

## The Will of George Washington

[Mount Vernon, 9 July 1799]

In the name of God amen I George Washington of Mount Vernon--a citizen of the United States, and lately Pr<es>ident of the same, do make, ordai<n> and declare this Instrument; w<hic>h is written with my own hand <an>d every page thereof subscribed <wit>h my name, to be my last Will & <Tes>tament, revoking all others.

<I>mprimus. All my <deb>ts, of which there are but few, and none of magnitude, are to be punctu<al>ly and speedily paid--and the Legaci<es he>reinafter bequeathed, are to be disc<ha>rged as soon as circumstances will <pe>rmit, and in the manner directe<d>.

<I>tem. To my dearl<y be>loved wife Martha Washington <I> give and bequeath the use, profit <an>d benefit of my whole Estate, real and p<er>sonal, for the term of her natural li<fe>--except such parts thereof as are sp<e>cifically disposed of hereafter: <My i>mproved lot in the Town of Alex<andria, situated on> Pitt & Cameron <streets, I give to her and> her heirs forev<er; [1] as I also do my> household & Kite<hen> furniture of every sort & kind, with the liquors and groceries which may be on hand at the time of my decease; to be used & disposed of as she may think proper.

<Ite>m Upon 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>. To emancipate them during <her> life, would, tho' earnestly wish<ed by> me, be attended with such insu<pera>ble difficulties on account of thei<r interm>ixture by Marriages with the <dow>er Negroes, as to excite the most pa<in>ful sensations, if not disagreeabl<e c>onsequences from the latter, while <both> descriptions are in the occupancy <of> the same Proprietor; it not being <in> my power, under the tenure by which <th>e Dower Negroes are held, to man<umi>t them. And whereas among <thos>e who will recieve freedom ac<cor>ding to this devise, there may b<e so>me, who from old age or bodily infi<rm>ities, and others who on account of <the>ir infancy, that will be unable to <su>pport themselves; it is m<y Will and de>sire that all who <come under the first> & second descrip<tion shall be comfor>tably clothed & <fed by my heirs while> they live; and that such of the latter description as have no parents living, or if living are unable, or unwilling to provide for them, shall be bound by the Court until they shall arrive at the ag<e> of twenty five years; and in cases where no record can be produced, whereby their ages can be ascertained, the judgment of the Court, upon its own view of the subject, shall be adequate and final. The Negros thus bound, are (by their Masters or Mistresses) to be taught to read & write; and to be brought up to some useful occupation, agreeably to the Laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing for the support of Orphan and other poor Children. and I do hereby expressly forbid the Sale, or transportation out of the said Commonwealth, of any Slave I may die possessed of, under any pretence whatsoever. And I do moreover most pointedly, and most solemnly enjoin it upon my Executors hereafter named, or the Survivors of them, to see that *th<is cla>use*

respecting Slaves, and every part thereof be religiously fulfilled at the Epoch at which it is directed to take place; without evasion, neglect or delay, after the Crops which may then be on the ground are harvested, particularly as it respects the aged and infirm; seeing that a regular and permanent fund be established for their support so long as there are subjects requiring it; not trusting to the <u>ncertain provision to be made by individuals. [2] And to my Mulatto man William (calling himself William Lee) I give immediate freedom; or if he should prefer it (on account of the accidents which ha<v>e befallen him, and which have rendered him incapable of walking or of any active employment) to remain in the situation he now is, it shall be optional in him to do so: In either case however, I allow him an annuity of thirty dollars during his natural life, whic<h> shall be independent of the victuals and cloaths he has been accustomed to receive, if he chuses the last alternative; but in full, with his freedom, if he prefers the first; & this I give him as a test<im>ony of my sense of his attachment to me, and for his faithful services during the Revolutionary War. [3]

Item. To the Trustees (<Go>vernors, or by whatsoever other name they may be designated) of the Academy in the Town of Alexandria, I give and bequeath, in Trust, four thousand dollars, or in other words twenty of the shares which I hold in the Bank of Alexandria, towards the support of a Free school established at, and annexed to, the said Academy; for the purpose of Educating such Orphan children, or the children of such other poor and indigent persons as are unable to accomplish it with their own means; and who, in the judgment of the Trustees of the said Seminary, are best entitled to the benefit of this donation. The aforesaid twenty shares I give & bequeath in perpetuity; the dividends only of which are to be drawn for, and applied by the said Trustees for the time being, for the uses above mentioned; the stock to remain entire and untouched; unless indications of a failure of the said Bank should be so apparent, or a discontinuance thereof should render a removal of this fund necessary; in either of these cases, the amount of the Stock here devised, is to be vested in some other Bank or public Institution, whereby the interest may with regularity & certainty be drawn, and applied as above. And to prevent misconception, my meaning is, and is hereby declared to be, that these twenty shares are in lieu of, and not in addition to, the thousand pounds given by a missive letter some years ago; in consequence whereof an annuity of fifty pounds has since been paid towards the support of this Institution. [4]

Item. Whereas by a Law of the Commonwealth of Virginia, enacted in the year 1785, the Legislature thereof was pleased (as a an evidence of Its approbation of the services I had rendered the Public during the Revolution--and partly, I believe, in consideration of my having suggested the vast advantages which the Community would derive from the ex<te>nsions of its Inland Navigation, under Legislative patronage) to present me with one hundred shares of one hundred dollars each, in the incorporated company established for the purpose of extending the navigation of James River from tide water to the Mountains: and also with fifty shares of one hundred pounds Sterling each, in the Corporation of another company, likewise established for the similar purpose of opening the Navigation of the River Potomac from tide water to Fort Cumberland, the acceptance of which, although the offer was highly honourable, and grateful to my feelings, was refused, as inconsistent with a principle which I had adopted, and had never departed from--namely--not to receive pecuniary compensation for any services I could render my country in its arduous struggle with great Britain, for its Rights; and because I had evaded similar propositions from other

States in the Union; adding to this refusal, however, an intimation that, if it should be the pleasure of the Legislature to permit me to appropriate the said shares to *public uses*, I would receive them on those terms with due sensibility; and this it having consented to, in flattering terms, as will appear by a subsequent Law, and sundry resolutions, in the most ample and honourable manner, I proceed after this recital, for the more correct understanding of the case, to declare-- [5]

That as it has always been a source of serious regret with me, to see the youth of these United States sent to foreign Countries for the purpose of Education, often before their minds were formed, or they had imbibed any adequate ideas of the happiness of their own; contracting, too frequently, not only habits of dissipation & extravagance, but principles unfriendly to Republican Governmt and to the true & genuine liberties of Mankind; which, thereafter are rarely overcome. For these reasons, it has been my ardent wish to see a plan devised on a liberal scale, which would have a tendency to sprd systemactic ideas through all parts of this rising Empire, thereby to do away local attachments and State prejudices, as far as the nature of things would, or indeed ought to admit, from our National Councils. Looking anxiously forward to the accomplishment of so desirable an object as this is (in my estimation) my mind has not been able to contemplate any plan more likely to effect the measure than the establishment of a UNIVERSITY in a central part of the United States, to which the youth of fortune and talents from all parts thereof might be sent for the completion of their Education in all the branches of polite literature; in arts and Sciences, in acquiring knowledge in the principles of Politics & good Government; and (as a matter of infinite Importance in my judgment) by associating with each other, and forming friendships in Juvenile years, be enabled to free themselves in a proper degree from those local prejudices & habitual jealousies which have just been mentioned; and which, when carried to excess, are never failing sources of disquietude to the Public mind, and pregnant of mischievous consequences to this Country: Under these impressions, so fully dilated,

Item I give and bequeath in perpetuity the fifty shares which I hold in the Potomac Company (under the aforesaid Acts of the Legislature of Virginia) towards the endowment of a UNIVERSITY to be established within the limits of the District of Columbia, under the auspices of the General Government, if that government should incline to extend a fostering hand towards it; and until such Seminary is established, and the funds arising on these shares shall be required for its support, my further Will & desire is that the profit accruing therefrom shall, whenever the dividends are made, be laid out in purchasing Stock in the Bank of Columbia, or some other Bank, at the discretion of my Executors; or by the Treasurer of the United States for the time being under the direction of Congress; provided that Honourable body should Patronize the measure, and the Dividends proceeding from the purchase of such Stock is to be vested in more stock, and so on, until a sum adequate to the accomplishment of the object is obtained, of which I have not the smallest doubt, before many years passes away; even if no aid or encouraged is given by Legislative authority, or from any other source. [6]

Item The hundred shares which I held in the James River Company, I have given, and now confirm in perpetuity to, and for the use & benefit of Liberty-Hall Academy, in the County

of Rockbridge, in the Commonwealth of Virga. [7]

Item I release exonerate and discharge, the Estate of my deceased brother Samuel Washington, from the payment of the money which is due to me for the Land I sold to Philip Pendleton (lying in the County of Berkeley) who assigned the same to him the said Samuel; who, by agreement was to pay me therefor. And whereas by some contract (the purport of which was never communicated to me) between the said Samuel and his son Thornton Washington, the latter became possessed of the aforesaid Land, without any conveyance having passed from me, either to the said Pendleton, the said Samuel, or the said Thornton, and without any consideration having been made, by which neglect neither the legal nor equitable title has been alienated; it rests therefore with me to declare my intentions concerning the Premises--and these are, to give & bequeath the said land to whomsoever the said Thornton Washington (who is also dead) devised the same; or to his heirs forever if he died Intestate: Exonerating the estate of the said Thornton, equally with that of the said Samuel from payment of the purchase money; which, with Interest; agreeably to the original contract with the said Pendleton, would amount to more than a thousand pounds. [8] And whereas two other Sons of my said deceased brother Samuel--namely, George Steptoe Washington and Lawrence [Charles] Augustine Washington, were, by the decease of those to whose care they were committed, brought under my protection, and in consequenc[e] have occasioned advances on my part for their Education at College, and other Schools, for their board--cloathing--and other incidental expences, to the amount of near five thousand dollars over and above the Sums furnished by their Estate wch Sum may be inconvenient for them, or their fathers Estate to refund. I do for these reasons acquit them, and the said estate, from the payment thereof. My intention being, that all accounts between them and me, and their fathers estate and me shall stand balanced. [9]

Item The balance due to me from the Estate of Bartholomew Dandridge deceased (my wife's brother) and which amounted on the first day of October 1795 to four hundred and twenty five pounds (as will appear by an account rendered by his deceased son John Dandridge, who was the acting Exr of his fathers Will) I release & acquit from the payment thereof. And the Negros, then thirty three in number) formerly belonging to the said estate, who were taken in execution--sold--and purchased in on my account in the year [\_\_\_\_] and ever since have remained in the possession, and to the use of Mary, Widow of the said Bartholomew Dandridge, with their increase, it is my Will & desire shall continue, & be in her possession, without paying hire, or making compensation for the same for the time past or to come, during her natural life; at the expiration of which, I direct that all of them who are forty years old & upwards, shall receive their freedom; all under that age and above sixteen, shall serve seven years and no longer; and all under sixteen years, shall serve until they are twenty five years of age, and then be free. And to avoid disputes respecting the ages of any of these Negros, they are to be taken to the Court of the County in which they reside, and the judgment thereof, in this relation shall be final; and a record thereof made; which may be adduced as evidence at any time thereafter, if disputes should arise concerning the same. And I further direct, that the heirs of the said Bartholomew Dandridge shall, equally, share the benefits arising from the services of the said negros according to the tenor of this devise, upon the decease of their Mother. [10]

