George Washington became a slaveholder at age 11 when he inherited 10 slaves upon the death of his father, Augustine Washington, and he continued to own slaves throughout his life. However, his views regarding the peculiar institution evolved over time, and in his will, he promised to free his slaves upon Martha’s death.

As a 19-year-old, George traveled to Barbados with his half brother Lawrence. Although his surviving diary of the experience does not explicitly discuss slavery on the island, his encounters with slavery there likely brought him to view a higher level of brutality than he had witnessed in Virginia.

By the time of George Washington’s birth, Virginia had been settled by Britain for 125 years. Soon after its colonization, Virginia began growing and exporting tobacco to England as part of a plantation-based economy. Barbados, meanwhile, had been colonized by Britain in 1625 and quickly became a vital trading partner of Virginia. The low market value of such exports led planters to switch to higher value sugar production in the 1640s. With the assistance of Dutch entrepreneurs, Barbados soon built a prosperous sugar industry. With sugar as the predominant crop, land in Barbados became scarce for other endeavors. To fulfill additional needs, residents relied on imports such as livestock, foodstuffs, and lumber, many of which were supplied by Virginia traders. In return, Virginians imported slaves from the island. The economic connection between the colonies later prompted thousands of Barbadians to migrate to Virginia, where land could be obtained more readily. The emigrants comprised substantial numbers of slaveholders and slaves, who brought their ideas and customs with them.

The sugar revolution in Barbados demanded a steady workforce, leading the island to become the first English-American colony to replace indentured servants with African slaves. It gained a reputation as a harsh environment for the enslaved. For plantation owners, on the other hand, Barbados became a highly profitable venture, earning the status of Britain’s most valuable colony. Even as the much larger island of Jamaica surpassed Barbados in sugar production in 1720, the industry continued to thrive, as did the institution of slavery. Virginia—with a climate that precluded sugar production—remained a tobacco colony and, like Barbados, transitioned from indentured servants to slaves.

Barbados influenced slavery in Virginia. In 1661, the island government passed an “Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes,” making Barbados the first English colony to extensively...
With the anticipated end dates for The Papers of George Washington, the Martha Washington Papers, and the Family Papers projects on the horizon, we are planning for the future. The Center for Digital Edming, led by senior editor Jennifer Sterrett, continues to bring projects together, ensuring that the talent and expertise cultivated at The Washington Papers and beyond are not lost. Already, collaborations have been organized with more than 20 different organizations (see page 12).

Meanwhile, work on The Papers of George Washington carries on. Volume 25 of the Revolutionary War Series will be published in the fall. A single-volume edition of the diary Washington kept on his journey to Barbados, his only travel beyond the shores of the North American continent, is anticipated in the spring of 2018. Two other volumes are currently under editorial review: Presidential Series volume 20 (the penultimate volume in that series) and Revolutionary War Series volume 26. Work is under way on volumes 27 through 29 of the latter series.

The Martha Washington Papers project also is progressing steadily. The team, which is preparing as comprehensive a volume as possible, has found more than 80 letters to and from Martha that were missing from the only other documentary edition of her papers. As of now, transcription is complete, and editors are deep into annotation.

We continue to engage with the public by sharing our historical insights. Some of these efforts have garnered widespread recognition. For example, a link from The Oatmeal website to a Washington Papers blog post resulted in more than 60,000 online hits for us in two days. And a blog post about the Hartford Conference—a November 1780 event overshadowed by Benedict Arnold’s treachery—received praise from National Archivist David Ferriero. These efforts would not be possible without the generosity of our donors and funding institutions. We invite you to read the complete donors list on page 9. We are deeply grateful for the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the Packard Humanities Institute, the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, the Florence Gould Foundation, and the University of Virginia. Thank you!

Katharine McEnery Pittman: What do you wish more people knew about Martha Washington?

Katharine McEnery Pittman: I wish people knew more about her involvement behind the scenes. She was so effective in her constant support and assistance to Washington: going to every single winter camp, going to the presidency, establishing what that role of the First Lady is. And yet, she was never asked if she wanted any of it. Many people talk about Washington’s duty to his country, but Martha’s duty to her country was just as fierce as his.

KB: Are there any liberties you have to take in order to make Martha accessible today?

