

George Washington

Since February 22 is celebrated as George Washington's birthday I thought an article on him might be interesting. What do we know about George Washington? He was the first president of the United States. He led the Continental army against the British forces in the American Revolution. He is remembered for his boat trip across the Potomac and his winter at Valley Forge. Several myths were common about him but, he did not cut down a cherry tree as a boy, and he didn't throw a silver dollar across the Potomac River, and his teeth were not wooden.

Most people know that he called Mount Vernon home and many of us have had the opportunity to visit. I visited Mount Vernon several years ago and had the sensation that I was walking through history. It was fascinating to see many of the things and places I had read about when I learned about our first president George Washington.

George Washington was born February 22, 1732 at Popes Creek Plantation in Westmoreland County, Virginia. Both his parents were descended from families who had emigrated from England to Virginia in the 1650's. When his father died in 1743, George was eleven-year-old. George inherited the small Ferry Farm on the Rappahannock River where he was living with his mother and siblings. His half brother Lawrence Washington inherited the larger farm at the junction of the Little Hunting Creek and Potomac Rivers that he renamed Mount Vernon. As George grew he began studying geometry and surveying, using a set of surveyor's instruments from the storehouse at Ferry Farm.

Among the earliest maps drawn by Washington are sample surveys included in "School Boy Copy Books," housed in the George Washington papers in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress. The schoolbook includes lessons in geometry and several practice land surveys Washington prepared at the age of sixteen. Early in 1748, George Washington accompanied George William Fairfax and James Genn, Surveyor of Prince William County, on a month-long trip west across the Blue Ridge Mountains to survey land for Lord Fairfax.

Between 1747 and 1799 Washington surveyed over two hundred tracts of land and held title to more than sixty-five acres in thirty-seven different locations. In 1752 Washington made his first land purchase, 1,459 acres along Bullskin Creek in Frederick County, Virginia. This act inaugurated the second and more profitable phase of his cartographic career, in which he assumed the role of land speculator. Over the next half century Washington would continue to seek out, purchase, patent, and eventually settle numerous properties. His will, executed in 1800, lists 52,194 acres to be sold or distributed in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, Kentucky, and the Ohio Valley. In addition to these properties, Washington also held title to lots in the Virginia cities of Winchester, Bath (now Berkeley Springs, West Virginia), and Alexandria, and in the newly formed City of Washington.

In 1751 George sailed with his half brother Lawrence to Barbados in the West Indies. This was Washington's only trip outside his country during his lifetime. Lawrence died the following year, and George became heir to Mount Vernon. For the next two years he managed the family plantation and served as an officer in the Virginia militia. In 1753 he stepped onto the stage of history.

At the age of twenty one Washington was sent to warn the French that they were encroaching on British territory. Washington set off with six companions, for what was then the far West. After a long and difficult journey, he found the French at Fort Le Boeuf near Lake Erie and delivered the message to them. The French were not polite and had no intention of giving up any territory. Washington was involved in several other dealings with the French during the French and Indian War by 1758.

In 1759 he married a young widow, Martha Dandridge Custis, and settled down to manage his extensive farms. Not yet 30, he was already Virginia's foremost soldier and a member of the House of Burgesses, the Virginia legislature. He owned extensive lands, was rich, respectable, and connected with most of the leading families of the colony.

For the next 15 years, Washington divided his time between the affairs of Virginia and his estate. Helping to raise his two step-children, he experimented with scientific farming, bought and sold western lands, hunted and fished, and enjoyed the pleasures of country life.

In 1774 Washington took his stand on the side of the American rebels. He voted for a meeting of all the American colonies and was sent as a delegate to the First Continental Congress which met in Philadelphia in 1774. He was also sent to the Second Continental Congress which met the following year.

On June 15, 1775, Washington was unanimously elected to the command of all American forces. For the next eight years Washington carried almost the entire burden of the American cause on his broad shoulders. Thirteen colonies not yet a nation, with a population of less than 3 million, had defied the greatest military power in the world.

The new United States came into existence with the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It had no regular army, no navy, no treasury, and no diplomatic service. It did not have what was needed to fight a war. From 1776 to 1781 the American Revolutionary War was fought with the French coming to the aid of the American troops in 1780. On October 19, 1781 the British army marched out of Yorktown and stacked its arms in surrender. Peace talks began in Paris in 1782 and a final treaty was signed in 1783.

In December 1783 Washington was able to leave the army and the Congress. The first talks that led to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 were held at Mount Vernon, with Congress voting to call a convention at Philadelphia to draft a plan for a new government. Washington once again headed the list of delegates from Virginia.