Item If Charles Carter who intermarried with my niece Betty Lewis is not sufficiently secured in the title to the lots he had of me in the Town of Fredericksburgh, it is my will & desire that my Executors shall make such conveyances of them as the Law requires, to render it perfect. [\[11\]](#)

Item To my Nephew William Augustine Washington and his heirs (if he should conceive them to be objects worth prosecuting) and to his heirs, a lot in the Town of Manchester (opposite to Richmond) No. 265--drawn on my sole account, and also the tenth of one or two, hundred acre lots, and two or three half acre lots in the City, and vicinity of Richmond, drawn in partnership with nine others, all in the lottery of the deceased William Byrd are given--as is also a lot which I purchased of John Hood, conveyed by William Willie and Samuel Gordon Trustees of the said John Hood, numbered 139 in the Town of Edinburgh, in the County of Prince George, State of Virginia. [\[12\]](#)

Item To my Nephew Bushrod Washington, I give and bequeath all the Papers in my possession, which relate to my Civil and Military Administration of the affairs of this Country; I leave to him also, such of my private Papers as are worth preserving; [\[13\]](#) and at the decease of wife, and before--if she is not inclined to retain them, I give and bequeath my library of Books and Pamphlets of every kind. [\[14\]](#)

Item Having sold Lands which I possessed in the State of Pennsylvania, and part of a tract held in equal right with George Clinton, late Governor of New York, in the State of New York; my share of land, & interest, in the Great Dismal Swamp, and a tract of land which I owned in the County of Gloucester; withholding the legal titles thereto, until the consideration money should be paid. And having moreover leased, & conditionally sold (as will appear by the tenor of the said leases) all my lands upon the Great Kanhawa, and a tract upon Difficult Run, in the county of Loudoun, it is my Will and direction, that whensoever the Contracts are fully, & respectively complied with, according to the spirit; true intent & meaning thereof, on the part of the purchasers, their heirs or Assigns, that then, and in that case, Conveyances are to be made, agreeably to the terms of the said Contracts; and the money arising therefrom, when paid, to be vested in Bank stock; the dividends whereof, as of that also wch is already vested therein, is to inure to my said Wife during her life--but the Stock itself is to remain, & be subject to the general distribution hereafter directed. [\[15\]](#)

Item To the Earl of Buchan I recommit "the box made of the Oak that sheltered the Great Sir William Wallace after the battle of Falkirk" presented to me by his Lordship, in terms too flattering for me to repeat, with a request "to pass it, on the event of my decease, to the man in my country, who should appear to merit it best, upon the same conditions that have induced him to send it to me." Whether easy, or not, to select *the man* who might comport with his Lordships opinion in this respect, is not for me to say; but conceiving that no disposition of this valuable curiosity can be more eligible than the re-commitment of it to his own Cabinet, agreeably to the original design of the Goldsmiths Company of Edenburgh, who presented it to him, and at his request, consented that it should be transferred to me; I do give & bequeath the same to his Lordship, and in case of his decease, to his heir with my grateful thanks for the distinguished honour of presenting it to me; and

more especially for the favourable sentiments with which he accompanied it. [16]

Item To my brother Charles Washington I give & bequeath the gold headed Cane left me by Doctr Franklin in his Will. I add nothing to it, because of the ample provision I have made for his Issue. [17] To the acquaintances and friends of my Juvenile years, Lawrence Washington & Robert Washington of Chotanck, I give my other two gold headed Canes, having my Arms engraved on them; and to each (as they will be useful where they live) I leave one of the Spy-glasses which constituted part of my equipage during the late War. [18] To my compatriot in arms, and old & intimate friend Doctr Craik, I give my Bureau (or as the Cabinet makers call it, Tambour Secretary) and the circular chair--an appendage of my Study. [19] To Doctor David Stuart I give my large shaving & dressing Table, and my Telescope. [20] To the Reverend, now Bryan, Lord Fairfax, I give a Bible in three large folio volumes, with notes, presented to me by the Right reverend Thomas Wilson, Bishop of Sodor & Man. [21] To General de la Fayette I give a pair of finely wrought steel Pistols, taken from the enemy in the Revolutionary War. [22] To my Sisters in law Hannah Washington & Mildred Washington; to my friends Eleanor Stuart, Hannah Washington of Fairfield, and Elizabeth Washington of Hayfield, I give, each, a mourning Ring of the value of one hundred dollars. These bequests are not made for the intrinsic value of them, but as mementos of my esteem & regard. [23] To Tobias Lear, I give the use of the Farm which he now holds, in virtue of a Lease from me to him and his deceased wife (for and during their natural lives) free from Rent, during his life; at the expiration of which, it is to be disposed as is hereinafter directed. [24] To Sally B. Haynie (a distant relation of mine) I give and bequeath three hundred dollars. [25] To Sarah Green daughter of the deceased Thomas Bishop, [26] & to Ann Walker daughter of Jno. Alton, also deceased, I give, each--one hundred dollars, in consideration of the attachment of their fathers to me; each of whom having lived nearly forty years in my family. [27] To each of my Nephews, William Augustine Washington, George Lewis, George Steptoe Washington, Bushrod Washington and Samuel Washington, I give one of the Swords or Cutteaux of which I may die possessed; and they are to chuse in the order they are named. These Swords are accompanied with an injunction not to unsheath them for the purpose of shedding blood, except it be for self defence, or in defence of their Country and its rights; and in the latter case, to keep them unsheathed, and prefer falling with them in their hands, to the relinquishment thereof. [28]

And now

Having gone through these specific devises, with explanations for the more correct understanding of the meaning and design of them; I proceed to the distribution of the more important parts of my Estate, in manner following--

<Fi>rst To my Nephew Bushrod Washington and his heirs (partly in consideration of an intimation to his deceased father while we were Bachelors, & he had kindly undertaken to superintend my Estate during my Military Services in the former War between Great Britain & France, that if I should fall therein, Mount Vernon (then less extensive in domain than at present) should become his property) I give and bequeath all that part thereof which is comprehended within the following limits--viz.--Beginning at the ford of Dogue run, near

my Mill, and extending along the road, and bounded thereby as it now goes, & ever has gone since my recollection of it, to the ford of little hunting Creek at the Gum spring until it comes to a knowl, opposite to an old road which formerly passed through the lower field of Muddy hole Farm; at which, on the north side of the said road are three red, or spanish Oaks marked as a corner, and a stone placed. thence by a line of trees to be marked, rectangular to the back line, or outer boundary of the tract between Thomson Mason & myself. thence with that line Easterly (now double ditching with a Post & Rail fence thereon) to the run of little hunting Creek. thence with that run which is the boundary between the Lands of the late Humphrey Peake and me, to the tide water of the said Creek; thence by that water to Potomac River. thence with the River to the mouth of Dogue Creek. and thence with the said Dogue Creek to the place of beginning at the aforesaid ford; containing upwards of four thousand Acres, be the same more or less--together with the Mansion house and all other buildings and improvements thereon. [29]

Second In consideration of the consanguinity between them and my wife, being as nearly related to her as to myself, as on account of the affection I had for, and the obligation I was under to, their father when living, who from his youth had attached himself to my person, and followed my fortunes through the vicissitudes of the late Revolution--afterwards devoting his time to the Superintendence of my private concerns for many years, whilst my public employments rendered it impracticable for me to do it myself, thereby affording me essential Services, and always performing them in a manner the most filial and respectful--for these reasons I say, I give and bequeath to George Fayette Washington, and Lawrence [Charles] Augustine Washington and their heirs, my Estate East of little hunting Creek, lying on the River Potomac; including the Farm of 360 Acres, Leased to Tobias Lear as noticed before, and containing in the whole, by Deeds, Two thousand and Seventy seven acres--be it more or less. Which said Estate it is my Will & desire should be equitably, & advantageously divided between them, according to quantity, quality & other circumstances when the youngest shall have arrived at the age of twenty one years, by three judicious and disinterested men; one to be chosen by each of the brothers, and the third by these two. In the meantime, if the termination of my wife's interest therein should have ceased, the profits arising therefrom are to be applied for th[e]ir joint uses and benefit. [30]

Third And whereas it has always been my intention, since my expectation of having Issue has ceased, to consider the Grand children of my wife in the same light as I do my own relations, and to act a friendly part by them; more especially by the two whom we have reared from their earliest infancy--namely--Eleanor Parke Custis, & George Washington Parke Custis. And whereas the former of these hath lately intermarried with Lawrence Lewis, a son of my deceased Sister Betty Lewis, by which union the inducement to provide for them both has been increased; Wherefore, I give & bequeath to the said Lawrence Lewis & Eleanor Parke Lewis, his wife, and their heirs, the residue of my Mount Vernon Estate, not already devised to my Nephew Bushrod Washington; comprehended within the following description--viz.--All the land North of the Road leading from the ford of Dogue run to the Gum spring as described in the devise of the other part of the tract, to Bushrod Washington, until it comes to the Stone & three red or Spanish Oaks on the knowl. thence with the rectangular line to the back line (between Mr Mason & me)--thence with that line westerly, along the new double ditch to Dogue run, by the tumbling Dam of my Mill; thence

with the said run to the ford aforementioned; to which I add all the Land I possess West of the said Dogue run, & Dogue Crk--bounded Easterly & Southerly thereby; together with the Mill, Distillery, and all other houses & improvements on the premises, making together about two thousand Acres--be it more or less. [\[31\]](#)

Fourth Actuated by the principal already mentioned, I give and bequeath to George Washington Parke Custis, the Grandson of my wife, and my Ward, and to his heirs, the tract I hold on four mile run in the vicinity of Alexandria, containing one thousand two hundred acres, more or less, & my entire Square, number twenty one, in the City of Washington. [\[32\]](#)

Fifth All the rest and residue of my Estate, real & personal--not disposed of in manner aforesaid--In whatsoever consisting--wheresoever lying--and whensoever found--a schedule of which, as far as is recollected, with a reasonable estimate of its value, is hereunto annexed--I desire may be sold by my Executors at such times--in such manner--and on such credits (if an equal, valid, and satisfactory distribution of the specific property cannot be made without) as, in their judgment shall be most conducive to the interest of the parties concerned; and the monies arising therefrom to be divided into twenty three equal parts, and applied as follow [\[33\]](#)--viz.

