JAW's speculation is disturbing, even worse than anything in Yankeedom				
Daily Confederation	Montgomery, AL	05/27/1858	Mention of an offer of \$300,000 by Northern men, look into it				
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	05/31/1858	Terms of sale, property of nation				
Daily Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	06/11/1858	Baltimore mechanic carves a replica of MV and tomb, 20 square feet				
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	07/02/1858	Secretary of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association releases statement				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/03/1858	Fourth of July celebration, out of Baltimore				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/07/1858	Specifics of the Baltimoreans visit for the Fourth				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/09/1858	New York Volunteers visit DC, later go on tour of the tomb				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/12/1858	New York Seventh Regiment visits the tomb				X
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	07/21/1858	Call to join the MVLA of the Union, \$1 fraternity, speak very democratically				
Charleston Mercury (Philadelphia)	Charleston, SC	08/02/1858	Rumor that JAW wants to remove the remains of GW				

Journal)			before MVLA gets it				
Weekly Patriot and Union	Harrisburg, PA	08/05/1858	Rumor of JAW, how is the contract worded? Includes tomb contents?				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	08/09/1858	Round trip tickets now \$3.25, at Camden Station				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	08/12/1858	More details on the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association as an organization				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	09/23/1858	Selling of Gilbert portraits as a fundraiser for families and clubs, Everett				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	10/21/1858	Mrs. E.S. Connor advocating to California women to be assertive			X	X
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	10/21/1858	Reply to Connor by Anna Cora Ritchie				X
Delaware State Reporter	Dover, DE	11/19/1858	Margaret Ann Comegys, VR for Delaware makes an appeal to state citizens				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	11/27/1858	The Mount Vernon Papers, Everett donated \$10,000 to Mount Vernon Fund				X
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	12/01/1858	Sarah King Hale, VR for New Hampshire makes an appeal to state citizens				X
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	12/02/1858	Dr. C. MacKay's letter, English traveler		X		X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	12/24/1858	Everett's critiques of the state of condition of Mount Vernon				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	12/30/1858	Mr. Ullman NY Academy of Music, give his orchestra for a ball in Richmond				
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	01/10/1859	\$57,000 paid to JAW, first installment				
Barre Gazette	Barre, MA	01/28/1859	JAW's add for a runaway slave, we must buy MV, unworthy descendant				X
<b>Douglass' Monthly</b>	Rochester, NY	02/xx/1859	Mount Vernon a slave Shamble, JAW playing on the bones of his ancestor				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	02/10/1859	A Polander gives 50 cents as a contribution to Mrs. Newton				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	02/14/1859	Expansion from 9 to 26 states, made the payments, but more help needed				
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	02/15/1859	Expansion from 9 to 26 states, made the payments, but more				

			help needed				
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	02/24/1859	Call to women of California, details on installment payments				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	02/24/1859	Washington's birthday, only in MA is it a state holiday and banks close				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/21/1859	Mrs. Ritchie receives \$105 from Masons for Mount Vernon				
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	05/25/1859	Knights Templar visit the tomb, flowers spread over the tomb with garland				X
Delaware State Reporter	Dover, DE	06/10/1859	Steamer Mount Vernon, Knights Templar visit				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	06/11/1859	Cadets of West Point send MVLA, 229 subscriptions and \$458 dollars				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	06/15/1859	Ad for excursions to MV, every Tues and Friday, \$3, Samuel Baker Captain				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/12/1859	Ad for excursions to MV, every Tues and Friday, \$3, Samuel Baker Captain				
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	07/13/1859	New Hampshire needs to step up and assist the MVLA				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/15/1859	Ad for excursions to MV, every Tues and Friday, \$3, Samuel Baker Captain				
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	07/29/1859	Visitor to Mount Vernon, writer for the Alexandria Gazette				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	08/06/1859	William Selden chartered, excursion planned				
Barre Gazette	Barre, MA	02/03/1860	Woman found weeping at the ice house, mistaking it for the tomb				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	03/08/1860	Mount Vernon Ladies' Association grand procession to Mount Vernon				X
The National Era	Washington D.C.	03/15/1860	Visit by Congress on March 7th, 200 people, Marine band, Larrabee and Cochrane	X			
Daily Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	03/16/1860	MVLA grand procession to MV, Thomas Collier, details of excursion				X
Ohio Daily Statesman	Columbus, OH	03/21/1860	Visit to Mount Vernon, the Ladies have taken possession, pennies for "picaninnies"	X			X
Daily Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	04/04/1860	Mention of the Washington and				

			Mount Vernon Steamboat Company				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/08/1860	Western and Southwestern editors travel to Washington, Mount Vernon				
Wisconsin Daily Patriot	Madison, WI	05/16/1860	Editors from the West, much more detailed account	X		X	X
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	06/20/1860	A little birdy as a preacher, how a bird experiences visitors				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	10/06/1860	Prince of Wales visits the tomb, horse chestnuts				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	10/17/1860	Prince of Wales visits the tomb, horse chestnuts	X			X
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	10/23/1860	Prince of Wales visits the tomb, horse chestnuts, plans to plant them at Windsor				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	11/13/1860	Quartermaster Strong of the Putnam Phalanx schedules visit				
Daily True Delta	New Orleans, LA	11/21/1860	Crew of the Bainridge for their contributions to the Mount Vernon Fund				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	12/07/1860	Putnam Phalanx visits Washington D.C. and Mount Vernon				X
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	04/25/1861	Old Church in Alexandria, ground sacred because of his feet, pew in tact	X			X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/17/1861	Rumors of JAW taking Washington's body from MV, deed favors Ladies				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	05/23/1861	Rumors of JAW taking Washington's body from MV, deed favors Ladies				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/23/1861	Professor Amasa McCoy visits MV, undisturbed, superintendent				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	05/24/1861	Rumors of body missing, vandalism, Ladies recommend returning relics safety	X			
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	05/24/1861	Professor Amasa McCoy visits MV, undisturbed, superintendent				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	05/30/1861	Three New Yorkers visit to make sure Washington's remains still there				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	05/31/1861	Three New Yorkers visit to make sure Washington's remains still there, detailed				

