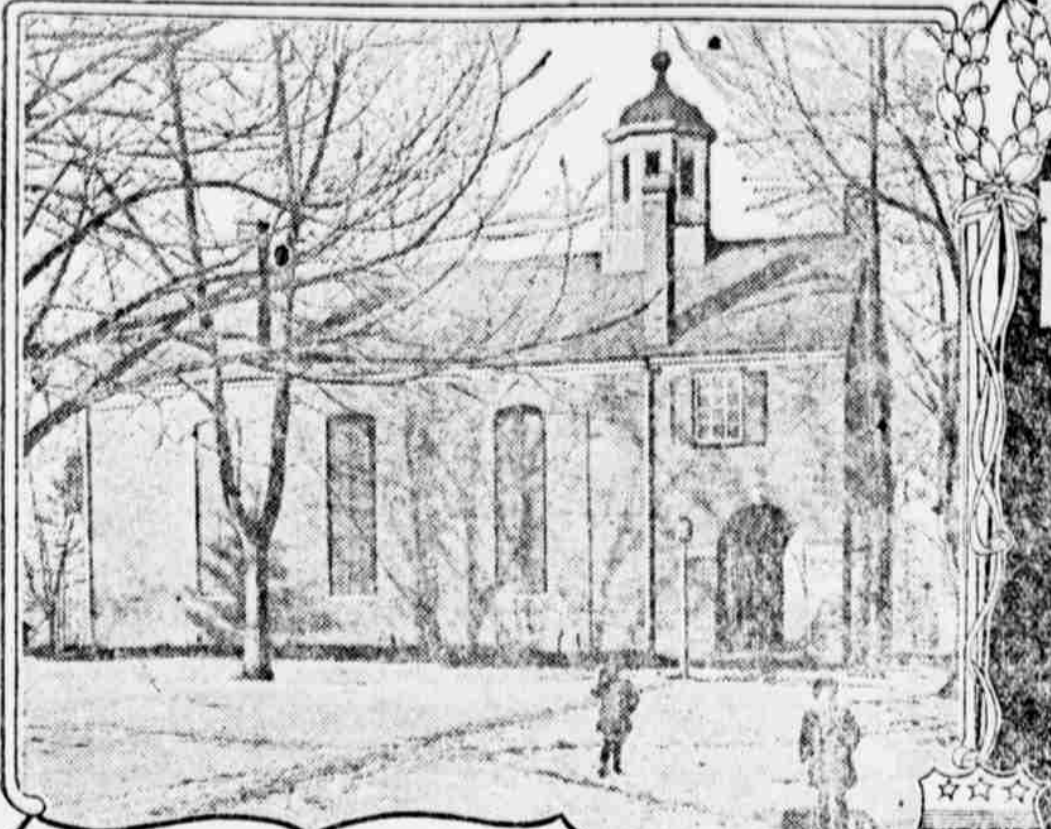


# Washington's Will Saved to Posterity



Document Has Been Restored and Now Rests in Courthouse Where It Was Filed for Probate in 1800.

FAIRFAX COURTHOUSE WHERE WASHINGTON'S WILL WAS FILED



A PAGE FROM WASHINGTON'S WILL BEFORE IT WAS REPAIRED

**A**S THE anniversary of the birth of George Washington comes again and the whole nation pauses to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of the greatest figure of American history, the realization is forced home that Washington lives in the hearts of the people so vividly because of his intensely human traits.

The American public of today does not worship a remote legendary hero, whose glories gather luster through the effusions of flattering songs and stories, but is on intimate terms of acquaintance with its idolized first president through the most trustworthy agency, that of his own hand-written letters and documents. Through the strides of modern progress and the discovery of remarkable paper surgery, 50,000 or more private and official letters, addresses, documents, reports and accounts have been collected, repaired and bound into volumes, 400 of them, and are accessible to those who wish to peruse them in the big library of congress in the interest of research.

But the most important of all the papers penned by Washington, and the one which, throughout its entire length, is the most perfect reflection of him as a man of affairs and of business, is his last will and testament, almost the last document penned by his hand, written about five months before his death. After many and varied vicissitudes this marvelous paper has been repaired and saved to posterity by being safely deposited in a steel vault in Fairfax courthouse, where it was presented for probate in 1800.

Washington loved life and crowded into his sixty-seven years many and varied interests. Through a perusal of only a few of the hundreds of letters written to him and by him, it is seen that he enjoyed all outdoor sports and games, was proficient in most of them, gambled on horses, cards, cocks and lotteries, speculated in lands and stocks, danced almost until the year of his death, loved theaters, teas, receptions and all social amusements. Though he made constant use of wines on his table, moderation and method were the precept and principle of his life, and these traits are forcefully illustrated in the 24 pages of his will, which he prepared without legal aid, though contrary to his usual forethought in leaving this duty until so late in life. Every line of it bears mute testimony to his efficiency in business and his sense of responsibility, and it shows that he spent considerable time in its preparation, for in disposing of his various properties in bequests to relatives he went into great detail.