To William Augustine Washington, Elizabeth Spotswood, Jane Thornton, and the heirs of Ann Ashton; son, and daughters of my deceased brother Augustine Washington, I give and bequeath four parts; that is--one part to each of them. [\[34\]](#)

To Fielding Lewis, George Lewis, Robert Lewis, Howell Lewis & Betty Carter, sons and daughter of my deceased Sister Betty Lewis, I give & bequeath five other parts--one to each of them. [\[35\]](#)

To George Steptoe Washington, Lawrence Augustine Washington, Harriot Parks, and the heirs of Thornton Washington, sons & daughter of my deceased brother Samuel Washington, I give and bequeath other four parts, one part to each of them. [\[36\]](#)

To Corbin Washington, and the heirs of Jane Washington, Son & daughter of my deceased brother John Augustine Washington, I give & bequeath two parts; one part to each of them. [\[37\]](#)

To Samuel Washington, Francis Ball & Mildred Hammond, son & daughters of my Brother Charles Washington, I give & bequeath three parts; one part to each of them. And to George Fayette Washington[,] Charles Augustine Washington & Maria Washington, sons and daughter of my deceased Nephew Geo: Augustine Washington, I give one other part; that is--to each a third of that part. [\[38\]](#)

To Elizabeth Parke Law, Martha Parke Peter, and Eleanor Parke Lewis, I give and bequeath three other parts, that is a part to each of them. [\[39\]](#)

And to my Nephews Bushrod Washington & Lawrence Lewis, and to my ward, the



grandson of My wife, I give and bequeath one other part; that is, a third thereof to each of them. And if it should so happen, that any of the persons whose names are here enumerated (unknown to me) should now be deceased--or should die before me, that in either of these cases, the heirs of such deceased person shall, notwithstanding, derive all the benefits of the bequest; in the same manner as if he, or she, was actually living at the time.

And by way of advice, I recommend it to my Executors not to be precipitate in disposing of the landed property (herein directed to be sold) if from temporary causes the Sale thereof should be dull; experience having fully evinced, that the price of land (especially above the Falls of the Rivers, & on the Western Waters) have been progressively rising, and cannot be long checked in its increasing value. And I particularly recommend it to such of the Legatees (under this clause of my Will) as can make it convenient, to take each a share of my Stock in the Potomac Company in preference to the amount of what it might sell for; being thoroughly convinced myself, that no uses to which the money can be applied will be so productive as the Tolls arising from this navigation when in full operation (and this from the nature of things it must be 'ere long) and more especially if that of the Shanondoah is added thereto.

The family Vault at Mount Vernon requiring repairs, and being improperly situated besides, I desire that a new one of Brick, and upon a larger Scale, may be built at the foot of what is commonly called the Vineyard Inclosure, on the ground which is marked out. In which my remains, with those of my deceased relatives (now in the old Vault) and such others of my family as may chuse to be entombed there, may be deposited. And it is my express desire that my Corpse may be Interred in a private manner, without parade, or funeral Oration.

[\[40\]](#)

Lastly I constitute and appoint my dearly beloved wife Martha Washington, My Nephews William Augustine Washington, Bushrod Washington, George Steptoe Washington, Samuel Washington, & Lawrence Lewis, & my ward George Washington Parke Custis (when he shall have arrived at the age of twenty years) Executrix & Executors of this Will & testament, [\[41\]](#) In the construction of which it will readily be perceived that no professional character has been consulted, or has had any Agency in the draught--and that, although it has occupied many of my leisure hours to digest, & to through it into its present form, it may, notwithstanding, appear crude and incorrect. But having endeavoured to be plain, and explicit in all Devises--even at the expence of prolixity, perhaps of tautology, I hope, and trust, that no disputes will arise concerning them; but if, contrary to expectation, the case should be otherwise from the want of legal expression, or the usual technical terms, or because too much or too little has been said on any of the Devises to be consonant with law, My Will and direction expressly is, that all disputes (if unhappily any should arise) shall be decided by three impartial and intelligent men, known for their probity and good understanding; two to be chosen by the disputants--each having the choice of one--and the third by those two. Which three men thus chosen, shall, unfettered by Law, or legal constructions, declare their sense of the Testators intention; and such decision is, to all intents and purposes to be as binding on the Parties as if it had been given in the Supreme Court of the United States.

In witness of all, and of each of the things herein contained, I have set my hand and Seal, this ninth day of July, in the year One thousand seven hundred and ninety [nine] and of the Independence of the United States the twenty fourth.

## Notes

1. Washington bought the lot in Alexandria and built the house on it before the Revolution. It was the only piece of property he left outright to his wife Martha. The Virginia Assembly in 1762 voted to extend the limits of the town of Alexandria, and on 9 May 1763 fifty-eight one-half-acre lots in the expanded town were offered for sale at public auction. Washington purchased two of the lots: in 1764 he paid John Alexander, Jr., £38 for lot no. 112, at Prince and Pitt streets, and £10.10 for lot no. 118, at Pitt and Cameron streets. In the spring of 1769 he engaged Richard Lake (Leak, Leake) and Edward Rigdon to build a house on the second of these lots. The first payment to men working on the house was made in June 1769 and the last in August 1771. Washington's accounts show that over the two years he paid £59.16.1-1/2 to Lake, £30.19.2 to the joiner Rigdon, £5.10 to cabinet-maker James Connell, £16.11.8 to plasterer Matthew Lawson, and £9.15.4 to housepainter William Bushby, which would indicate that he was out of pocket only £131.7.7-1/2 for house and lot. A quarter of a century later he wrote Lear that he had been told his property at the corner of Pitt and Cameron streets would bring as much as £2,000 if offered for sale.

Washington's first tenant in Alexandria, Dr. William Brown, came to Virginia from the University of Edinburgh in 1770 and lived and practiced medicine in the house for a decade or so. When Brown moved at the end of 1785 or early 1786 to another house in town, he was paying an annual rent of £60, the same amount paid by his successor, William Halley, who rented the house in 1786. In November 1788, upon learning that Bushrod Washington wished to move to Alexandria and practice law there, Washington offered the house to his nephew "Rent free till you can find a more convenient one." Shortly thereafter Washington left for New York to assume the presidency, and for a time he lost sight of what was being done about the house. In December 1792 he instructed his farm manager, Anthony Whitting, to find out whether it was occupied and, if not, to secure a renter. Six months later Washington confessed to a man named Cleon Moore that he knew nothing of the status of his property and asked his friend John Fitzgerald of Alexandria to arrange for its rental to Moore. Upon investigation, Fitzgerald found living in the house a woman with young children, whose husband was away on a trip to Boston. It turned out that the family, "orderly though poor," had rented the house from Washington's farm manager before his death in June 1793. In October 1793 Washington talked with the young man and agreed to allow him to remain in the house with his family in return for keeping it in good repair.

Washington decided in the fall of 1793 to fix up his Alexandria house for Frances Bassett (Fanny) Washington and her three little children. Fanny Washington, Martha Washington's niece, and her husband, Washington's beloved nephew George Augustine Washington, had lived at Mount Vernon since shortly before their marriage in 1785. After George Augustine's death in January 1793, Fanny declined the pressing invitation of the Washingtons that she make Mount Vernon her permanent home with her children, declaring that she would follow the advice given

by her husband before his death that she find a house in Alexandria so as to provide for the education of her children, Anna Maria and the two little boys. After receiving and accepting Washington's offer of the Alexandria house, in November 1793 Fanny Washington asked that a story be added to it, which was not done, but Washington did agree to pave the cellar of the house and to have "one end of the stable laid with plank . . . to accomodate the servants" whom she "was obliged to carry" with her. Washington also took it upon himself to acquire wallpaper in Philadelphia for the house, while Martha Washington arranged to have furniture made in Philadelphia and shipped to Alexandria for her niece. At the end of the summer of 1794 the young widow finally moved into the sand-colored house with its red roof at the corner of Pitt and Cameron streets, but she lived in it for only a little over a year. Twelve months later she married Tobias Lear, Washington's former and future secretary, and in the fall of 1795 she moved with her children across the river to Georgetown where her new husband was then in business. In December 1795 Lear reported to Washington that he had succeeded in renting the house in Alexandria "for Sixty Pounds Curr. Per Annum to Nath[anie]l Washington who will go into it immediately." The new tenant kept the house for no more than a year; at the end of 1797 Washington rented it at the same rate to his former commission agent, Philip Marsteller, a merchant in the town. The first item in Martha Washington's will reads: "I give and devise to my Nephew Bartholomew Dandridge and his Heirs, my lot in the town of Alexandria situate on Pitt and Cameron Streets devised to me by my late Husband George Washington deceased" (Fields, *Papers of Martha Washington*, 406).

See GW to Carlyle & Adams, 15 Feb. 1767, n.8, Cash Accounts, January 1770, n.6, April 1770, n.7, August 1770, n.11, January 1771, n.2, August 1771, nn.6 and 7 (*Papers, Colonial Series*, 8:290-91, 322-23, 362-64, 424-25, 511-12), Ledger A, 278, 321, 323, Agreement with William Halley, 20 Feb. 1786, and note (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 3:562-63), Ledger B, 119, 185, *Diaries*, 2:182-83, Bushrod Washington to GW, 20 Nov. 1788, John Fitzgerald to GW, 11 Oct. 1793, GW to Bushrod Washington, 25 Nov. 1788 (*Papers, Presidential Series*, 1:119-20, 126-27), GW to Anthony Whitting, 16 Dec. 1792, GW to Cleon Moore, 19 July 1793, GW to John Fitzgerald, 11 Aug. 1793, Frances Bassett Washington to Martha Washington, June 1794, and Martha Washington to Frances Bassett Washington, 2 June 1793, 10 Feb., 2 Mar., 13 Apr., 25 May, 30 June 1794 (Fields, *Papers of Martha Washington*, 249-50, 256-57, 259-60, 264-65, 265-66, 268, 270), Frances Bassett Washington to GW, 5, 28 Mar., 22 Nov. 1793, 17 Sept. 1794, GW to Frances Bassett Washington, 10 June, 18 Aug. 1793, and GW to William Pearce, 22 Dec. 1793, 12 Jan., 9, 16 Feb., 27 April, 4, 11, 18, 25 May, 8 June, 13 July, 3 Aug., 1794, Tobias Lear to GW, 17 Nov., 14 Dec. 1795, GW to Lear 2, 30 Nov. 1795, and GW to John Fitzgerald, William Herbert, and George Gilpin, 22 Nov. 1797, n.2 (*Papers, Retirement Series*, 1:481).

The second lot that GW bought in Alexandria in 1763, the one on the corner of Prince and Pitt streets, remained unimproved until shortly before his death. See the references to it in Schedule of Property, printed immediately below, and in note 19 of that document. [\[back\]](#)

2. At about the same time that he was drawing up his will, Washington made a list of the adult and child slaves on each of the Mount Vernon farms, usually giving ages, occupations, and other pertinent information. His list of 317 slaves, includes the names of 124 who belonged to him outright and were to be freed when Martha Washington died, 153 who were Martha Washington's dower slaves and at her death would go to the Custis heir-at-law, her grandson

George Washington Parke Custis, and forty others leased by GW from his neighbor Penelope Manley French. Of the 277 slaves belonging to Washington in his own right or by marriage, 179 were 12 years old or older, eighteen of whom were "Passed labor." The remaining ninety-eight were children under the age of 12. Of those twelve years old and over, ninety-five were females and eighty-four were males. Shortly after Washington's death, Bushrod Washington recommended to Martha Washington that she get "clear of her negroes" at Mount Vernon. According to Eugene Prussing, she "was made unhappy by the talk in the [slave] quarters of the good time coming to the ones to be freed as soon as she died." He reported that "many did not wait for the event" but took off at once. In any case, all the slaves that Washington owned outright were freed after Martha's death, and the accounts of the executors of Washington's will show an expenditure by 1833 of more than \$10,000 to the pensioned former slaves who remained at Mount Vernon or lived nearby (Bushrod Washington to Martha Washington, 27 Dec. 1799, in Fields, *Papers of Martha Washington*, 328-31; Prussing, *Estate of George Washington*, 158-60). [\[back\]](#)

**3.** At a sale in October 1767 Washington bought "Mulatto Will" for £61.15 from Mary Smith Ball Lee, widow of John Lee of Westmoreland County, who had recently died. The young man called himself William Lee; Washington at first called him Billy, but after the Revolution he consistently referred to him in his papers as Will or William. As early as May 1770 Will Lee began going to Williamsburg as Washington's body-servant to Williamsburg for the meeting of the Virginia House of Burgesses. For the next two decades Will was in constant attendance upon Washington as his personal servant, acting by turns as valet, waiter, butler, or huntsman. He accompanied Washington to the meeting of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1774, remained by his side "through the War" and returned with him to Mount Vernon at the end of 1783, went back with him to Philadelphia in 1787 at the calling of the Constitutional Convention, and, even though by then badly crippled, travelled to New York when Washington became president in 1789.