San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	06/07/1861	More visitors confirm that Washington's remains still at MV				
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	06/07/1861	Three New Yorkers visit to make sure Washington's remains still there, detailed				
The Crisis	Columbus, OH	08/08/1861	General Winfield Scott's Orders, trampling of Constitution and ashes				
Weekly Patriot and Union	Harrisburg, PA	09/05/1861	A Drive through Confederate Territory to the Tomb of Washington				X
The Christian Recorder	Philadelphia, PA	10/05/1861	A company visits MV, 800 bushels of wheat, 500 oats, 70 barrels of fish				
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	02/06/1862	No tolling bell on pacing Mount Vernon, hallowed spot, the tomb				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	03/06/1862	General McClellan's Dream with Washington				
Hartford Daily Courant	Hartford, CT	05/28/1863	Thomas and Charles Gardner selling lithographs of the tomb \$1 , frauds				
Wisconsin Daily Patriot	Madison, WI	10/13/1863	British legation visits the tomb, along with Admiral Milne				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	10/13/1863	British legation visits the tomb, along with Admiral Milne				
Wisconsin Daily Patriot	Madison, WI	03/10/1864	Brevities, woman weeping over the ice house of Washington				
Hartford Daily Courant	Hartford, CT	06/06/1864	New road to be built, about 38 miles, will pass by MV to help with excursions				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/08/1865	Citizens want river travel re-established, sacred spot				X
The Daily Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	05/16/1865	Present condition of MV, looks much better considering the war				
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	05/17/1865	Present condition of MV, looks much better considering the war				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	05/18/1865	Present condition of MV, looks much better considering the war; detailed				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	06/01/1865	Army visits the tomb, General Logan,	X			X
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	06/01/1865	"Jesse and I" go to Mount Vernon and visit the tomb	X			X
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	07/29/1865	Herbert, charging admission to soldiers, dilapidated condition				

San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	09/04/1865	Mount Vernon looking much better, talk about the Pohick Church	X			X
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## APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

TABLE B (Readex America's Historical Newspapers, key word search: "Mount Vernon," "Washington," and "tomb," specifically visitor accounts to Mount Vernon)

Newspaper	Place of Publication	Date	Observations	Relic(s)	Pilgrim(s)	Pilgrimage	Sacred/Holy/Hallowed
Providence Phoenix	Providence, RI	03/15/1806	General William Barton of Rhode Island, need Washington's spirit to help Congress				
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser	Philadelphia, PA	01/07/1811	A veteran soldier visits, "My God Where Would They Bury Me?" Spirit of 76				
National Intelligencer	Washington D.C.	05/16/1812	George Washington Parke Custis on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog apocryphal				
Boston Commercial Gazette	Boston, MA	05/25/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	05/29/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser	Philadelphia, PA	05/29/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Merrimack Intelligencer	Haverhill, MA	05/30/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Portland Gazette	Portland, ME	06/01/1812	GWPC on Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
Farmer's	Amherst, NH	06/08/1812	GWPC on				

Cabinet			Washington's accomplishments, story of soldier visiting, dog				
New York Daily Advertiser	New York, NY	02/27/1818	Visit to the tomb by Major John Reid, letter dated Nov. 16, 1815	X		X	X
Genius of Liberty	Leesburg, VA	03/10/1818	Extract of John Reid's account, mentions General Jackson	X		X	X
American Beacon	Norfolk, VA	06/05/1818	A foreigner letter, Jerusalem and Mecca			X	X
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	06/30/1818	A foreigner letter, Jerusalem and Mecca			X	X
American Beacon	Norfolk, VA	09/22/1818	English observer, visits Mount Vernon and the tomb, slave guide				
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser	Philadelphia, PA	12/04/1818	Proposition by Robert Henry Goldsborough to erect monument over tomb at MV				
American Mercury (Richmond Enquirer)	Hartford, CT	12/29/1818	Extract of letter of visitor to Mount Vernon	X			X
New England Galaxy	Boston, MA	03/19/1819	Visit to MV, German gardener, Lieut. Francis Hall 1816-7, mentions a theft				
Alexandria Gazette	Alexandria, VA	06/25/1819	College students visit, recite poem "To the Tomb of Washington"				X
City of Washington Gazette	Washington D.C.	07/28/1819	Russian minister on a visit, given a walking stick with MV on it for Alexander				
Poulson's American Daily Advertiser	Philadelphia, PA	01/14/1820	Visit to the tomb, inside the tomb and a creaky door				X
Essex Register	Salem, MA	01/18/1823	Editor of New York Statesman visits Nathaniel Carter, parties of pleasure, music	X	X	X	X
Columbian Centinel	Boston, MA	02/19/1823	William B. Walter, poem inspired by the visit		X		X
Providence Gazette	Providence, RI	03/05/1823	Pickpockets and thieves, favorite place for pilgrims		X		X
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	07/15/1823	Fourth of July Celebration at Mount Vernon, more detailed, Pleyel's Hymn				X
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	04/23/1824	Extract of a letter to the editors of N.Y. American,			X	X