KMP: I’ve noticed a lot of questions about slavery and Martha’s perspective on it, especially recently. One of the trickiest things for me is that Martha was a typical eighteenth-century woman. But to answer [in that way] would come to off sounding harsh and racist.

THE WASHINGTON PAPERS IN THE NEWS

- The Historian will feature assistant editor Lynn Price’s book review of The Washingtons by flora Fraser. The Historian is a quarterly historical journal published by Phi Alpha Theta.

- A May 2017 comic strip from website The Oatmeal cited research specialist Kathryn Gehred’s blogpost “Did George Washington’s false teeth come from his slaves?”. The Oatmeal used Gehred’s scholarship to help illustrate the psychological phenomenon known as the backfire effect, a reaction that occurs when core beliefs are challenged. In this instance, consideration of how George Washington’s dentures may have come to include teeth from his slaves challenges a core belief in his character.

To many an individual who has toiled lifelong, the word “retirement” sounds very much like “Holy Grail.” It was no different for George Washington, whose unequalled service to his country had long since merited rest under his “vine and fig tree.”

Volume 20 of the Presidential Series, soon to be published, covers the period of April 1 to Sept. 21, 1796, during which Washington had entered the final year of his presidency and had begun to prepare for retirement. First and foremost, there was the matter of a farewell address—an issue that could not wait, lest efforts be undertaken to persuade him to forestall, yet again, his repose. This time, he would not be turned from his purpose.

When a prominent public figure casts an eye on a restful return to private life, the other eye is firmly focused on preserving legacy. Again, it was no different for Washington, who understood that his legacy as president—to the extent that it would stand apart from those as Revolutionary War hero and Father of His Country—would rest primarily upon the preservation of democracy and the continued functionality of the uniquely American democratic system he had helped create. The Jay Treaty of 1794 with Great Britain tested those institutions. The treaty had been signed, consented to by the Senate, and ratified by the president, but there remained the matter of paying its provisions. Debates over the treaty became debates over the separation of powers, as opponents in the House threatened to withhold funds—reflecting hunting treaty implementation. Washington was quick to condemn such measures and argued that funding should be automatic with ratification. Ultimately, the House approved funds. The treaty improved relations with Britain, and, in turn, worsened relations with France. This and other thorny matters, both foreign and domestic, are also covered by Hoth in Presidential 20 and chronologically challenging contributions to be confounding. Former senior editor David R. Hoth, who himself retired from The Washington Papers in February 2017, proved up to the challenge, rearranging the pieces until a clear, coherent picture of the chronology of events emerged. After long weeks of sorting, assessing, and reassessing, Hoth lays out the complex history of Washington's remarkable Farewell Address.

In this brief letter, Gen. George Washington called on Major General Stirling (also known as William Alexander, Lord Stirling) to take charge of the New Jersey militia. By doing so, Stirling could oppose an invasion of that state by British forces and their German auxiliaries, both under the command of Lt. Gen. Wilhelm von Knyphausen. The incursion had begun at 11:00 PM the night before with the landing of four regiments at Elizabethtown Point and soon swelled to 6,000 men. Only the New Jersey Brigade, guarding nearby Elizabeth, N.J., was in position to oppose the landings, but it numbered a mere 870 men.

Washington, though, soon put in motion the six brigades of his army at Morristown, 20 miles away. Knyphausen, seeking to capture Springfield, N.J., and penetrate Washington's camp at Morristown, had expected little resistance, especially from the militia. But his hopes were dashed as his troops pushed through Elizabeth and moved closer to Springfield. The tenacious resistance of the Jersey brigade and Washington's decisive action in marching to defend Springfield blunted the German general’s offensive and forced him to retreat. However, the greatest reason for Knyphausen's withdrawal was the swift response and stiff opposition of the Jersey militia. They turned out in large numbers to harass the flanks of Knyphausen's column, impede his march, and threaten his rear. Washington praised them in a letter to Samuel Huntington, president of Congress, on June 10: “The Militia have turned out with remarkable spirit and have hitherto done themselves great honor.”

These letters will appear in the forthcoming volume 26.