During the war Will Lee took as his wife "one of his own colour a free woman" from Philadelphia, named Margaret Thomas, who was, Washington wrote Clement Biddle, "also of my family." Washington's efforts after the war to bring Will Lee's wife to Mount Vernon apparently failed. According to George Washington Parke Custis, Will was "a stout active man, and a famous horseman," until two accidents in the late 1780s deprived him of the use of his legs. While acting as a chain carrier when Washington surveyed his Four Mile Run tract near Alexandria in April 1785, Will fell and "broke the pan of his knee"; three years later, in March 1788, he fell at the post office in Alexandria and "broke the Pan of his other Knee" (*Diaries*, 4:125, 5:281). In June 1788 he was still "unable to walk" (*ibid.*, 5:349), but when Washington left Mount Vernon for New York on 16 April 1789 to assume the presidency, Will followed him. The old servant got as far as Philadelphia before problems with his knees forced him to remain there to seek treatment from doctors. On 3 May Tobias Lear, writing from New York, asked Clement Biddle in Philadelphia to persuade Will Lee to return to Mount Vernon, "for he cannot possibly be of any service here." Will was not to be persuaded: on 22 June Lear wrote Biddle that "Billy arrived here safe & well." What services if any Washington's faithful servant was able to perform in New York is unclear, but Washington informed his secretary Tobias Lear in November 1793 that Lee's replacement was "too little acquainted with the arrangement of a Table, & too stupid for a Butler." Back at Mount Vernon, Will Lee took up residence in his

house near the mansion and acted as a cobbler, becoming, according to later testimony of one of Bushrod Washington's Mount Vernon slaves, a troublesome old man before his death, probably about 1810. See Cash Accounts, May 1768, n.2 (*Papers, Colonial Series*, 8:82-83), GW to Clement Biddle, 28 July 1784 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 2:14), Custis, *Recollections of Washington*, 157, Tobias Lear to Clement Biddle, 3 May, 22 June 1789 (ViMtV), Biddle to GW, 27 April 1789, n.1 (*Papers, Presidential Series*, 2:133-34), *Diaries*, 2:238, 278, 286-88, 3:276, 5:73, GW to Lear, 8 Nov. 1793, and Prussing, *Estate of George Washington*, 27, 159. [\[back\]](#)

4. When an association was formed in Alexandria in 1785 to establish an academy in the town, Washington agreed to become one of its managers, or sponsors. At the end of that year he informed the academy's trustees that he had long intended to set aside at his death £1,000, the interest of which was to be used for establishing "a school in the Town of Alexandria for the purpose of educating orphan children" and the children of "indigent parents." He explained that he could not afford to give the £1,000 immediately; instead, he would undertake to pay the trustees each year the interest on that amount and would vest the £1,000 in them, if they could assure him that the academy would provide "that kind of education which would be most extensively useful to people of the lower class of citizens, viz.--reading, writing & arithmetic, so as to fit them for the mechanical purposes." The trustees promptly promised to do "every thing in their power to comply fully" with Washington's "benevolent intentions." In January of every year thereafter Washington made the payments of £50, the last on 6 Jan. 1798. He also agreed, in June 1786, that the money he was contributing to the academy could be used for the support of girls as well as of boys, "in a ratio not to exceed one girl for four boys." In November 1785 Washington placed his nephews George Steptoe Washington and Lawrence Augustine Washington in Alexandria Academy, where they remained until after Washington became president. See GW to Trustees of the Washington Academy, 17 Dec. 1785, and note 1 of that document (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 3:463-64), Ledger C, 42, GW to William Brown, 30 June 1786 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 4:135), and *Diaries*, 4:241. [\[back\]](#)

5. Gov. Benjamin Harrison wrote Washington from Richmond on 6 Jan. 1785 to inform him that "the assembly yesterday without a dissenting voice complimented you with fifty shares in the potowmack company and one hundred in the James River company." Washington agonized long and hard about whether he should accept the shares lest this be taken as pay for his public service, which he had committed himself to forego. In the end, he induced the legislature to provide that the future profit from stock should go not to him personally but instead "stand appropriated to such objects of a public nature, in such manner, and under such distributions, as the said George Washington, esq. by deed during his life, or by his last will and testament, shall direct and appoint" (12 Hening 42-44). For GW's acceptance of the stock, see the references in Benjamin Harrison to GW, 6 Jan. 1785, n.1 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 2:257); for his bequest of the fifty shares in the Potomac River Company to "a UNIVERSITY to be established within the limits of the District of Columbia," see the two ensuing paragraphs of the will and note 6; for his gift in 1797 of the one hundred shares of stock in the James River Company to Liberty Hall Academy, see note 7 below. [\[back\]](#)

6. Four years before he wrote this will, in a letter to the District of Columbia commissioners dated 28 Jan. 1795, Washington presented in very much the same terms as he does here the argument for establishing a national university in the new Federal City on the Potomac. He told

the commissioners that he was prepared to "grant, in perpetuity, fifty shares in the navigation of Potomac river towards the endowment" of such a university. In 1796 he wrote the commissioners three more times about this, and in his final address to Congress on 7 Dec. 1796, he stated that he had "heretofore proposed to the consideration of Congress, the expediency of establishing a National University; and also a Military Academy. The desirableness of both these Institutions, has so constantly increased with every new view I have taken of the subject, that I cannot omit the opportunity of once for all, recalling your attention to them" (DNA:46, Fourth Congress, 1795-97, Records of Legislative Proceedings, President's Messages). For other references by GW to the creation of a national university, see GW to Thomas Jefferson, 15 Nov. 1794, 15 Mar. 1795, to Alexander Hamilton, 1 Sept. 1796, and to St. George Tucker, 30 May 1797 (*Papers, Retirement Series*, 1:163); for GW's holdings in the Potomac River Company, see his notation to the entry regarding the Potomac River Company in the Schedule of Property attached to the will, printed below, and also note 23 to that document. [\[back\]](#)

7. Washington informed Gov. Robert Brooke of Virginia in September 1796 that he wished to give to Liberty Hall Academy in Rockbridge County the one hundred shares in the James River Company bestowed upon him in 1785 by the Virginia legislature. Liberty Hall Academy, founded by the Rev. William Graham and incorporated in 1782, had been renamed Washington Academy. It was soon to become Washington College, and still later Washington and Lee University. It was not until April 1798 that the trustees of the institution acknowledged that they had received in September 1797 official notice of his gift and expressed their appreciation for it. See GW to Robert Brooke, 15 Sept. 1796, Edward Graham to GW, 9 Mar. 1798, Washington Academy Trustees to GW, 12 April 1798, and notes 1 and 2 to that document (*Papers, Retirement Series*, 2:131-32, 236-37). For GW's acquisition of the James River Company stock, see Benjamin Harrison to GW, 6 Jan. 1785, n.1 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 2:257). [\[back\]](#)

8. In 1771 Washington sold a tract of 180 acres in Frederick County to Philip Pendleton (1752-1802) for £400. The next year Washington's friend Edmund Pendleton indicated that he would pay Washington the £400 on behalf of his nephew. Before any payment was made, however, Philip Pendleton, early in 1773, transferred the land, and the debt, to Washington's brother Samuel. Washington wrote his brother from New York in 1776 that he would arrange to have the title to the land transferred to him, but he failed to do so. Before his death in 1781, Samuel Washington gave the land to his son Thornton. When Washington in 1784, shortly after his return to Mount Vernon, reminded the executors of his brother's estate that he had not received a penny for the 400 acres and still retained the deed to the tract, his nephew Thornton Washington wrote him that he had been living on the land for some time and had made many improvements. He asked his uncle for assurance that he would not be evicted. Thornton Washington was allowed to remain on the land. Two years later he wrote Washington that the Hite family were preparing to challenge Washington's title to it. His fears proved groundless. No payments on the land were made either before or after Thornton's death in 1787; five per cent annual rent for twenty-nine years would have raised the amount of the debt by 1799 to more than £900. See Bond to Philip Pendleton, 7 Dec. 1771 (*Papers, Colonial Series*, 8:573), Ledger B, 22, 36, Edmund Pendleton to GW, 19 Dec. 1772, GW to Samuel Washington, 4 Feb. 1773, 5 Oct. 1776, *Diaries*, 3:37, 74, GW to James Nourse, 22 Jan. 1784, and, particularly, note 3 of that document, and Thornton Washington to GW, 1 Aug. 1784, 6 June 1786 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 1:69-70, 2:20-21, and 4:100-2). [\[back\]](#)

**9.** When Washington returned to Mount Vernon at the end of the war, eleven-year-old George Steptoe Washington and eight-year-old Lawrence Augustine Washington, sons of Washington's dead brother Samuel and his fourth wife, Anne Steptoe Washington, were living in Alexandria under the care of David Griffith, the minister at Christ Church. Washington immediately notified his nephews' guardian, James Nourse, of his willingness to keep an eye on them, and it was at Washington's suggestion that later in the year Nourse sent the boys across the river to Georgetown to attend the school of the Rev. Stephen Bloomer Balch. Upon Nourse's death in October 1784, Washington assumed responsibility for supervising the education of his two nephews and for the next eight years provided most of the funds for their support. In November 1785 he moved them back to Alexandria and put them under the tutelage of William McWhir at the new Alexandria Academy. In January 1787 the two boys were moved into the house of Samuel Hanson, where their behavior brought complaints from Hanson, requiring GW's intervention on a number of occasions. When Washington went to New York in the spring of 1789, his friend Dr. James Craik took the boys into his house. At the end of the year, with Washington's approval, Craik removed them from the Academy and placed them in the school of Gilbert Harrow in Alexandria in order to have them concentrate on the study of mathematics. On Tobias Lear's advice, Washington in the fall of 1790 had his nephews brought to Philadelphia and enrolled in the college there, where they remained until their graduation in 1792. In addition to GW's correspondence from 1787 to 1790 with Samuel Hanson and George Steptoe Washington, for GW's patronage of these two nephews see his letters to James Nourse, 22 Jan. 1784, to David Griffith, 29 Aug. 1784, to Stephen Bloomer Balch, 30 Oct. 1784, 26 June, 22 Nov. 1785, to Charles Washington, 12 April 1785, to Bushrod Washington, 17 Nov. 1788, to James Craik, 8 Sept. 1789, and to Tobias Lear 10 Oct. 1790 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 1:69-70; 2:61-2, 113, 494-95; 3:84, 378; *Papers, Presidential Series*, 1:116-17; 4:1-3; 6:547-49). See also the letters to GW from Charles Washington, 16 Nov. 1784, 19 Feb., 23 Nov., 30 Dec. 1785, from Benjamin Stoddert, 21 June 1785, from William McWhir, 8 Mar. 1788, from James Craik, 24 Aug. 1789, 3 Feb. 1790, and from Tobias Lear, 10, 28 Oct. 1790 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 2:137-39, 370-71; 3:68, 382, 483-84; 6:148; *Papers, Presidential Series*, 3:529-31; 5:95-98; 6:549-52, 593-95). For GW's account with George Steptoe and Lawrence Augustine Washington, see Ledger B, 206, 229, 250, 301, 328. The itemized account from 1784 to 1791 shows a running total of £406.7.6 spent by Washington for the two nephews. [[back](#)]