			gardener, names on door				
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	09/21/1824	Extract of letter, gentleman traveling in VA				X
Middlesex Gazette	Middletown, CT	01/10/1827	Captain Partridge and cadets Military Academy at Georgetown	X			X
Narrative of a Tour in North America	London, England	1834	Travel account of Henry Tudor's visit to the states, baptismal robe of Washington				
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	11/25/1831	Mr. N.P. Willis of NY Mirror, visit to MV, decrepit old family servant	X		X	
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	02/18/1832	Tazewell's speech against removal, Washington should stay at Mount Vernon				X
The New York Mercury	New York, NY	04/25/1832	Visit to Mount Vernon, shame on Virginia, dialogue of a slave guide, Fisher				X
Richmond Enquirer	Richmond VA	05/18/1832	National Republican Convention, want to visit tomb, suggested by Halsey of NJ				X
Connecticut Mirror (Nat'l Intelligence r)	Hartford, CT	05/19/1832	Young Men's National Republican Convention, visit the tomb			X	
Salem Gazette (National Gazette)	Salem, MA	09/14/1832	Mr. Vigne's visit to Mount Vernon, Six Months in America			X	
Rhode Island American	Providence, RI	01/08/1833	Washington's birthplace, will it become a place for pilgrims?		X		
Portsmouth Journal of Lit and Politics	Portsmouth, NH	02/16/1833	Mr. Vigne's visit to Mount Vernon, Six Months in America			X	
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	09/12/1834	Female slave at gate, things uninteresting compared to tomb, tree branches				
Haverhill Gazette	Haverhill, MA	04/23/1836	Editor goes to MV, aged slave gives directions, servant boy, women in tomb	X			X
Connecticut Courant	Hartford, CT	08/29/1836	Editor goes to MV, aged slave gives directions, servant boy, women in tomb				
Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	09/08/1836	Make a pilgrimage to the tomb Americans			X	

Hudson River Chronicle (NY Express)	Sing-Sing, NY	05/18/1841	Visit led by aged servant woman, branch for a cane			X	X
The Log Cabin	New York, NY	09/11/1841	Tour by a communicative black man, Bill Smith, T. Struthers for sarcophagi				X
Salem Gazette	Salem, MA	09/24/1841	Mr. Marshall speech to Congress, one of Washington's bones not worth Vas				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	10/28/1842	John Dillion Smith's visit to Mount Vernon	X			X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	03/21/1844	Mr. Joshua Wells' turns a piece of a locust tree, cane for General Scott				
Weekly Herald	New York, NY	07/12/1845	Lancaster Fencibles visit, denied entry, too many visitors, govt. should buy				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	04/17/1846	Powhattan steam boat, harmonious singers and "Washington's Grave" song				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	04/27/1846	As the spring thaws, throngs of visitors descend on Mount Vernon			X	
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	04/30/1846	Powhattan steam boat, harmonious singers and "Washington's Grave" song				X
Farmer's Cabinet (NY Journal Commerce)	Amherst, NH	07/29/1847	Rev. J.N. Danforth's visit, very religious, Chateaubriand				X
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	11/19/1847	Details on the destruction, asylum for disabled seamen or refugees				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	09/13/1850	Mention of new marble at the tombs? Now more accessible thanks to boats				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	09/14/1850	Light Infantry went to MV, perfectly silent, perform music at the tomb				
The Weekly Herald	New York, NY	09/14/1850	Members of both houses visit MV on the Thomas Collyer steam boat				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	09/26/1850	A Patron reading a letter of a traveler to Mount Vernon		X		X

The Daily Ohio Statesman	Columbus, OH	11/19/1850	GWPC and Edmond Lafayette visit the tomb	X	X	X	X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	01/06/1851	Lord Carlisle's Lecture on America in England, mentions visit to tomb				
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	04/19/1852	Visit of Kossuth to the tomb				X
Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	04/20/1852	Who Might Have Been the Washington of Hungary? Full account			X	
Frederick Douglass Paper	Rochester, NY	04/29/1852	Kossuth's visit, dialogue			X	X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/25/1852	General Assembly of the Presbyterians, Thomas Collyer with Capt. Gedney				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	06/17/1852	Visit to MV, R.J. Turner vocalist sings, relics, Captain Gedney	X			X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/07/1852	Steamer George Washington, Capt. Corson, Union Fire Company, Linhardt's band				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	11/13/1852	Masonic visit to Mount Vernon, centennial anniversary of joining the Masons				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	03/15/1853	Estimate of how many people are visiting per month				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	09/01/1853	Old Negro, relics of Mount Vernon for sixpence		X		X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	11/26/1853	The Washington Grays, 1832 excursion, lock of hair from GWPC, set in medals				
The Daily Globe	Washington D.C.	05/02/1854	The American Scientific Association visits, band in tow, about 300 people	X			X
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	05/11/1854	The American Scientific Association visits, band in tow, about 300 people				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	05/13/1854	Upwards of 100 people visited the tomb today				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	01/18/1855	Convention of the Soldiers of 1812, visit Mount Vernon				
Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	04/29/1855	Pennsylvania friend, Thomas	X		X	X