General Washington
Calls on the Militia of New Jersey

Benjamin L. Huggins, ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Washington’s Leadership
Through ‘steady perseverance’

Adrina Garbooshian-Huggins, ASSISTANT EDITOR

I trust…that a steady perseverance, and our skilled exertions, will put things right again.
— George Washington to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., in a letter dated Aug. 4, 1777

One measure of leadership is the ability to inspire in the most difficult of times, and George Washington delivered this expression of resolve and optimism at just such a moment. Following the British capture of Ticonderoga, N.Y., in early July 1777, Connecticut governor Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., wrote Washington on July 28. Complaining that the “Militia are one half gone home,” he appealed for Continental reinforcements for the northern army to help counter an enemy advance. But a “deficiency” in the regiments had rendered Washington unable to grant the request. Washington and Trumbull feared that the evacuation of Ticonderoga and the subsequent retreat of Maj. Gen. Arthur St. Clair’s army would allow the British to penetrate into northern New York and western New England, thus cutting off communication between New England and the southern states. Washington’s frustration with “that languor which has but too generally prevailed throughout the States” to fill their quotas of the regiments suggests that the army lacked the troops required to hinder such a British advance. Yet, despite such difficulties, Washington relaid a message of perseverance and hope. It would be neither the first time nor the last time during the course of the war that Washington would articulate a message of perseverance.

The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia. The commander in chief again demonstrated such leadership in the spring of 1780, when starvation threatened the army at the Jockey inside Savannah, Georgia.

Washington continued by invoking his faith in a “[Provi]dence” that “has always displayed its power & goodness, when clouds and thick darkness seemed ready to overwhelm us.” He penned this letter during a period in which the army was contending with severe provision shortages, a crisis that ultimately led to a mutiny in the Connecticut line in late May. Around the same time, Washington received reports of British incursions on the New York frontier and did not know the fate of the southern army in Charleston, S.C., which had in fact surrendered to the British on May 12. The difficulties facing the army prompted Washington to write to Lund about the increasing need for the “bounty” of Providence. In spite of his seeming desperation, Washington trusted in Providence and underscored his persistence to realize a successful conclusion to the war.

Many people do not realize that Washington and Jackson’s political careers overlapped, and that Jackson once had rather mixed feelings about the “Father of His Country.”

Andrew Jackson
A Second Washington?

Thomas Coers, ASSOCIATE EDITOR, THE PAPERS OF ANDREW JACKSON

During his lifetime, Andrew Jackson often was dubbed a “Second Washington,” and indeed, there is much to recommend the comparison. Both were generals-turned-presidents who had saved the country from the British on the battlefield. Other similarities, however, were not so flattering; both owned slaves, had little in the way of formal education, and were known for occasional fits of bad temper.

Throughout both the 1824 and 1828 campaigns as well as Jackson’s presidency, his supporters frequently juxtaposed the present context, it is not owing to the want of exertion in me, or the application of every means that Congress and the United States, or the States individually, have put into my hands.

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On Dec. 15, 1796, Jackson was one of only 12 congressmen who voted against approving a speech thanking Washington for his Farewell Address. The extent of Jackson’s disaffection with Washington is revealed in a remarkable letter he wrote three days after that vote. Addressed to Daniel Smith, Jackson’s letter was until recently thought to be mostly lost to posterity. The manuscript, which is housed in the Library of Congress’s Jackson Papers collections, is so badly mutilated that only the opening few lines and several stray passages survive. The full text of the letter, fortunately, was recovered by The Papers of Andrew Jackson in 2008 when it was found printed in an 1879 issue of the New Orleans Daily Picayune.

In the letter, Jackson assails “the Administration of the American Government for these four years past,” and condemns Washington for unfairly favoring Britain at the expense of France, America’s Revolutionary ally. “I view the present as a solemn crisis in the American history,” Jackson lamented. “Nothing can ward off the horrid scene of war unless Jefferson should be elected President, of which I have but very little hope.” Jackson also explained his vote against thanking Washington for his Farewell Address: “View the [House’s] answer to the President’s speech [i.e., the “answer” Jackson refused to vote for], you will see the majesty of the people prostrate at the feet of their servant, George Washington, adoring him with the most fulsome adulation for no other merit than performing the constitutional duties of his office. I never like to see the creator worshiping the created.”

Andrew Jackson
A Second Washington?