**10.** As Daniel Parke Custis's widow, and before she married George Washington in 1759, Martha Washington lent her brother Bartholomew Dandridge £600 sterling. At the settlement of Daniel Parke Custis's estate in 1759-1761, Dandridge's bond for this debt was assigned to Martha Washington's daughter, Martha Parke (Patsy) Custis. After Patsy's death in 1773 the bond passed to Washington as Martha's husband; with unpaid interest the debt at that time came to £1,219.9.4 (Guardian Accounts, 3 Nov. 1773, printed in *Papers, Colonial Series*, 9:366-74). Bartholomew Dandridge died in 1785, and three years later his son John Dandridge as executor of his father's will persuaded Washington to seek title to the Dandridge slaves in payment of the Dandridge estate's debt to him. In this way he hoped to prevent other creditors from forcing their sale. Washington agreed to seek a judgment against the estate, and he succeeded in securing title to the slaves. But he arranged for the slaves to remain in the actual possession of Bartholomew Dandridge's widow, Mary Burbidge Dandridge, in New Kent County. Washington's account with the estate of Bartholomew Dandridge has not been found, but it would appear that the value placed upon the slaves was not sufficient to settle Washington's debt, leaving, by 1795 almost

£425 owed (Ledger C, 9). See particularly GW to Burwell Bassett, Jr., 3 Feb. 1788, and the note to that document in which the documents referred to here are cited. [\[back\]](#)

**11.** Washington, as he reported to Gov. Benjamin Harrison in 1781, purchased in May 1771, at his mother's request and at his own expense, "a commodious house, garden, and [two] Lotts (of her own choosing) in Fredericksburg, that she might be near my Sister [Betty] Lewis, her only daughter" (GW to Benjamin Harrison, 21 Mar. 1781). Mary Ball Washington moved from Ferry Farm across the Rappahannock into Fredericksburg in late 1771 and lived in the house that her son had bought for her until her death in August 1789. After her death, Washington had three local men examine the house and lot and recommend what price and terms should be set for their sale. Their suggested price of £450 payable in two years found no takers, and in March 1790 Washington agreed to sell the property for £350 payable in three years, to Charles Carter, Jr., who probably was already living in the house with his wife Betty Lewis, Mary Washington's granddaughter. In the spring of 1794 Carter made his first payment to Washington, an order for £200 on a merchant in Alexandria. Upon the receipt of the payment, Washington wrote Carter: "The remainder of the money due me for the purchase of the lots (amounting to abo<ve> two hundred pounds more) I give . . . to my niece Mrs Carter" (GW to Carter, 29 May 1794; see also Carter to GW, 14 May 1794). Washington probably included this provision in his will simply to confirm his gift to the Carters of the unpaid balance due on the purchase, but he also may have had in mind the question raised about the title to the property arising from the fact that Carter and Washington had proceeded under the false illusion that Washington had bought the house and lot from Washington's brother-in-law and Carter's father-in-law, Fielding Lewis. The fact was that Washington had bought them both from Michael Robinson, who had bought the lots from Lewis (ten years earlier) in 1761. For the source of this confusion, see Carter to GW, 14 May 1794. For GW's purchase of the house and lots in 1771 and 1772 and his sale of them in 1790, see GW to Harrison, 21 Mar. 1781, Ledger A, 536, Cash Accounts, 1761, n.69 (*Papers, Colonial Series*, 7:1-10), *Diaries*, 3:52, 69, GW to Betty Washington Lewis, 13 Sept. 1789, Burgess Ball and Charles Carter, Jr., to GW, 8 Oct. 1789, Burgess Ball to GW, 26 Dec. 1789, Charles Carter, Jr., to GW, 6 Feb. 1790, 14 May 1794, and GW to Charles Carter, Jr., 8 Mar. 1790, 29 May 1794 (*Papers, Presidential Series*, 4:32-36, 146-47; 5:102-3). [\[back\]](#)

**12.** As early as July 1767 the managers of a lottery to dispose of William Byrd III's holdings at the falls of the James River advertised for sale 10,000 tickets at £5 a piece. Washington had already bought twenty of the tickets, and he later entered an agreement with nine other men, Peyton Randolph, John Wayles, George Wythe, Richard Randolph, Lewis Burwell, William Fitzhugh of Chatham, Thomson Mason, Nathaniel Harrison, Jr., and Richard Kidder Meade, to purchase jointly another one hundred tickets. When the lottery was held in Williamsburg on 2 Nov. 1768, Washington won on his own one one-half-acre lot south of the James River in what was to be laid out in 1769 as the town of Manchester. He also was entitled to one-tenth share in those prizes drawn by his partners; these included four two-acre lots in Manchester-to-be and two one-hundred-acre lots in Henrico County north of the James. Back at Mount Vernon after the Revolution, Washington wrote his lawyer Edmund Randolph in July 1784 and asked that Randolph let him "know (if you can) what is become of this property; & of what value it is--especially the Lott No. 265 which I hold in my own right--for I faintly recollect to have heard the joint stock was disposed of to no great advantage for the company--for me, I am sure it was not, as I have never received an iota on account of these prizes." Randolph replied that the value of



Washington's own lot in Manchester was unknown. He also reported that as far as he could determine Richard Randolph had sold "the most valuable" of the four lots in Manchester and that Thomson Mason had sold the two larger tracts in Henrico County north of the James. Apparently both Edmund Randolph and Washington forgot about this exchange: about five years later, in August 1789, Randolph asked Washington whether he had any information regarding the Byrd lottery prizes that Washington and his uncle Peyton Randolph had shared with others. Washington gave this answer: "The list of associates who purchased 100 Tickets in the lottery of the deceased Colo. Byrd is all the memorandom I have of that transaction. To the best of my recollection Mr Thomson Mason (deceased) was one of the associates and was either authorised, or assumed (I do not know which) the management of the business--He did it so effectually it seems as to monopolize the whole interest." When Washington made this bequest in his will in the summer of 1799 to his nephew William Augustine Washington, it may have slipped his mind that three years before, in June 1796, he had written another of his nephews, Bushrod Washington, about the prizes to which he was entitled from the Byrd lottery and also about the "lot in some Town [Edinburgh] that was established on James River (below Richmd) by a certain John Wood [Hood]." He then told Bushrod that if "upon enquiry" he thought any returns could be got from any of this, "I give you all the Interest I have therein & you may act accordingly." Washington had bought the lot in the town of Edinburgh, which never came into existence, in October 1760. See GW to Edmund Randolph, 10 July 1784, 8 Sept. 1789, Edmund Randolph to GW, 20 July 1784, 2 Aug. 1789 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 1:494-96; 2:4-5; *Papers, Presidential Series*, 3:371-73; 4:5-6), and GW to Bushrod Washington, 29 June 1796. For an account of the Byrd auction, see Cash Accounts, May 1769, n.10 (*Papers, Colonial Series*, 8:191-94); for the purchase of the lot from John Hood, see Cash Accounts, October 1760, *ibid.*, 6:465-66. [\[back\]](#)

**13.** Washington prized his papers highly and long before drafting his will had come to look upon the great mass of documents that he held at Mount Vernon as part of his legacy to the new nation. Most of the letters and other papers from the pre-Revolutionary years preserved by him have to do with his career as colonel of the Virginia Regiment in the 1750s, or they relate to his agricultural and business affairs. During the Revolution, recognizing the particular importance of the papers of the leader of the army fighting for American independence, viewing them "as a species of Public property, sacred in my hands," Washington in 1781 gained the approval of Congress to have his correspondence, orders, and instructions properly arranged and copied into bound volumes. This was accomplished in two years by a team of clerks working at Poughkeepsie, N.Y., under the direction of Richard Varick. In the summer of 1783 Varick delivered twenty-eight fat volumes of recopied documents. At the end of the year Washington had these volumes, as well as the originals of his "public and other Papers," sent overland to Mount Vernon. These Revolutionary War documents represented the larger part of the collection of papers at Mount Vernon that Washington left to his nephew Bushrod Washington; but with his heightened sense of the significance of his role in the founding of the American Republic, Washington after the Revolution was at greater pains both to retain copies of the hundreds and hundreds of letters that he wrote and to preserve the even larger number of letters that he received. He also at some point in the 1780s put a series of clerks to work copying his letter books from the French and Indian War, but only after he himself had gone through them, correcting the mistakes in spelling and grammar of the young Washington and rewording infelicitous or unclear passages of his. At the end of his presidency in 1797, Washington had his

presidential secretaries, Tobias Lear and Bartholomew Dandridge, take from his files the papers that should go to his successor, John Adams, and send the rest down to him at Mount Vernon. He also had his letter-press contraption sent to Mount Vernon and in his final two years used it to make copies of most of the letters that he himself wrote. Lear reported that Washington, after saying, six hours before his death, "*I find I am going, my breath cannot continue long,*" gave instructions to Lear to "*arrange & record all my late Military letters & papers . . . and let Mr Rawlins finish recording my other letters, which he has begun.*" The "Military letters and papers" were those relating to his role as commander in chief of the army in 1798 and 1799; "Mr Rawlins" was his clerk, Albin Rawlins.