			Collier				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	04/30/1855	President Franklin Pierce visits, Thomas Collier			X	
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	08/28/1855	Visit to Mount Vernon and the sights to see, very specific		X	X	X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	12/19/1855	The Amoskeag Veterans visit the tomb, steamer George Washington				X
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	05/28/1857	Don't modernize Mount Vernon, foreigners might turn it into a business		X		X
Weekly Herald	New York, NY	06/27/1857	Masons visit the tomb, St. John's Day, christening of two children, named Wash				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/22/1857	Western guests, Hail Columbia, music and marches				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/23/1857	Western guests, Hail Columbia, music and marches				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/27/1857	The Cabinet at Mount Vernon, Water Witch government steamer				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	10/08/1857	Columbia Masons visit Mount Vernon, says June 24, 1837				X
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	07/12/1858	New York Seventh Regiment visits the tomb				X
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	12/02/1858	Dr. C. MacKay's letter, English traveler		X		X
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	05/25/1859	Knights Templar visit the tomb, flowers spread over the tomb with garland				X
Charleston Mercury	Charleston, SC	07/29/1859	Visitor to Mount Vernon, writer for the Alexandria Gazette				
The National Era	Washington D.C.	03/15/1860	Visit by Congress on March 7th, 200 people, Marine band, Larrabee and Cochrane	X			
Ohio Daily Statesman	Columbus, OH	03/21/1860	Visit to Mount Vernon, the Ladies have taken possession, pennies for "picaninnies"	X			X
Wisconsin Daily	Madison, WI	05/16/1860	Editors from the West, much more	X		X	X

Patriot			detailed account				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	10/06/1860	Prince of Wales visits the tomb, horse chestnuts				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	10/17/1860	Prince of Wales visits the tomb, horse chestnuts	X			X
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	10/23/1860	Prince of Wales visits the tomb, horse chestnuts, plans to plant them at Windsor				
The Sun	Baltimore, MY	12/07/1860	Putnam Phalanx visits Washington D.C. and Mount Vernon				X
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	05/30/1861	Three New Yorkers visit to make sure Washington's remains still there				
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	06/07/1861	Three New Yorkers visit to make sure Washington's remains still there, detailed				
Wisconsin Daily Patriot	Madison, WI	10/13/1863	British legation visits the tomb, along with Admiral Milne				
New Hampshire Patriot	Concord, NH	05/17/1865	Present condition of Mount Vernon, looks much better considering the war				
Farmer's Cabinet	Amherst, NH	05/18/1865	Present condition of MV, looks much better considering the war; detailed				
The Pittsfield Sun	Pittsfield, MA	06/01/1865	Army visits the tomb, General Logan,		X		X
New Hampshire Sentinel	Keene, NH	06/01/1865	"Jesse and I" go to Mount Vernon and visit the tomb		X		X
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	07/29/1865	Herbert, charging admission to soldiers, dilapidated condition				
San Francisco Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	09/04/1865	Mount Vernon looking much better, talk about the Pohick Church	X			X

## APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

TABLE C (Proquest American Periodicals, keyword search: "Mount Vernon," "Washington," and "tomb")

Name of Publication	Date	Observations	Relic(s)	Pilgrim(s)	Pilgrimage(s)	Sacred, Holy, Hallowed
The Literary and Philosophical Repertory	05/01/1813	New England Traveler, no monument				X
Examiner	03/25/1815	John Randolph, British rumor				
The North American Review and Journal	03/1816	The right kind of monuments				
The National Register	03/30/1816	Property of the nation, American				X
The National Register	05/30/1818	French foreigner letter		X	X	
The New England Galaxy	03/29/1819	Francis Hall's travels in North America				
The Literary Gazette	01/21/1821	Picturesque Views of America				
The Christian Observer	01/11/1823	English traveler, Bushrod				X
Christian Register	08/01/1823	Tomb falling into disrepair				X
Christian Register	09/26/1823	U.S. Beagle salutes Rude tomb				
New England Galaxy	06/25/1824	Masons need to take action				
Zion's Herald	09/22/1824	Gentleman traveling in Virginia to Vermont				
Saturday Evening Post	10/23/1824	Lafayette's visit, Masonic sash	X			
Niles Weekly Register	10/30/1824	Lafayette's visit, Masonic sash	X			
Saturday Evening Post	10/30/1824	Pilgrimage story				
The American Monthly Magazine	11/1824	Pilgrimage story			X	
The Gazetteer	11/02/1824	Pilgrimage story			X	
Circular	11/05/1824	Pilgrimage story			X	
The New England Galaxy/US Literary Advertiser	11/05/1824	Pilgrimage story			X	
New York Religious Chronicle	11/06/1824	Pilgrimage story			X	
Niles Weekly Register	11/06/1824	Pilgrimage story			X	
The Religious Intelligencer	11/06/1824	Pilgrimage story			X	
Christian Secretary	11/09/1824	Pilgrimage story			X	
The Cincinnati Literary Gazette	12/11/1824	Shrine of Patriotism				X
Masonic Mirror and Mechanics' Intelligencer	01/22/1825	New Hampshire Masons, call to Lodges				
The Masonic Casket	05/1825	Ohio Masons				
The New York Mirror	09/17/1825	Lorenzo admires the man, not the hero				
Genius of Universal Emancipation	10/1/1825	Muse's Bower, poem on resting place, humble				