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News and Announcements

Personnel

The Washington Papers Welcomes Two New Assistant Editors

Jeffrey Zvengrowski joined The Washington Papers in December as an assistant editor. A gift from the Florence Gould Foundation finances his position. He is working on The Papers of George Washington Revolutionary War Series, volume 28, which will span September to November 1770 and will include Benedict Arnold’s treason and the Harford Conference. Canadian-born Zvengrowski moved from his hometown of Calgary, Alberta, to Charlottesville, Va., in 2008 to pursue a doctoral degree in American history at the University of Virginia. His dissertation focused on connections between the Democratic Party and French Bonapartists in the nineteenth century and served as the basis for They Stood Like the Old Guard of Napoleon: Jefferson Davis and the Pro-Bonaparte Democrats, 1800–1870, scheduled for publication in 2018 by the University Press of Kentucky. Zvengrowski’s research on conceptualizing a digital edition, which will strengthen his understanding of The Washington Papers’ digital edition. Jennifer Stertzer, a longtime instructor at DHSI, taught the course with assistance from colleague Erica Cavanaugh. In addition to assisting Stertzer, Cavanaugh co-instructed a course about Drupal, the content-management system she and Stertzer used to create the George Washington Financial Papers, a born-digital edition.

Editors Study (and Teach) Abroad

In June, assistant editor Adria Garbooshian-Huggins and copy editor Jane Haxby participated in classes at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) in Victoria, Canada. Haxby attended a course on editing XML, a computer-coding language that helps make documentary editing materials accessible online. She hopes these new skills will allow her to contribute more to the production of digital materials. Garbooshian-Huggins attended a course on computerizing a digital edition, which will strengthen her understanding of The Washington Papers’ digital edition. Jennifer Stertzer, a longtime instructor at DHSI, taught the course with assistance from colleague Erica Cavanaugh. In addition to assisting Stertzer, Cavanaugh co-instructed a course about Drupal, the content-management system she and Stertzer used to create the George Washington Financial Papers, a born-digital edition.

Engagement

The Washington Papers Visit Capitol Hill

In March, Washington Papers senior editor Jennifer Stertzer, researchers Jennifer Gehred, and communications specialist Katie Blizzard attended the National Humanities Alliance’s annual Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C. The two-day event began with lectures and panels on the role and current state of the humanities. The next day, Stertzer, Gehred, and Blizzard visited the U.S. Capitol to meet with senators and representatives about the impact of the humanities on public education and scholarship. Sharing their experiences at The Washington Papers, having worked for the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities’ Documents Compass project from 2013 to 2015, in July, The Washington Papers welcomed assistant editor Dana Stefanni, who is based at Mount Vernon. Stefanni said he brings to the project a “deep appreciation for the life and legacy of George Washington.” He is editing Revolutionary War Series, volume 29, which covers the winter months of 1780 and details the aftermath of Arnold’s treachery and the deepening of French military engagement in the war.

A native of Florida, Stefanni earned his bachelor’s degree at Florida State University before pursuing his master’s and doctoral degrees at the University of Virginia. His dissertation explored the planning, construction, and settlement of early Washington, D.C., up to 1831. Stefanni has taught students about the periods surrounding the Revolutionary War, but has not concentrated on the military operations. He looks forward to gaining expertise on the war in his new post.

Editors Engage with Peers at Conference

The Washington Papers were well-represented at June’s annual Association for Documentary Editing (ADE) conference in Buffalo, New York. Jennifer Gehred and Haxby visited the U.S. Capitol to meet with senators and representatives about the impact of the humanities on public education and scholarship. Sharing their experiences at The Washington Papers, having worked for the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities’ Documents Compass project from 2013 to 2015, in July, The Washington Papers welcomed assistant editor Dana Stefanni, who is based at Mount Vernon. Stefanni said he brings to the project a “deep appreciation for the life and legacy of George Washington.” He is editing Revolutionary War Series, volume 29, which covers the winter months of 1780 and details the aftermath of Arnold’s treachery and the deepening of French military engagement in the war.

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Thank You to Our Supporters

These generous supporters of The Washington Papers have advanced the long-standing work and new initiatives of the project. We thank them for their faith in our mission:

Theodore L. Ferraro
Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association
Mount Vernon, VA

Ferraro Writes Foreword to Monroe Autobiography

Managing editor William M. Ferraro contributed a scholarly foreword to a new edition of The Autobiography of James Monroe (first published in 1859). His foreword identifies the manuscript’s editors, examines their treatment of the text, and assesses the work’s research value. Ferraro concluded that despite some “flubs and infelicities,” this edited version of Monroe’s manuscript retains significance for students of early American history.