Washington's dream of erecting a separate building for his papers at Mount Vernon never materialized, and Martha Washington, it is supposed, destroyed the letters between herself and her husband before Bushrod Washington took possession of the papers, probably after Martha's death in 1802. Judge Washington soon sent most of his uncle's papers at Mount Vernon to Richmond, beginning in 1803, for Chief Justice John Marshall to use in preparing his five-volume biography of the great man, which Marshall published between 1804 and 1807. Bushrod, through the years, also gave away some of Washington's letters and returned others to the senders. In 1815 William B. Sprague, a young tutor at Lawrence Lewis's home Woodlawn, obtained Bushrod's permission to take any letters he wanted provided he left copies in their place. Sprague took full advantage of the offer to the extent of about 1500 letters. In 1827 Bushrod gave Jared Sparks access to the papers and subsequently allowed him to take many of them to Boston where Sparks put together and published his twelve-volume edition of *The Writings of George Washington* (Boston, 1834-37). Before Sparks had barely begun his work, Bushrod Washington died, in 1829, and left the papers to his nephew George Corbin Washington. George Corbin Washington sold George Washington's public papers to the United States government in 1834 for \$25,000 and his private papers in 1849 for \$20,000. The papers taken from Mount Vernon were deposited in the Department of State until 1904, at which time they were transferred to the Library of Congress. For the quotations, see GW to William Gordon, 23 Oct. 1782, to Richard Varick, 1 Jan. 1784, and Tobias Lear's Narrative Accounts of the Death of George Washington, printed immediately below. For the history of the disposition of GW's papers, see the Introduction to the Library of Congress's *Index to the George Washington Papers*; for a brief description of the papers, see W.W. Abbot, "An Uncommon Awareness of Self: The Papers of George Washington" (*Prologue*, Quarterly of the National Archives, vol. 21, no. 1, [Spring 1989] 7-19). [\[back\]](#)

**14.** The books at Mount Vernon are listed in the inventory made when Washington's estate was appraised after his death. The executors of Washington's will returned the inventory and appraisal of the estate to the Fairfax County court, which ordered it to be recorded on 20 Aug. 1810. The inventory was among those papers that disappeared from the courthouse in the nineteenth century. Early in the twentieth century William K. Bixby presented the original inventory to Mount Vernon, where it remains. It was first printed in 1927 by Eugene E. Prussing as appendix II, in his *Estate of George Washington*, 401-408. The seventeen-page list of books and maps in the inventory of nearly one thousand items includes multi-volume sets of books and pamphlets bound together in single volumes, valued altogether at \$1,698. The books were in Washington's library at Mount Vernon, in three book cases and "on the Table." Years later Edward Everett procured in 1860 from John A. Washington a copy made of the original

inventory and printed it in his *Life of Washington*. In 1897 Appleton P.C. Griffin included in his *Boston Athenæum Washington Collection* an appendix listing the books in the inventory as printed in Everett's biography. Although the Boston Athenæum listing, arranged by categories, is based on Everett's imperfect copy of the inventory, it is very useful because William C. Lane, the librarian of the Athenæum, provides the full and correct names and the authors and titles of most of the works listed in it and, when possible, notes how and at what time each came into Washington's possession as well as its disposition after his death. See also Carroll and Meacham, *The Library at Mount Vernon*. [\[back\]](#)

**15.** In the schedule of property which Washington prepared and attached to his will, he listed all of his landholdings, including the tracts referred to here which he had already sold but had not received full payment for, and he appended an explanatory note to each. This Schedule of Property with Washington's explanatory notes is printed immediately below. [\[back\]](#)

**16.** In June 1791 David Steuart Erskine, eleventh earl of Buchan, sent by the Scottish painter Archibald Robertson the 2"x3"x4" hinged snuffbox, "made of the Oak that sheltered our Great Sir William Wallace after the Battle of Falkirk." Buchan wrote Washington that since he felt his "own unworthiness to receive this magnificently significant present," he had secured permission of the donors, the Company of Goldsmiths, "to make it over to the Man in the World to whom I thought it was most justly due" (Buchan to GW, 28 June 1791). Beginning in 1790 and until 1798, Buchan, as president of the Agriculture Society in London, was a frequent correspondent of Washington's. After the executors of Washington's will returned the box to Buchan with a copy of the will, Buchan decreed that the box be set aside "for the University of Washington with a Golden Pen to which there may be annually offered medals by the States to the honour of such young Citizens Students therein as shall be found in comparative trial to have made not only the greatest progress in useful knowledge during the whole of their course of Education but shall at the same time have been found to be most exemplary in their conduct & most preeminently possessed of the Principles & knowledge 'most friendly to Republican Government & to the true & genuine liberties of Mankind' to use the words of the great Founder himself" (see Buchan's "Observations respecting the Will of General Washington," Papers of the Earl of Buchan, William Salt Library, Stafford, United Kingdom). [\[back\]](#)

**17.** Charles Washington, six years younger than George Washington and his last surviving brother, lived at his house Happy Retreat near present-day Charles Town, West Virginia. He died there in September 1799, less than three months before Washington died at Mount Vernon. The cane came into the possession of the United States government in 1845 and is deposited in the Smithsonian Institution. In 1789 Benjamin Franklin included this provision in a codicil to his will: "My fine crab-tree walking-stick, with a gold head curiously wrought in the form of the cap of liberty, I give to my friend, and the friend of mankind, *General Washington*. If it were a Sceptre, he has merited it, and would become it. It was a present to me from that excellent woman, Madame de Forbach, the dowager Duchess of Deux-Ponts, connected with some verses which should go with it" (Albert H. Smyth, *Writings of Franklin*, 10:501-10). [\[back\]](#)

**18.** Lawrence Washington (1728-c.1813) of Chotank had spent several nights at Mount Vernon as recently as March 1798. He was the son of John and Mary Massey Washington and lived on the Potomac River downstream from Mount Vernon near Chotank Creek. His first cousin Robert

Washington, born in 1730, was the son of Townshend Washington of Chotank and the eldest brother of GW's long-time estate manager at Mount Vernon, Lund Washington. Robert Washington of Chotank has been tentatively identified as the "Robin" to whom GW wrote the letter that he copied in his notebook as an adolescent in the 1740s. The appraisers of the estate found "In the Study" at Mount Vernon "11 Spye Glasses," which they valued at \$110, and "4 Canes," valued at \$40 (Prussing, *Estate of George Washington*, 416). See *Diaries*, 6:287, and *Papers: Colonial Series*, 1:40-41. [\[back\]](#)

**19.** In 1796 Washington had the Philadelphia cabinetmaker John Aiken make the tambour secretary for his study at Mount Vernon. Thomas Burling of New York made the revolving chair to be used with the secretary. The appraisers in 1800 valued the "Tambour Secretary" at \$80 and the "Circular Chair" at \$20. Both pieces were returned to Mount Vernon in the twentieth century. James Craik had been Washington's physician and close friend since accompanying him as surgeon on the expedition to the Ohio in 1754. See Christine Meadows, "A Very Handsome Study," *Mount Vernon Annual Report* (1980), 32-41, and Prussing, *Estate of George Washington*, 416, 418. [\[back\]](#)

**20.** The dressing table that Washington bequeathed to his friend Dr. David Stuart was a French piece which Washington acquired from the French Minister to the United States, Eléonor-François-Elie, comte de Moustier, upon the minister's departure from New York in October 1789.

In his *Recollections of Washington*, George Washington Parke Custis reported that during the Revolutionary War Washington's body-servant Will Lee always carried the large telescope "in a leathern case." The inventory of the contents of Mount Vernon lists, "In the Passage," a "Spye Glass" which the appraisers valued at \$5. The editor of Custis's *Recollections* noted in 1859 that the telescope had "always been a conspicuous object upon the wall of the great passage at Mount Vernon." It may well be that Stuart, who was married to Eleanor Calvert Custis Stuart, the widow of Martha Washington's son, John Parke Custis, never removed the telescope from Mount Vernon; the dressing table was brought back to Mount Vernon in 1905. See Custis, *Recollections of Washington*, 224, Prussing, *George Washington's Estate*, 412-13, and *Mount Vernon Annual Report* (1981, 16-19). [\[back\]](#)

**21.** On 1 May 1794 the Rev. Clement Cruttwell (1743-1808) sent to Washington from Wokingham, Berkshire, in England, *The Holy Bible. . . with Notes, by Thomas Wilson, Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man, and Various Renderings Collected from the Other Translations by the Rev. Clement Cruttwell, the Editor*, published in three volumes in 1785 in Bath. According to Cruttwell, Thomas Wilson (1703-1784), son of the noted Bishop of Sodor and Man, Thomas Wilson (1663-1755), had directed in his will that this work by his father be sent to Washington. The Wilson work is listed in the inventory taken of Washington's library after his death, and the three volumes are now in the Library of Congress (Griffin, *Boston Athenæum Washington Collection*, 498). [\[back\]](#)

**22.** Four pairs of pistols were found "in the Study" at Mount Vernon when the inventory of its contents was taken in 1800. The appraisers set a value of \$50 on three of the pairs, and \$50 on the fourth. The pair of pistols given to Lafayette was exhibited at the Chicago Exhibition in 1893

as one of the "Souvenirs Franco-Américain de La Guerre de Independance." They had been on permanent display in Lafayette's chateau de La Grange. It is possible that these were the pistols that were sent from Philadelphia to General Washington at West Point on 22 Sept. 1779, with these words: "General Washington: accepting of these Pistols will very much oblige Sir Your most obedient very humble Sevt George Geddes." On 30 Sept., in accepting the gift, Washington called them "a pair of very elegant Pistols." By leaving this or another of his pair of pistols to Lafayette, Washington may have been returning the compliment. In 1824 Congressman Charles Fenton Mercer presented Gen. Andrew Jackson with a pair of pistols which, he said, Washington wore during the Revolution and were the gift of Lafayette. Mercer had got the pistols from William Robinson, the son-in-law of Washington's nephew William Augustine Washington. See Prussing, *Estate of George Washington*, 417-18, Richard and Carol Simpson, "Andrew Jackson's Pistols," (*The Gun Report*, January 1985), and Andrew Jackson to Edward George Washington Butler, 20 Jan. 1824, in Sam B. Smith, Harriet Chappell, Owsley, et al., eds., *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, 5:341-42. [\[back\]](#)

**23.** Hannah Bushrod Washington was the widow of Washington's brother John Augustine Washington, who died in January 1787. Mildred Thornton Washington was the widow of Washington's brother Charles Washington, who died in September 1799. Eleanor Calvert Custis Stuart, the wife of Dr. David Stuart, was, in consequence of her earlier marriage in February 1774 to Martha Washington's son, John Parke Custis (d.1781), the mother of Martha's four grandchildren. Hannah Fairfax Washington, wife of Washington's cousin and friend Warner Washington of Fairfield in Frederick County, was the daughter of Washington's mentor, William Fairfax of Belvoir. Elizabeth Foote Washington of Hayfield in Fairfax County was the widow of Lund Washington, the manager of the Mount Vernon estate for more than a decade before, during, and after the Revolution. [\[back\]](#)

**24.** See note 30 below. [\[back\]](#)

**25.** Sally Ball Haynie was a child 11 or 12 years old in October 1790 when her mother, Elizabeth Haynie, wrote to Washington about their desitute condition. Mrs. Haynie was probably the daughter of Washington's mother's half sister Elizabeth Johnson. To afford his impoverished relatives some relief, Washington instructed his rental agent Battaile Muse to find a vacant tenement for them on his land in Berkeley, Frederick, Fauquier, or Loudoun county and fix up a house where they might live rent free for as long as they chose. Mrs. Haynie seems not to have taken up Washington's offer but did accept occasional gifts of money from him. She and her daughter chose to live with and work for Betty Calmes, the widow of Marquis Calmes who owned land on the Shenandoah River in Frederick County. Mrs. Haynie's health failed, and in 1794, Washington's nephew Robert Lewis, who had taken over from Muse in late 1791 the oversight of Washington's tenant farms in Virginia, settled her and young Sally in a small house near his own residence in Fauquier County. When Mrs. Haynie died in April 1796, Lewis and his wife took Sally, a "beautiful young girl" of "great œconomy and industry," into their house, with the understanding that she would go to Mount Vernon and help Mrs. Washington with the housekeeping upon the Washingtons' return home from Philadelphia in 1797. The adolescent Sally had been a member of the Lewis household for only a very short time when Robert Lewis concluded that she was "giddy" and "extremely deficient in household Economy." He was quick to inform Washington of this and to encourage Sally to accept the invitation of the widowed Mrs.