Christian Watchman	05/26/1826	Bushrod's refusal, good for him, go Sabbath				
Christian Register	05/27/1826	Bushrod's refusal, great number visit				
Western Recorder	05/30/1826	Bushrod's refusal, good for him, go Sabbath				
The Religious Intelligencer	06/03/1826	Bushrod's refusal, good for him, go Sabbath				
Zion's Herald	06/07/1826	Bushrod's refusal, good for him, go Sabbath				
Western Luminary	06/14/1826	Bushrod's refusal, good for him, go Sabbath				
Philadelphia Recorder	06/17/1826	Bushrod's refusal, good for him, go Sabbath, welcomes everyone				
The Christian Advocate	07/01/1826	A sprig of evergreen for Otto Kotzebue, missionary	X			
Christian Spectator	11/01/1826	Essay on the Sabbath, Dr. Beecher, learn from Bushrod				
The Juvenile Miscellany	01/1827	Extend your pilgrimage beyond Mount Vernon go visit his mothers			X	X
New England Galaxy/US Literary Advertiser	01/05/1827	Weems, military, monument needed at tomb	X		X	
The New York Mirror	01/20/1827	Weems, military, monument needed at tomb				
Religious Intelligencer	02/03/1827	Violations of the Sabbath				
Masonic Mirror and Mechanics' Intelligencer	04/28/1827	Masons involvement in Washington's funeral				
Saturday Evening Post	06/16/1827	A View of the tomb, Masons, monument				
Philadelphia Album and Ladies Lit Gazette	07/11/1827	Baltimore troops visit the tomb, then Alexandria				
The Juvenile Miscellany	01/1828	Traveling group, Yankee, Ohio, Baltimorean, Englishman, tomb				X
Gospel Advocate and Impartial Investigator	05/10/1828	Our Cause in the South, visit to Mount Vernon, simple tomb makes sense			X	X
The Youth's Companion	07/25/1828	Biography of Washington, those who visit him should go to mom			X	

The Christian Telescope and Universalist	09/25/1828	Splendid Views of American Scenery (#7), nature				
Christian Register	12/5/1829	Bushrod Washington's wife Julia dies	X			
The Banner of the Constitution	04/07/1830	Printing of a 1818 letter of a visit				
Masonic Mirror: Science, Literature	04/24/1830	Masonic procession to the tomb				
Anti-Masonic Review and Magazine	05/01/1830	Name of Washington needs to be removed from masons				
New England Galaxy	02/25/1832	Washington's remains	X	X	X	X
Workingman's Advocate	03/03/1832	Washington's remains, Republic is his memory, not Westminster	X	X	X	X
The Episcopal Watchman	03/06/1832	Virginia House of Delegates approves keeping Washington, granite over tomb				
New England Magazine	04/1832	Common right to his dust as a national treasure				
The New England Farmer	04/11/1832	Howard of Maryland, British ship up Potomac War of 1812				
The Episcopal Watchman	04/17/1832	Aged negro tour, tomb, cedar mementos	X		X	X
Niles Weekly Register	05/19/1832	Committee for the YMNRC, visit the tomb			X	X
United States Catholic Miscellany	09/01/1832	Daniel O'Connell's birthday				
The New England Farmer	10/10/1832	Seeds from Mount Vernon can be bought at an orchard				
The New York Mirror	10/13/1832	What you see traveling to Mount Vernon, old negroes, national saint	X		X	X
The New England Farmer	10/17/1832	Seeds from Mount Vernon can be bought at an orchard				
Liberator	10/20/1832	G.T. Vigne, national grave, could save the Union				
The Monthly Repository	04/1833	Lavasseur's account, two sketchings, one Mount Vernon				



		one the tomb				
Episcopal Recorder	06/08/1833	Mrs. Sigourney's poem, Washington's tomb a Mecca				
Waldie's Select Circulating Library	10/01/1833	Visit to Alexandria Museum, walking sticks, sectionalism	X	X	X	X
The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge	11/01/1834	New tomb picture, simple tomb of Washington				
New England Magazine	11/1834	Cherokees on board the steam boat, Oliver Smith, slave	X	X	X	X
Liberator	11/22/1834	Traveler account used to criticize slavery	X	X	X	X
The New York Mirror	02/28/1835	Officer visits in 1826, takes black cloth, public property nation	X		X	X
The New York Mirror	03/21/1835	Gallery of the National Academy of Design, Life of Washington				
The Catholic Telegraph	04/17/1835	Pilgrimage to Mount Vernon, but deep snow and bad roads			X	
The American Quarterly Review	09/01/1835	Englishmen visit the tomb in their Narrative to American Churches				X
The New York Telegraph (NY Evangelist)	11/1835	Freedmen working at the tomb, descendants of freed slaves				
The Family Magazine	1836; 4	Drawing of Mount Vernon, simplicity of the estate and tomb, key		X		X
Parley's Magazine	01/01/1836	Visit to Mount Vernon, 77 year old colored man, evergreen, slaves didn't like him				
The Family Magazine	05/1836	Description of the simplistic tomb, drawing				
The Southern Rose	05/14/1836	Lady tourist, moment with Washington, childhood dreams				
The Southern Rose	06/11/1836	Cedar from tomb put in pot, try to transport it to Carolina				
The Knickerbocker, New York Monthly	09/1836	Ode written at the tomb of				