On May 9, 1787, Washington mounted his horse and started off on the long ride from Mount Vernon to Philadelphia. Washington was chosen as president of the convention that resulted in the document that was eventually drawn up providing for the present federal form of government of the United States, with its separation of powers and three branches. On September 17, 1787, delegates from twelve states signed the new Constitution.

The first election for president took place on February 4, 1789. Washington was elected unanimously, receiving all the electoral votes cast. John Adams became vice president. Actually the presidency was the last thing that Washington himself wanted.

Washington headed off to New York City, the first national capital, to take the oath of office. The problems that faced the first president were enormous. Washington had to hold the new nation together, get the government working, and attract first-rate people to run it. He was re-elected in 1792 and could have been elected again in 1796, but he decided that two terms were enough and refused to run again.

In 1797, succeeded by John Adams, Washington returned to his beloved Mount Vernon hoping to enjoy at last the peace that he wanted. That was short lived. On December 13, 1799, he became ill with a severe throat infection. He died at his Mount Vernon home on December 14, 1799 two months before his 68th birthday.

Washington's local connections

Working as a surveyor, the teenage George Washington spent a great deal of time in the Eastern Panhandle, starting in 1748. In 1750, he purchased as his first piece of property the Bullskin Run Plantation in Jefferson County; in 1777 he bought two lots in Bath/Berkeley Springs where he had spent several summers; and in 1794 he worked with Congress to establish a federal arsenal and armory in Harpers Ferry. The fond affection that Washington developed for the beautiful countryside and its bounty grew to the point where many members of his family also settled here. In fact, the Washington's had so much invested in the area that Charles Town was named for the first president's brother and at one point, Washington was petitioned to consider Shepherdstown as a possible site for the nation's Capitol.

Mount Vernon was designated a National Historic Landmark on December 19, 1960 and later administratively listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Washington, who believed that America should become a "granary to the world", sought to improve many aspects of farming. His advanced crop rotations, use of fertilizers, experimentation with crops, and innovative farm equipment made him one of the "pioneers" of modern agriculture.

George Washington was the only U.S. President who did not live in the White House, which was not completed until after his death. During his two terms as president, the capital of the United States was located first in New York and then in Philadelphia. George Washington played a large role, however, in the development of the new Federal City named after him, and in overseeing the design of both the Capitol Building and the White House.

We salute you George Washington a true father of our country. Happy Birthday!

WVDA Ag Safety Days February 22 – 25, 2010

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture will provide free safety training to anyone attending the Ag Safety Days certification training classes at the WVU Tree Fruit Research & Education Center, Kearneysville, WV February 22 – 25, 2010. You must register before February 13, 2010 for this training. For more information contact Kathy Martin, Telephone 304-558-2209.

Winchester Area Fruit Production School February 19, 2010

The Winchester Area Fruit Production School will be held February 19, 2010 at the Best Western Lee-Jackson Inn Banquet Convention Center, Winchester from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. There is a \$9.00 registration fee, payable at the door. Please call the Frederick Office at 540-665-5699 and let them know if you will be attending, so they have an accurate count to provide lunch. You must sign in by 8:30 am and sign out at the end to receive re-certification credit for attending. If you have questions contact Cyndi Marston cmarston@vt.edu or by telephone 540-432-6029.

2010 West Virginia Small Farm Conference March 1 – 4, 2010

The 2010 WV Small Farm Conference is scheduled for March 1 – 4 at the Lakeview Resort and Conference Center in Morgantown, WV. This year's event features seven learning tracks: Fruit and Vegetable Production, Value-adding, Beginning Farmers, Agri-tourism, Energy, Farmers Market Management, Animal Production and Marketing. There are several special events scheduled during the week of the conference: Winter Blues Farmers Market – Monday evening, March 1st, Better Process Control School – Monday and Tuesday, March 1&2, Community Food Security Workshop and Seminar, 2010 Agritourism Media Awards, WV Specialty Crops Block Grant Poster Session. The conference tracks are designed to accommodate the diverse mix of experience, age, crop enterprise and interests of the region's small farmers. For more information and a registration form go to the following website: <http://smallfarmcenter.ext.wvu.edu/events/conference>

Gardening 101 Program

The Berkeley-Jefferson Master Gardener Association will be conducting a free gardening seminar on Saturday, March 13, 2010 from 9:00 AM until 2:30 PM at the Berkeley County Youth Fairgrounds. Participant check-in begins at 8:30 AM. The seminar, called Gardening 101, will cover the following topics: Setting up a Garden, Seed Choices, Starting Plants from Seeds, Container Gardening, Pests and Weeds, Composting & Rain Barrels. Participants are asked to bring a brown bag lunch. The Master Gardener Association will provide drinks and desserts. For more information or to register for Gardening 101, please contact the Berkeley County Extension Service office at (304) 264-1936 or go to <http://www.berkeleyextension.com>