Calmes to return and live with her. In January 1798 Sally herself wrote to Washington from Mrs. Calmes's, where she had been since the summer of 1796, and Washington instructed Robert Lewis to provide her with money to buy "necessaries." At the end of the year Sally wrote again saying that "nothing givs me gratter pleasure then to wright and reseve a letter from Soo grate a friend as you have bin to me." She informed Washington that she was living in the house of Capt. George Eskridge in Frederick County. See GW to Elizabeth Haynie, 27 Dec. 1790, to Battaile Muse, 27 Dec. 1790, to Robert Lewis, 26 June 1796, to Sally Ball Haynie, 11 Feb. 1798, Robert Lewis to GW, 17 Jan. 1795, 5 May, 26 June, 27 July 1796, and Sally Ball Haynie to GW, 28 Jan., 8 Sept., 7 Dec. 1798 (*Papers, Presidential Series*, 7:119-21; *Papers, Retirement Series*, 2:83-84); and see especially the notes to the letters from GW to Elizabeth Haynie, 27 Dec. 1790, and to Sally Ball Haynie, 11 Feb. 1798. [\[back\]](#)

**26.** Sarah Green was the daughter of Thomas Bishop, Washington's old military servant, and of Susanna Bishop, who from 1766 until her death in December 1785 delivered most of the babies born to slave mothers at Mount Vernon. An only child, Sarah Bishop was married, probably by 1787, to Thomas Green, the overseer of Washington's slave carpenters. Thomas Bishop was already nearly fifty years old in 1755 when he landed in Virginia with General Edward Braddock's forces. Three months after Braddock's defeat in July 1755, Washington as colonel of the new Virginia Regiment, hired Bishop as his personal military servant. Bishop remained with the young colonel until Washington left the Virginia Regiment at the end of 1758. Bishop then returned to the British army at Philadelphia. In the spring of 1760 Washington decided that he wished to have Bishop with him at Mount Vernon and paid £10 to secure his release from the British service. The old soldier lived at Mount Vernon for the next thirty-four years, until his death in 1795. For a time, in the late 1760s, Bishop acted as overseer of Muddy Hole farm at Mount Vernon, but even before Washington left for war in 1775, Bishop seems to have been relegated to performing occasional tasks for the estate manager, Lund Washington, who complained to Washington in December 1775 that "every thing Bishop does is wrong." Despite this, Washington never wavered in his commitment to provide his old servant with the necessities of life. Bishop's house was on the river near the mansion house at Mount Vernon. George Washington Parke Custis later recalled that the old man in good weather would go outside his house, station himself at a spot where Washington would likely pass on his daily ride about the plantation, so as to greet and be greeted by the general. Upon learning of the death of his old servant in January 1795, Washington wrote from Philadelphia to his farm manager, William Pearce: "Altho' Bishop should never have wanted victuals or cloaths whilst he lived, yet his death cannot be cause of regret, even to his daughter; to whom, from the imbecility of age, if not when he died, he soon must have become very troublesome to her, and a burthen to all around him."

Three or four months before Bishop's death in 1795, his son-in-law, Thomas Green, went off, leaving his wife Sarah and her young children behind. Washington had come to consider Green, who had been employed at Mount Vernon since 1783, a hopelessly incompetent drunkard. He viewed Green's leaving on "his own accord" as a "lucky circumstance," even though he pitied "his helpless family." In a letter that has not been found, Sarah Green wrote Washington about her distressed circumstances and told him of her intention to move into Alexandria in order to support her children and herself by taking in washing and sewing, or perhaps she would set up a shop. Washington expressed to his farm manager William Pearce his willingness to aid her, if

she should move into town, "to the amount of twenty pounds in the purchase of things or on credit but not by an advance in money." He also instructed Pearce to "give her a boat load of Wood--a little flour--and some meat at killing time." Mrs. Green seems to have decided to try to open a shop in Alexandria: in March 1796 she wrote from Alexandria to ask Washington for his help. Washington sent her, "as charity," \$8 in April 1795 and \$10 in July 1796 (Ledger C, 22, 25). For GW's early dealings with Thomas Bishop, see particularly *Diaries*, 1:229, 259, George Mercer to GW, 17 Feb. 1760, Robert Stewart to GW, 14 April 1760, and John Mercer to GW, 16 June 1760 (*Papers, Colonial Series*, 6:387-89, 412-14, 436-37). For other references to GW's concern for Bishop's welfare, see Lund Washington to GW, 3, 10 Dec. 1775 (*Papers, Revolutionary War Series*, 2:477-82, 526-28), and GW to Bishop, 10 April 1779. For references to Bishop's house and to his duties, see GW to Anthony Whitting, 14 Oct. 1792, Custis, *Recollections of Washington*, 376, Lund Washington's Account Book, 31, 60, 71, and Cash Accounts printed in *Papers, Colonial Series*, vols. 7 and 8. For Custis's anecdote about Bishop, see his *Recollections*, 376-81. For GW's opinion of Thomas Green, see particularly his letters to Green of 23 Dec. 1793 and to William Pearce of 21 Sept. 1794. For GW's dealings with Sarah Green, see GW to William Pearce, 21 Sept., 16, 30 Nov. 1794, and Sarah Green to GW, 21 Mar. 1795. [\[back\]](#)

**27.** John Alton accompanied Washington as his body-servant when the young man left Mount Vernon in April 1755 to join General Braddock. Alton remained with Washington throughout the disastrous campaign, falling ill at "abt the same time" that Washington did, "with near the same disorder." He did not return with Washington to the frontier in September 1755 when Washington was made colonel of the Virginia Regiment but remained at Mount Vernon instead. It was to Alton that Washington wrote in April 1759 shortly before bringing his bride to Mount Vernon, with instructions to have the "House very well cleand," to have "two of the best Bedsteads put up," and to see to it that the chairs and tables were "very well rubd and Cleand." In 1762 Alton was made overseer first of Dogue Run farm and then of Muddy Hole farm. In 1765 he was moved to Mill farm and in 1770 back to Muddy Hole. At the time of his death in 1785 he was overseer of River farm, having served without interruption, it appears, as an overseer at Mount Vernon for twenty-three years. In November 1786 Washington informed Alton's widow Elizabeth that she could "have the House used for a School by my Mill if the School should be discontinued" (*Diaries*, 5:66). Although there is some uncertainty about the marriage of the Alton's daughter, Ann, it seems clear that in 1785 she married the housekeeper, or butler, at Mount Vernon named Richard Burnet, who had been hired by Martha Washington in May 1783. Burnet left the Washingtons' employ in September 1785 upon his marriage, but in May 1786 he returned to take up his old position, this time under the name of Richard Burnet Walker. He continued as butler at Mount Vernon until 1789. For John Alton's role as Washington's body servant during Braddock's campaign, see GW to John Augustine Washington, 28 June-2 July 1755, and to William Fairfax, 23 April 1755, n.3, in *Papers, Colonial Series*, 1:259, 319-28. For his employment as overseer at Mount Vernon, see GW to Alton, 5 April 1759 (*ibid.*, 6:200), and Washington's Cash Accounts and his list of tithables in *Papers, Colonial Series*, vols. 7 through 10, and Lund Washington's Account Book, 34, 80, 160 (ViMtV). For the reference to Elizabeth Alton, see *Diaries*, 5:66. For the marriage of Ann Alton and the Mount Vernon career of Richard Burnet Walker, see GW to Clement Biddle, 17 Aug. 1785, n.4 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 3:186). [\[back\]](#)

**28.** William Augustine Washington was the son of George Washington's half-brother Augustine; George Steptoe Washington was the son of his brother Samuel; George Lewis was the son of his sister Betty Washington Lewis; Bushrod was the son of his brother John Augustine Washington; and Samuel was the son of his brother Charles Washington. In the inventory of the contents of the house at Mount Vernon in 1800, the appraisers listed "7 Swords & 1 blade," which they valued as a whole at \$120. The sword chosen by Samuel Washington was presented in 1843 to the United States Congress by his son Samuel T. Washington. At the time of the presentation the sword was described as "a plain couteau, or hangar, with a green hilt and silver guard. On the upper ward of the scabbard is engraven 'J. Bailey, Fish Kill.' It is accompanied by a buckskin belt, which is secured by a silver buckle and clasp, whereon are engraved the letters 'G.W.' and the figures '1757.' These are all of the plainest workmanship, but substantial . . ." (Prussing, *George Washington's Estate*, 416, 481). [\[back\]](#)

**29.** Washington left to his nephew Bushrod Washington the core of the great plantation that he had created upon the Potomac. It was that part of it lying between Little Hunting and Dogue creeks which included the original 2,126-acre Mount Vernon tract on Little Hunting Creek and a number of smaller tracts between it and Dogue Run below the Alexandria road, which he had gradually added to his holdings. Three of the five farms that Washington maintained at Mount Vernon lay between the two creeks and were referred to as Muddy Hole farm, Union (Ferry and French) farm, and Mansion House farm with its gardens and buildings, including the great house itself. Bushrod's father, John Augustine Washington, the brother closest to Washington's heart, "the intimate companion of my youth and the most affectionate friend of my ripened age," spent much of his time taking care of George Washington's affairs in the late 1750s when his brother was away commanding the Virginia Regiment on the frontier. Washington took a particular interest in the education and legal education of Bushrod, his brother's eldest son, and he frequently conferred with the young lawyer about legal matters in the 1790s before Bushrod accepted appointment to the United States Supreme Court in 1798. Washington left to Bushrod not only the mansion house and three farms but also all of his books and his papers (see notes [13](#) and [14](#)). For Washington's sentiments regarding John Augustine, see GW to Henry Knox, 27 April 1787 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 6:157-59). [\[back\]](#)

**30.** Almost to the day in 1786 that he completed piecing together the plantation of more than 7,000 acres at Mount Vernon, the work of more than thirty years, Washington began arranging for its future breakup. In October of that year his nephew Maj. George Augustine Washington, who was acting as Washington's estate manager and living at Mount Vernon, married Martha Washington's niece Frances Bassett of Eltham, who also was living at Mount Vernon. In October 1786 Washington wrote his nephew that he intended "to give you at my death, my *landed* property in the neck, containing by estimation between two & three thousand acres." The tract on Clifton's Neck was that portion of the Mount Vernon plantation that lay to the east of Little Hunting Creek on the Potomac River, 1,806 acres of which he had bought from William Clifton in 1760 and 238 acres from George Brent in the same year. Washington developed on this property what he called River Farm, one of the five farms that he organized and operated at Mount Vernon. At Washington's urging George Augustine Washington took over a 360-acre section of this land on Clifton's Neck at the north east corner of River farm and established a farm there with the slaves given to him by his father-in-law, Burwell Bassett. When George Augustine died in 1793, his widow retained control of the farm, called Walnut Tree Farm, and at



Fanny Washington's marriage to Tobias Lear in 1795 control of the farm passed to Lear, where it remained after Fanny's death in March 1796. Lear moved to Walnut Tree Farm with his own young son and with the children of George Augustine and Fanny Washington, Anna Maria and the two heirs of Clifton's Neck, George Fayette and Charles Augustine Washington. In 1797 Washington expressed a willingness to lease the whole of River Farm to Lear in 1798, but this was not done, possibly because Lear became occupied with the duties of military secretary for Washington. See Washington to George Augustine Washington, 25 Oct. 1786 (*Papers, Confederation Series*, 4:307-10), *Diaries*, 1:240, Tobias Lear to GW, 8, GW to Lear (second letter), 11 Sept. 1797 (*Papers, Retirement Series*, 1:339-41, 345-47); see also note 1 above.