The will was signed July 9, 1799, and was filed for probate at the county seat of the county in Virginia in which Washington had lived and died January 20, 1800, being presented in open court by George Steptoe Washington, Samuel Washington and Lawrence Lewis, three of the executors.

For a long time it reposed in the office of the clerk at Fairfax Court House, but with the confusion of the Civil war it was removed to Richmond with other valuable papers and there lost for a time, it being rumored that it had been picked up by a federal soldier and sold abroad. However, it eventually turned up at Fairfax Court House again much the worse for its travels and experiences.

Then, for a number of years, it was freely handled by visitors and historians, until the edges became frayed, great holes appeared, and almost every sheet split in the creases, and the ink, though good, faded from the light and exposure.

When it became apparent that steps should be taken to hold the torn sheets together, some one in authority in Fairfax turned the will over to a woman resident to be mended, which she did most literally and most disastrously with a coarse needle and equally coarse thread. Consequently the needle holes and heavy thread soon worked still greater havoc through the carefully worked pages.

Then a group of men interested in the collection and preservation of historic documents, headed by Lawrence Washington, sought to have the paper turned over to the government, so that the experts of the state department might have a chance to repair and deposit it for safe-keeping, along with other important papers of the government. But the Virginia authorities refused to permit the manuscript to leave Fairfax Court House, and consequently the aid of the state de-

partment paper surgeons was rendered unavailable. As a labor of love and appreciation for the historical value of the document and its famous author, the library of congress finally volunteered to send its most expert manuscript restorer down to Fairfax to make the repairs and put the 24 pages into a condition that would insure them against further destruction. This entailed the shipping to Fairfax of considerable equipment, including a heavy press.

To put the battered paper in good condition required 16 days of the most painstaking work on the part of William Berwick, the library's skilled manuscript mender, who made daily trips to the quaint old courthouse. The first step toward restoration after he had photographed every one of the ragged pages was setting the ink. This was done by a liquid process or bath designed to prevent further fading. Then each one of the sheets was backed or mounted upon crepe paper, a sort of transparent durable silk gauze, which allowed any reasonable amount of handling. Then came an endless amount of scraping, patching, pasting and cutting which only the deftest, most expert fingers could do, and the results would not have been so remarkably satisfactory but for a most fortunate circumstance.

When it came to grafting new material into the old manuscript to replace the old which had been worn away, the great problem lay in finding new material that would match in texture and color that upon which the will was written. Mr. Berwick was in despair as to where to find paper for the patches which would make the will look as good as new, when by a lucky chance in a second-hand book store in Washington a number of blank sheets of the writing paper which George Washington had made especially for his personal use were discovered. This was exactly what was wanted and now, unless one holds the sheets of the restored will in such a position that the bright light will shine through them, there is no way of telling where the old part, or rather the original part, leaves off and the grafted sections begin.

When Mr. Berwick completed his task, which cost the Fairfax authorities nothing, the sheets of the document, mounted upon cardboard, bound in the form of a book mounted with a handsome red levant cover, were placed in a steel fireproof and burglarproof safe constructed especially for the purpose, in accordance with the specifications of the government officials.

The will, which has been called the most valuable relic of any left to posterity by the father of his country—more valuable than the swords, books, furniture or china, in view of the fact that it more faithfully portrays the mind of the man himself, reflecting his personality as nothing else could do so perfectly, opens as follows:

I, George Washington, of Mount Vernon, a citizen of the United States and lately president of the same, do make, ordain and declare this instrument, which is written with my own hand and every page thereof subscribed with my name to be my last will and testament, revoking all others.

In it he directs that:

To my beloved wife, Martha Washington, I give and bequeath the use and benefit of my entire estate, real and personal, for the term of her natural life, except such parts thereof as are specifically disposed of.

He also ordered that his body be interred "in a quiet manner, without parade or funeral oration." One clause, which has been extensively quoted, is as follows:

Upon the decease of my wife it is my will and desire that all the slaves which I hold in my own right shall receive their freedom.

Concerning the disposition of his slaves, the general gave more explicit directions than to any other part of his estate, and he especially directed that none of them should be sold outside of Virginia.

He directed that his debts, which he said were "few and none of great magnitude," be "punctually and speedily paid." He also called attention to the fact that many of the young men of the United States were being sent abroad to foreign countries to be educated and were contracting habits of dissipation and principles unfriendly to republican government. To aid in stopping this he gave 50 shares in the Potomac company toward the endowment of a university within the District of Columbia under the auspices of the general government. He also made provision in his will for the construction of a new family vault at Mount Vernon, in which might be placed the remains of himself and his near relatives.