Forum for Rural Innovation: New Approaches for Agriculture and Rural Prosperity

The sixth annual Forum for Rural Innovation will be held Friday, March 19, 2010, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Best Western Lee-Jackson Motor Inn & Conference Center in Winchester, Virginia. The purpose of the forum is to showcase new and exciting projects and programs that enhance farm or rural business profitability. The models presented at the forum also focus on conserving farmland and natural resources, and developing new approaches to rural prosperity in upscale areas where land commands premium prices. The program features presentations from some of the most progressive and recognized farmers and researchers in the region, and will emphasize farming for high-profitability by using innovative and sound business approaches particularly suited

to the Mid-Atlantic region. Forum topics and speakers will include:

“Trends and Opportunities in Specialty Crops and Cane Berries” - Dr. Reza Rafie, Horticulture Extension Specialist, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA Hear an overview of the potential for marketing cane berries and related specialty crops in the Mid-Atlantic region. Also, details of a high tunnel specialty crop trial to be conducted in northern Virginia in 2010.

“Internet Marketing 201 - Social Networking As A Marketing Tool” - Janet Childs, Owner and Marketing Director of BreedersWorld.com and VA Lamb, Berryville, VA. Learn how to use low cost, highly effective new tools that get your message and products in front of customers faster than websites alone. A step-by-step presentation on starting and maintaining a cost effective marketing program.

“Step-By-Step Process For Direct Marketing Meat and Processed Foods” - Barry Jones, Office of Meat & Poultry Services, VA Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Lynchburg, VA and Cindy Martel, Marketing & Development, WV Dept. of Agriculture, Charleston, WV. Thinking about selling at a farmers market or doing direct sales? This session will answer your questions on what producers need to do to comply with state regulations in order to sell meats and processed foods. Find out if the investment of time and equipment adds value to the bottom line.

“What I See As Food Innovation in the Mid-Atlantic Region” - Melissa Harris, Publisher of Flavor Magazine, Sperryville, VA. Flavor Magazine is an independent publication dedicated to local food, wine, and sustainable agriculture in the D.C. and Virginia Piedmont areas. Learn how this unique regional magazine discovers innovative farms for their articles and hear about some of their favorites.

“Innovative Ideas for Large Acreage Land Owners and Renters” - Warren Howell, Allder School Berries, Purcellville, VA; Phillip Ramsey, Stoneleigh Farms, Warrenton, VA; and Tyler Wegmeyer, Wegmeyer Farms, Hamilton, VA. What do pumpkins, honey bees, and berries have in common? Hear how these three entrepreneurs have expanded their operations onto larger acreages, and the unique lease arrangements for non-traditional crops.

“New and Successful Innovative Projects from Across the Region” - A snapshot of efforts being conducted in agriculture development and marketing by members of the group sponsoring the Forum for Rural Innovation. Kellie Boles, Jefferson County, WV; Ray Pickering, Fauquier County, VA; Melissa Nelson, Loudoun County, VA; Mary Beth Bennett, Berkeley County, WV. During the conference luncheon featuring local food products, the 2010 Innovation Awards will be presented to: Farmers Online Market.net – Catlett, VA, Phillip Ramsey, Stoneleigh Farms – Warrenton, VA, Bob Tabb, Round Oak Farm – Leetown, WV, Leon Warner, Ellerslie Farm – Berryville, VA. In addition, exhibits by agricultural suppliers, support agencies, and area businesses will be featured the entire day. Area agribusinesses are encouraged to participate with exhibits and displays. The registration fee of \$35.00 per person includes the forum program, morning refreshments, and a buffet lunch. Registration information is available online at www.LoudounFarms.org or by calling 703-777-0426. Pre-registration by March 12 is required. The Forum for Rural Innovation is a cooperative educational effort by the Offices of Agricultural Economic Development and Cooperative Extension in Clarke, Fauquier, Frederick and Loudoun Counties of Virginia; Jefferson and Berkeley Counties, West Virginia; Potomac Headwaters and Shenandoah RC&D; Virginia Cooperative Extension and WVU Extension.

Garden Tips

- Prune deciduous trees and shrubs
- Prune blueberries
- Seed onions and greens in cold frame
- Apply dormant oil spray to fruit trees

Until next time ...Happy Gardening, and Farming!

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