Magazine		Washington				
The Rural Depository	10/08/1836	Slave guide, old tomb, ladies, taking relics	X			X
Christian Register and Boston Observer	03/25/1837	Washington and slave wrestled as boys, pieces of old tomb				
The New Yorker	07/22/1837	L.H. Sigourney's poetry				
Army and Navy Chronicle	11/09/1837	Washington moved to marble sarcophagus, Struthers				
The Albion	03/24/1838	Harriet Martineau's visit to Mount Vernon, key, same as Brown's Literary		X		X
Brown's Literary Omnibus	04/13/1838	Key is a contrast to such a republican place, old tomb destroyed				
The Knickerbocker, New York Monthly Magazine	07/1838	Sketch of Major Dart, horseback party to the tomb and cedar				
Rose of the Valley	03/01/1839	Very religiously motivated, walking there, consecrated ground				X
New York Literary Gazette	04/20/1839	Sonnet written at the tomb of Washington				
Christian Secretary	07/19/1839	Key is a contrast to such a republican place, old tomb destroyed				
The New York Review	10/1839	Review of Charles Murray's Travels in America, English				
Southern Literary Messenger	12/1839	Old negro woman, story of preserved body, not really				X
The New Yorker	12/21/1839	Old negro woman, story of preserved body, not really				
The Ladies' Companion, a Monthly Magazine	01/1840	Description of the house, overview of failures of government			X	X
Christian Register and Boston Observer	01/25/1840	Old negro woman, story of preserved body, not really				
The Yale Literary Magazine	02/1840	Lafayette preached, old negro servant, poem				X
Ladies' Garland and	04/01/1840	Picture of tomb,				

Family Wreath		story of Washington's death				
The Poughkeepsie Casket	04/04/1840	Wood slapped together to protect, old black woman tobacco				X
The Poughkeepsie Casket	04/18/1840	Mrs. Lydia Sigourney's poem				
The Knickerbocker, New York Monthly Magazine	05/1840	Account of the transference of remains, no odor, looks okay				
American Masonic Register and Literary Companion	06/06/1840	Account of the transference of remains, no odor, looks okay				
Boston Weekly Magazine	06/20/1840	Account of the transference of remains, no odor, looks okay				
Ladies' Companion, a Monthly Magazine	04/1841	Black gardener, pebbles for child, grapevine, ennobled slave			X	X
The Boston Weekly Magazine	06/12/1841	Jeremiah Spofford, cedars are bare				X
Episcopal Recorder	06/19/1841	Visit to Mount Vernon, old servants of Washington				X
The New Yorker	07/17/1841	Visit to Mount Vernon, everything is sacred			X	X
The New Yorker	09/11/1841	Slave named Bill Smith, tour of the grounds		X		X
New York Evangelist	09/18/1841	Slave named Bill Smith, tour of the grounds		X		X
Southern Literary Messenger	11/1841	Jolly ebon-faced driver, simple construction, evergreens				
The Liberty Bell	01/01/1842	Edmund Jackson, visits tomb, reflects on the VA problem		X		X
Niles' National Register	02/12/1842	John Quincy Adams visited Mount Vernon at some point after 1826				
Boston Recorder	03/11/1842	R.W.C., Rev. McLain, road Yankee New England, lemon/orange tree				
Ladies Repository	04/1842	Mentions Le Vasseur's account, scenic and peaceful repose				
New York Observer and Chronicle	07/16/1842	Visit to the tomb, beautiful and				

		serene, take a flower, GW lives on				
The New World	03/04/1843	Captain Barclay, wild nature returned, lemon tree				
Trumpet and Universalist Magazine	07/08/1843	Correspondent of the Troy Whig, Mount Vernon \$20,000 for sale				
The Ladies' Companion, a Monthly Magazine	04/1844	Englishmen visit more than Americans? Negro at gate, old negro at tom	X		X	X
The Rover	07/03/1844	Memento Mori, Remember that you will die				
Trumpet and Universalist Magazine	08/24/1844	Bill Smith is the guide, came with Bushrod Washington, Horace Greeley				
Ladies Repository	12/1844	If Ohio farmers there, land would be fine, old negro woman's faith				
Maine Farmer	12/05/1844	Visit to Mount Vernon, old male black slave guide	X		X	X
United States Gazette	06/12/1845	Description of the tomb				X
The Columbian Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine	09/1845	Beautiful, should be visited by Americans and foreigners		X		X
New York Observer and Chronicle	06/27/1846	Rev. Samuel Prime, letters of intro, house, Apostle of Liberty		X	X	X
Ladies Repository	09/1846	Send your keys Europe, reminders of tyranny, liberty				
New York Observer and Chronicle	11/07/1846	Old blind slave and her faith, Old Phil is sick, young negro boy		X		
Dwights American Magazine and Family Newspaper	12/05/1846	Sticks cut for canes, fruit trees robbed, "Grave of Washington" song				
Dwights American Magazine and Family Newspaper	05/01/1847	Ashamed to stand at Washington's tomb with MAW going on				
Trumpet and Universalist Magazine	06/05/1847	Editor reflects, pokes fun of Capitol tomb, the man is his own monument				
Prisoner's Friend	12/22/1847	JCW willing to sell 150 acres, tomb, and house for \$100,000				

The Green Mountain Gem	01/01/1848	Simple description of the tomb, evergreens cut				
Dwights American Magazine and Family Newspaper	03/01/1848	Terms of sale, Turk or foreigner, extracting admission fees				X
Horticulturist and Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste	04/1848	Public property, complete collection of American trees				X
New York Journal of Commerce	05/13/1847	Duty of government to take care of estate, military asylum			X	X
The Western Miscellany	09/1848	Very simple, rustic tomb, servant, cards for entrance		X		X
The Columbian Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine	02/1849	Mecca of Liberty, old slave Sylvia 15 GW came back, bow in gratitude				X
The Literary World	02/17/1849	Elizabeth Long's Mount Vernon poem				X
The Liberator	07/20/1849	Ethiop, Uncle Colover, liberty, hoe cake, cane, MA would care for Mount Vernon			X	X
Prisoner's Friend	08/01/1849	C.H. Brainard, intro letter Judge Cranch, initials in wall, 102 year slave				X
The Independent	08/02/1849	Repeat of Massachusetts would take care of such a place				
Godey's Lady's Book	10/1849	Robert Criswell Jr., canes, old slave, acorn to Russia, Harmonists eagle	X		X	X
Peterson's Magazine	01/1850	Ann S. Stephens, bring little boy pebbles, grapevine leaves, black gardener			X	X
		Pilgrimages to America Shrines No. 1---Mount Vernon				
Christian Advocate and Journal	03/21/1850	Dr. Holdich, Rev. W.C. Hoyt, George Peck and wife, simple tomb				
The Liberator	05/10/1850	Henry Box Brown's Mirror of Slavery, tomb of Washington				