The will may be seen through the glass side of the vault in which it is deposited, before which hang heavy green curtains to exclude the light.

Fairfax Court House is doubly rich in view of the fact that it now also treasures the will of Martha Washington, also returned to it after many years of wandering. It was signed on Sep-

tember 22, 1800. This will is not nearly so long nor so involved as that of General Washington. It was probated in 1802 by George Washington Parke Custis and Thomas Peter, two of the executors. It was taken up with the disposition of household effects and provisions for the education of her relatives. Three granddaughters, four nieces, her grandson, four nephews, a grandniece and other distant relatives and friends are mentioned. To them she gave paintings, town lots and to nearly all of them she gave from five to ten guineas with which to buy rings.

One of the odd provisions was: "It is my will and desire that Ann Maria Washington, daughter of my niece, be put into handsome mourning at my death at the expense of my estate, and I bequeath to her ten guineas to buy a ring."

Another unusual order reads: "It is my will and desire that all of the wine in bottles in the vaults be equally divided between my granddaughters and grandson, to each of whom I bequeath ten guineas to buy a ring for each."

All of the family pictures, except a few specifically mentioned, were left to George Washington Parke Custis, and to him went a large collection of household furnishings, including beds, water coolers, china and furniture. Special provision was made for the education of three nephews, who were to be fitted in "some useful trade," and she made a further provision that 100 pounds be given to each to set him up in his trade.

The belated return of these two famous documents, so essentially personal and human in their contents, to the little courthouse where they were both filed for probate over a century ago has made of Fairfax Court House another Mecca for the history-loving tourist, and it is rapidly falling into line after Mount Vernon and Alexandria in point of popularity.

### CHOICE OF BUT TEN STATES.

New York state had no part in the election of the first president of the United States. For some years following the establishment of the federal government, the legislatures of most of the states chose the presidential electors, the people voting for them only indirectly, their choice being expressed by their votes for legislators. A deadlock between the senate and the assembly prevented the selection of electors from New York state, Rhode Island and North Carolina had not yet ratified the Constitution, so Washington was elected the first time by the votes of only ten of the 13 states.

New York city was the scene of the first inauguration, however, Washington took the oath on the portico of Federal hall, on the present site of the subtreasury, at Wall and Nassau streets, April 30, 1789. Immediately following this ceremony he retired within the building and delivered an address to congress, which met in Federal hall in those days. John Adams, the second president, also addressed congress in person, but Jefferson broke the custom which President Wilson has revived. Jefferson stigmatized that form of address as monarchial and put his message in writing.—New York Sun.

### BUILT FROM HIS OWN PLANS.

At the late date of 1827 a wish expressed by George Washington in his will was obeyed. He had called attention to his selection of a spot for a new tomb for himself and family and those of the family already buried in the old vault. The old tomb was disadvantageously situated on the side of a hill which was subject to landslides. For the new vault he specified not only the spot, but also dimensions and materials. According to these, his own plans, a tomb was built, and his and Mrs. Washington's bodies were transferred to it, along with the remains in the old vault of other members of the family. The latter were buried within the vault, out of sight, while the bodies of General and Mrs. Washington are in stone coffins above the ground, within plain view between a grated iron doorway.

### REALISTIC.

"You have a realistic picture to advertise your breakfast food." "Almost too realistic. A goat came along and ate one right off the billboard."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

### PERPLEXITY.

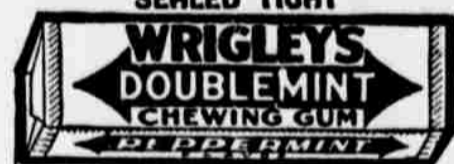
"You used to promise anything that might please the voter's fancy." "Yes," observed Senator Sorghum. "I don't try that any more. Voters are getting so nottunate you can't even tell what kind of a promise is going to suit their fancy."



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### STOOD UP FOR HIS RIGHTS

Drafted Man Fully Realized He Was Enjoying His Last Moments of Independence.

A drafted man from a dry state reached San Francisco at night, and was to go to Angel Island the following morning. That night he took a careful census of the city's wet places, and got down to the Angel Island boat in the morning, about one minute before the boat was due to leave.

"Get aboard here, and be quick about it," commanded the lieutenant in charge.

Instead, the recruit smiled, lighted a cigarette as best he could, and then sat down on the dock. "When I shtep on that boat," he said, "I'll be a soldier and have t'take orders from you. Might now I'm a plain citizen. This is my last chance to tell anything in English. Now, you blankety-blankety-blank sonofagun, if you want me on that boat, put me on it."

The lieutenant had his men put him aboard, but the recruit's first taste of army discipline has not been recorded.—San Francisco Chronicle.

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