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**31.** Martha Washington's granddaughter Eleanor Parke Custis, who had come to live at Mount Vernon as an infant, was married in the house on Washington's birthday in 1799 to Washington's nephew Lawrence Lewis. Lewis had in August 1797 at Washington's urging come to live at Mount Vernon so as to relieve his uncle of some of the burdens of entertaining the steady stream of visitors. In September 1799, at a time when Washington was seeking ways to reduce the scope of his farm operations at Mount Vernon so that he could assume direct control of them himself, he wrote to Lawrence Lewis about the provisions he had recently made in his will for him and his wife Nelly. The portion of the Mount Vernon holdings that he indicated was to go to the newly married couple was all that lying to the north and west of the road to Alexandria. This included Dogue Run farm, the mill tract, and a wooded tract of about four hundred acres which Washington had got from Charles West in 1772. He urged Lewis to build soon a house on the Charles West tract for himself and Nelly and to go ahead and rent at once the farm, grist mill, and distillery, all of which he could manage until they came to them at his death. Lewis did begin renting, and the couple later built their house, Woodlawn, beyond the mill. For Lawrence Lewis's invitation to Mount Vernon, see *Diaries*, 6:255. For the bequest to Lewis and his wife see *ibid.*, 1:241, and GW to Lewis, 20 Sept. 1799. [\[back\]](#)

**32.** Washington undoubtedly would have left a great deal more land to Martha Washington's only grandson and his own ward, George Washington Parke Custis, had he not already been well provided for. Eighteen-year-old Custis, who like his sister Nelly Lewis had lived at Mount Vernon since his infancy and was still living there in 1799, was the heir-at-law of his father John Parke Custis from whom he had inherited extensive holdings in New Kent, York, and Northampton counties and elsewhere. He also would at Martha Washington's death take possession of his grandmother's dower lands and slaves. The tract of land on Four Mile Run of about 1,200 acres which Washington left him was about four miles north of Alexandria on the road to Leesburg. Washington had agreed in 1774 to pay £450 for the land to each of the brothers George and James Mercer, who had been given joint ownership by their father, John Mercer. When some question later arose about Washington's title to the land, James Mercer in 1787 confirmed Washington's ownership and agreed to credit him with the payment of £450 to George Mercer's estate in return for Washington's crediting that amount toward the payment of their father's long-standing debt to the Custis estate. For many years Washington had been bothered by timber-stealing poachers on this land, which he had left undeveloped. As recently as April 1799, he had resurveyed the tract himself and taken steps to put an end to the depredations. See GW to James Mercer, 12 Dec. 1774, and note 3 of that document, 19 Nov. 1786, n.1

*(Papers, Colonial Series, 10:201-5; Papers, Confederation Series, 4:386)*, and GW to Ludwell Lee, 26 April 1799. [\[back\]](#)

**33.** Washington's Schedule of Property, in which he lists and describes the residue of his property, with instructions that it should be sold, is printed immediately below. What Washington is saying here is that the proceeds from the sale of the property should be apportioned among the children of his three brothers, his one sister, one half-brother, and Martha Washington's grandchildren. One share of the proceeds was to go to each of his eleven nephews and eight nieces, or to their heirs, and one share to each of Martha's three granddaughters. In addition one share was to be divided between his nephews Bushrod Washington and Lawrence Lewis and Martha's grandson, George Washington Parke Custis, all three of whom were otherwise major beneficiaries under the terms of the will. [\[back\]](#)

**34.** After his return from the presidency in 1797, Washington had regular business dealings with William Augustine Washington of Haywood, Westmoreland County, the son of his half-brother Augustine Washington who died in 1762. Augustine Washington's daughter Elizabeth was married to Washington's friend Alexander Spotswood of New Post, Spotsylvania County. Another daughter, Jane, was the wife of Col. John Thornton, son of Col. Francis Thornton (d.1784) of Society Hill, King George County. His third daughter, Ann Washington Ashton, was at the time of her death in 1777 the wife of her cousin Burdett Ashton of Northumberland County. She had four surviving children, Charles, Burdett, Ann, and Sarah. Her daughter Sarah Ashton married in 1788 Nicholas Fitzhugh of Ravensworth, Fairfax County. [\[back\]](#)

**35.** Washington and his brother-in-law, Fielding Lewis of Kenmore in Fredericksburg, were frequent business associates before Lewis's death near the end of the Revolution. Lewis left his widow, Washington's sister Betty, in somewhat reduced circumstances. When Washington became president in 1789, he took steps to give the two younger Lewis boys, Robert and Howell, a start in life. He made them clerks in his presidential household, Robert in 1789 and Howell in 1792. Upon Robert Lewis's return to Virginia in 1791, he became Washington's rental agent. In 1799 Robert Lewis was living with his wife in Fauquier County. Howell Lewis returned to Virginia in 1793 to act for a short time as Washington's agent at Mount Vernon before settling in Culpeper County. He visited Washington with his wife within a week of his uncle's death. Fielding Lewis, Jr., married very young before the Revolution and suffered many years of dire poverty with his wife and children. He seems by 1799, however, to have improved his condition and was living in Fairfax County. The second son, George, served with distinction as a cavalry officer in the Revolution. In 1799 George Lewis was living with his wife at Marmion, King George County. At the time of Washington's death Lawrence Lewis was living at Mount Vernon with his wife Nelly Custis. Betty Lewis Carter, the only daughter of Fielding and Betty Lewis, was the wife of Charles Carter, the son of Edward Carter of Blenheim. She lived at this time in Culpeper County with her husband and children. [\[back\]](#)

**36.** George Steptoe Washington and Lawrence Augustine Washington, sons of Washington's brother Samuel and his fourth wife, Anne Steptoe Washington, were little boys when their father died in 1781. After his return to Mount Vernon at the end of the Revolution, Washington assumed responsibility for their schooling in Georgetown and Alexandria and, later, their attendance at college in Philadelphia (see note 9). In 1799 George Steptoe Washington was

living at Harewood, his father's place in Berkeley County. His brother Lawrence Augustine was living at Federal Hill, later called Hawthorn, at Winchester on a part of the estate of his wife's family, the Woods. Their younger sister, Harriet (Harriot), was married to Andrew Parks of Baltimore. Thornton Washington, whose mother was Samuel's second wife, Mildred Thornton Washington, was living at the time of his death in 1787 at Cedar Lawn on land that he had acquired from his uncle George Washington through his father (see note 8). Thornton Washington's heirs included his son, Samuel, born in 1786, the child of his second wife, Frances Townshend Washington, and sons John Thornton Augustine (b.1783) and Thomas A. (b.1780), both born to his first wife, Mildred Berry Washington. [\[back\]](#)

**37.** Corbin Washington had recently moved from his farm on the family place in Westmoreland County. He was living at Selby, Fairfax County, where Washington visited him in November 1799 (*Diaries*, 6:374). Jane (Jenny) Washington was married to William Augustine Washington, the son of her father's half brother Augustine Washington. She was living with him at Haywood in Westmoreland County in 1791 when she died. Her surviving children in 1799 were George Corbin Washington, Ann Aylett Washington, and Bushrod Washington, Jr. As the major beneficiary of Washington's will, Bushrod, John Augustine Washington's oldest son, received only one third of a share (see note 33). [\[back\]](#)

**38.** For some time before the death of Charles Washington, his son Samuel had been struggling to rescue his father's property which was heavily burdened with debt. He was recently married and had built a house in Berkeley County. His sister Mildred was married to Thomas Hammond and also lived in Berkeley County. Charles Washington's other daughter, Frances, was married to Washington's friend Col. Burgess Ball, and they lived in Loudoun County. The orphaned children of Charles Washington's oldest son, George Augustine Washington, and of Martha Washington's niece Frances Bassett Washington Lear, were named George Fayette, Charles Augustine, and Anna Maria. The children lived with their stepfather at Walnut Tree Farm, a part of the Mount Vernon Clifton's Neck land which Washington left to the two little boys (see note 30). [\[back\]](#)

**39.** Elizabeth Parke Custis (Eliza) Law, the eldest daughter of Martha Washington's son John Parke (Jacky) Custis and his wife Eleanor Calvert Custis (now Stuart), was married to the English entrepreneur Thomas Law. The Laws lived near the capitol in the Federal City. Her sister Martha Parke Custis (Patsy) Peter was the wife of Thomas Peter, a businessman in Georgetown. The third sister Eleanor Parke Custis (Nelly) Lewis was at Mount Vernon with her husband, the heir to a major part of the Mount Vernon plantation (see note 31). [\[back\]](#)

**40.** After he inherited Mount Vernon, Washington had the old tomb built according to the instructions laid down in his half-brother Lawrence's will. The tomb was built on the side of a steep hill about two hundred yards south of the mansion house. It was a plain, bricked up excavation in the hillside. Whenever the tomb was opened for a new occupant, the bricks had to be removed and replaced again after the burial. Mrs. Washington instructed that a door be made for the vault after her husband's burial, observing "that it will soon be necessary to open it again." By 1799 the tomb was in a ruinous condition from tree roots and moisture.

After Washington's death John Adams requested and received permission from Mrs. Washington to remove Washington's body for reburial in a crypt to be built under the dome of the United States Capitol. This was never done, however. In 1831, after an attempt was made by vandals to steal Washington's body from the decaying tomb, Lawrence Lewis and George Washington Parke Custis built a new brick tomb west of the mansion, in the "Vinyard Inclosure" mentioned in Washington's will. The bodies of George and Martha Washington and other family members buried in the old tomb were reinterred in the new vault. For more on GW's tomb, see Paul Wiltstach, *Mount Vernon, Washington's Home and the Nation's Shrine*, (New York, 1916): 223-24, 247-50, and Prussing, *Estate of George Washington*, 239-42. [\[back\]](#)

**41.** The executors agreed among themselves that the business of the settlement of the estate should be left largely to Bushrod Washington and Lawrence Lewis. Nearly half a century after Washington's death, with all of the executors but George Washington Parke Custis dead, no final settlement of the estate had been reached. See Custis to Lorenzo Lewis, 20 June 1846 (*Mount Vernon Annual Report*, 1952, 52). [\[back\]](#)

ADS, ViFaCt; copy, Fairfax County Will Book H-1, 1-23, ViFaCt. W.W. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington, Retirement Series, vol. 4, April - December 1799*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 477-492. Several pages of Washington's original will in the Fairfax County Courthouse have been damaged; our reading of mutilated words has been taken from *The Will of General George Washington: To Which Is Annexed, A Schedule of His Property, Directed to Be Sold* (Alexandria, Va., 1800).