		Views of the Most Interesting Objects and Scenery in the USA				
The Literary World	06/22/1850					
		Drawn by Aug. Kollner, lith. By Deroy in Paris				
		30 views, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Saratoga Springs, Mount Vernon, tomb				
New York Evangelist	08/08/1850	Zachary Taylor's funeral, Congressional cemetery at Mount Vernon,				X
		Congressmen and Senators visit the tomb Sept. 13, 1850 Friday				
The Independent	09/19/1850					
Massachusetts Ploughman and New England Journal of Agriculture	11/30/1850	GWPC and La Fayette		X	X	X
		Morality/Mount Vernon, hundreds at the estate				
The Youth's Companion	04/03/1851					X
		H.W. to Dr. Whittemore, signs forbidding entering slave quarters				
Trumpet and Universalist Magazine	04/26/1851					
		Journal of Commerce reporter, manly signature, Bastille key				
The Literary World	05/24/1851					
		Southern Lady, bell tolls custom, relic collectors	X			X
Home Journal	07/05/1851					
Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion	09/06/1851	Every American should visit this place, sacredness	X			X
		A Pilgrimage by E. Kennedy, tomb is terrible, common property	X	X	X	X
The Southern Literary Messenger	01/1852					
		Gleanings and Groupings from a Pastor's Portfolio Joshua Danforth				
Tales of the Caravansary	01/10/1852					
		Visits tomb, wants to be alone to reflect on Washington				
New York Observer and Chronicle	04/22/1852					
		Rufus Choate, hundreds waiting to board boats, men NSEW conversing			X	X
Christian Observer	05/29/1852					

Ladies' Wreath	07/01/1852	Helen Irving visits	X		X	X
The National Era	07/08/1852	I.H. Julian's The Tomb of Washington poem				X
Home Magazine	10/1853	Heroic liberator, Americans must step up, fear of private individuals				X
Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion	10/29/1853	A resort? Fear of private individuals buying the estate				X
National Era	12/29/1853	Virginia wants it again, then Congress wants it again			X	X
The US Magazine of Science, Art, Manufactures, A,C,T	05/15/1854	GWPC and his release of Recollections, Martha's wishes, state/federal		X		X
Home Journal	06/10/1854	GWPC and his release of Recollections, Martha's wishes, state/federal		X		X
The Liberator	10/13/1854	Angelina Knox, fugitive from Mount Vernon, not weep at the tomb				
Maine Farmer	12/7/1854	Mount Vernon could be an agricultural school				X
Maine Farmer	01/18/1855	Old Soldiers' Convention, 1812, Indians, Dr. Sundown Seneca Indian				
The Southern Literary Messenger	05/18/1855	Southern Matron, to the Daughters of Washington				X
The Independent	05/24/1855	Music, pleasant colored woman, gave salves their freedom! Indians Penn		X		X
The Southern Literary Messenger	06/18/1855	Deserves a better tomb, Cecilia, hopes Virginia ladies succeed			X	X
Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion	07/07/1855	Revolutionary Relics, Masonic regalia, bier, flags, apron		X		X
Godey's Book and Magazine	08/1855	Ladies' Mount Vernon Association, Central Committee in Richmond				X
The Southern Literary Messenger	08/1855	J. Lansing Burrows' Fourth of July Address, Mecca, Zion				X

Maine Farmer	08/30/1855	Six French gentlemen, Society of La Montague, French assistance				
Godey's Book and Magazine	09/1855	Members and Donors, men should be donors, women of America property				X
The Southern Literary Messenger	09/1855	Henri de l'Eduse, A. Frey, A. Lanson, G. Yehl, H. Forbes, St. Gaudens				X
Godey's Book and Magazine	10/1855	Woman's Appeal by Isaac McLellan				X
The Southern Literary Messenger	12/1855	Efforts to fundraise, North and South, Henrico Light Dragoons tournament				X
Godey's Book and Magazine	01/1856	Acknowledgement of woman donors, \$50 or higher				X
The Southern Literary Messenger	02/1856	Governor and Virginia General Assembly trying to incorporate				
New York Observer and Chronicle	03/20/1856	Everett will donate proceeds from speeches, literary celebrity and ice house				
Circular	04/10/1856	Horace Greeley visits, everything is in ruins				
American Phrenological Journal	05/1856	John A. Washington refuses to sell to Ladies, only Virginia should buy it				X
The Southern Literary Messenger	05/1856	Patriotism, a poem, by John R. Thompson				X
Godey's Book and Magazine	06/1856	Details of the agreement between General Assembly and MVLA				
The Youth's Companion	06/19/1856	Everyone on the steamboat removed their hats and wept				
The Independent	01/29/1857	JAW sells timber to James Crutchett				
The Ladies' Repository	03/1857	Group visits, sees the tomb, few things inside the house, spyglass				X
The National Magazine	04/1857	Poem critical of Washington canes				