Doing Digital Humanities Features Chapter by Stertzer

In a volume about current work in the field of digital humanities, Jennifer Stertzer described the ways in which digital tools are reshaping the field of documentary editing. Her summary article, “Foundations for Digital Editing,” outlined emerging questions and methodologies and encouraged editors to blend the practices and strengths of traditional documentary editing into the evolving environment.
Carolina did the same in 1696. Although Virginia passed several laws regarding indentured servitude and slavery prior to 1705, have encountered during his weeks on Barbados was described to punishment, fugitive slaves, and masters’ authority over slaves versus over servants. Jamaica copied the law in 1664, and South Slaves,” a compilation similar to the Barbados act. That year saw passage of “An act concerning Servants and laws regarding indentured servitude and slavery prior to 1705, Continued from page 1.

The more brutal form of slavery that George Washington would encounter during his weeks on Barbados was described in horrifying terms by a visitor to the island in the 1760s. That observer saw “the heads of slaves, fixed upon sharp pointed stakes, while their unburied carcases were exposed to be torn by dogs and vultures on the sandy beach.” After a 1756 visit to Barbados, sailor Edward Thompson declared, “The cruel tyranny exercised over slaves, is shocking to humanity.” We are left to ponder the reaction of a young George Washington, whose diary of his visit to Barbados remains silent on the issue.

The book is not without its flaws. Dunbar’s writing can veer toward the fanciful. A sentence like “Her resolve was as solid as the granite found throughout the earth in her new state” would not appeal more to a casual reader than to a professional historian. In many cases, descriptions of what Staines must or could have done are discussed only in reference to their owners. The bravery and resolve it took for Ona Maria Judge to flee from everything she knew in search of freedom is indescribable. Dunbar’s description of Ona’s siblings and other family members at Mount Vernon provides insight into the ties that bound them together.

Dunbar, successfully drawing from her previous research into early Philadelphia’s free black communities, adds context and detail to the story. She further expands upon Staines’s life by focusing on developments significant to her subject rather than on the typical highlights of early U.S. history. Dunbar, for instance, essentially skips the Constitutional Convention, but examines in depth Pennsylvania’s 1780 legislation calling for the gradual emancipation of slaves. By focusing on Staines, and not just on what her actions imply about America’s First Family, Dunbar forces the reader to acknowledge how much of the story is lost when enslaved people are discussed only in reference to their owners.

There are many reasons to read Never Caught. Dunbar’s compelling story is one reason, the bravery and resolve she sought. But here, Dunbar does something far more significant: She asks us to consider how our own histories are shaped by these stories, and to look at our own lives through the lens of Staines’s story. The book is a powerful reminder of the importance of looking at history through the lens of those who were once invisible, and it is a testament to the power of one person’s actions to change the course of history.
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Join our mailing and email lists by emailing kblizzard@virginia.edu.

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Charlottesville, VA 22904-4117

The Washington Papers, a grant-funded project, was established in 1968 at the University of Virginia, under the joint auspices of the University and the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association of the Union, to publish a comprehensive edition of the Washingtons’ correspondence.

Center for Digital Editing
Awarded Funding from Three Grants, Finalist for Another

This summer, the Center for Digital Editing (CDE), led by Washington Papers senior editor Jennifer Stertzer, received $60,714 in combined funding from grants sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). Funding primarily supports editorial work and the creation of new digital editions for The John Dickinson Writings Project and The Papers of Martin Van Buren.

Additional funding from the NEH will bring together editors and technical experts for a two-day workshop to discuss, explore, and improve the usability and accessibility of tools that create digital documentary editions.

The CDE also secured a spot in the final round of consideration for a new, competitive grant sponsored by the Mellon Foundation and the NHPRC. The collaborative proposal intends to mobilize a team of leaders, spearheaded by the CDE, from the fields of digital humanities and documentary editing. In short, the Digital Edition Publishing Cooperative seeks to discuss and develop human and technical infrastructure to support the long-term preservation, discovery, and use of digital documentary editions. A decision about the award is anticipated later this year.

To learn more about these grants, visit centerfordigitalediting.org.