The Southern Literary Messenger	05/1857	Terms that JAW is willing to sell on to the state of Virginia				
The Southern Literary Messenger	05/1857	Southern Matron calls on Sons and Daughters of Washington		X		X
The Happy Home and Parlor Magazine	08/01/1857	Isaac McLellan poem, Woman's Appeal to the Women of America				X
The Southern Literary Messenger	10/1857	Status of the fundraising in the states				
The United States Democratic Review	05/1858	Sioux Chiefs at Washington's Tomb, Yancton tribe, names of chiefs				X
American Quarterly Church Review	07/1858	Ann Pamela Cunningham				X
Lady's Home Magazine	07/1858	Mount Vernon Fund, selling Stuart prints				X
The New York Observer	07/08/1858	Mount Vernon Fund, selling Stuart prints				
Horticulturalist and Journal of Rural Art and Taste	09/1858	Mary Morris Hamilton, NY, appeal to NY women				X
The Knickerbocker, New York Monthly Magazine	09/1858	List of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association regents				
The Southern Literary Messenger	09/1858	Praise to Ann Pamela Cunningham, ladies, simple tomb and America		X	X	X
The Liberator	09/17/1858	J.A.H. visits, thiftlessness, cheap trinkets, ghosts of slavery, Bastille Key abolitionism				
Emerson's Magazine and Putnam's Monthly	10/1858	Shrine of freedom, flowers plucked, key to the Bastille and freedom		X		X
Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion	10/23/1858	Orders weeping willows and trees from a botanist in London, Mecca				X
Christian Inquirer	10/30/1858	Must become national and consecrated ground				X
American Journal of Pharmacy	11/1858	American Pharmaceutical Association visits in 1858, brief, Washington Association				

New York Evangelist	11/25/1858	Crayon Journal, essay by T.P. Rossiter, "Mount Vernon, past and present"				
Ballou's Dollar Monthly Magazine	12/1858	Relics of the Revolution, ad describing many objects of Washington, Alexandria				X
Ballou's Dollar Monthly Magazine	12/1858	New York is winning the subscription battle				
The Independent	12/30/1858	Denigrating article on JAW, trying to hire Negros, Barnum Museum, rescue the bones				X
American Journal of Pharmacy	01/1859	W. Procter, Jr., photograph of the APA at the tomb				
The North American Review	01/1859	Lecture by Richard Owen, M.D. Professor University of Nashville				
The Liberator	01/14/1859	Protestant/Catholic, should imitate his virtues not gap at his tomb, buy canes				
The Independent	01/27/1859	\$500 reward for missing slave from Mount Vernon, Washington an abolitionist				
The Knickerbocker, New York Monthly Magazine	02/1859	The bones of Washington, JAW is a scoundrel, poor and broke				X
Godey's Book and Magazine	06/1859	The Purchase of Mount Vernon, \$158,000 collected, \$41,000 from goal, job creator				X
American Publishers' Circular and Literary Gazette	06/18/1859	Stereoscopic Pictures, D. Appleton and Co., mansion and tomb				
DeBow's Review	07/1859	Tomb is simple and unostentatious				X
American Publishers' Circular and Literary Gazette	07/23/1859	The New York Stereoscopic Company, pictures of tomb				
The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature	08/1859	Honorable Edward Everett, total raised, \$68,000, 129 times recited				

New York Observer and Chronicle	12/15/1859	Everett gives lecture for 130th time, in Portland				
The Ladies' Repository	02/1860	Poem critical of Washington canes				
Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal	02/15/1860	Woman weeping at an ice house, thought it was the tomb.				
Maine Farmer	03/29/1860	Mount Vernon Ladies' Association has taken possession of Mount Vernon				
Saturday Evening Post	04/07/1860	Anna Bache, dedicated to Ladies of Mount Vernon, poem			X	X
The Monthly Religious Magazine and Independent Journal	10/1860	Church in Alexandria, pew, prayer book, any Yankee, painting of angels fighting body		X	X	X
The Independent	10/11/1860	Prince of Wales visits, an heir to a rebel general?, D.W.B., tree and acorn, flower	X			
Circular	10/18/1860	Albert Edward, democracy, monarchy, Independent account reprinted	X			
Littell's Living Age	11/03/1860	D.W.B., reprint, kings visit rebel democrats	X			
The Independent	08/08/1861	General Winfield Scott's General Order #13, trample on documents and ashes				X
Maine Farmer	08/08/1861	General Winfield Scott's General Order #13, trample on documents and ashes				X
New York Evangelist	08/08/1861	Prince Napoleon Bonaparte visits the tomb, flag of truce				
The Independent	03/27/1862	Story of a Northern woman riding on horse, visits the tomb, spider webs				
Liberator	03/28/1862	McClellan's dream, Washington speaking to him from Mount Vernon				
New York Observer and Chronicle	02/26/1863	George Washington: There is none like him				

The Ladies' Repository	04/01/1864	George C. Round, sign 25 cents, Struthers ad, American and money, magic over rebel	X	X	X	X
The Christian Advocate and Journal	05/18/1865	George Lansing Taylor, how could the bones rest beneath a traitor's flag				X
New York Observer and Chronicle	05/25/1865	Should be opening soon, daily or three times a week boat, old negroes 30 years ago	X			
Maine Farmer	08/03/1865	Soldiers turned away because they didn't have the admission fee, Mr. Herbert		X		X