

Washington *Papers*

Introducing Our E-Newsletter, and Other News

We are pleased to share with you this inaugural issue of our e-newsletter, which will be published annually in place of our paper edition. As with our print newsletter, we will continue to share information about recent and upcoming volume publications, interesting threads and stories not covered in our annotation, and staff news.

To start, this past year editors have worked tirelessly to prepare for our multiple forthcoming publications. Volumes 29, 30, and 31 of *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series* will be published this year, as will *The Papers of Martha Washington*. And following the publication of the final installment of the *Presidential Series*, volume 21, in 2020, and the publication of volume 28 of the *Revolutionary War Series* in 2021, those materials will be added to our digital edition this year.

Of course, none of this work would be possible without the generous support

IN THIS ISSUE

Introduction

Remembering Benson J. Lossing: George Washington Popularizer During the Nineteenth Century

Highlight of Volume 32: George Washington Urged to Come to Virginia

Jennifer E. Steenshorne: *In Memoriam*

Staff News

of our funders, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Florence Gould Foundation, Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, Packard Humanities Institute, William Nelson Cromwell Foundation, and private donors. We are grateful for their many years of support.

Remembering Benson J. Lossing: George Washington Popularizer During the Nineteenth Century

William M. Ferraro, Managing Editor

Benson J. Lossing (1813–1891) published his way into prominence during the latter half of the nineteenth century largely by capturing—in words and images—George Washington and his world. Born in New York's lower Hudson River Valley, Lossing lost his father shortly after birth; his mother's death a decade later left him an orphan. His formal education consisted of three years at local schools. After three years as a farmworker, Lossing apprenticed to a watchmaker and silversmith in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., when he was 14. He completed his apprenticeship in 1833 and spent two years in the trade.

Lossing found his true calling in 1835 when he affiliated with a Poughkeepsie newspaper and soon after began a semi-monthly literary journal. Venturing to New York City, Lossing studied wood engraving. This skill enabled him in 1838 to become editor and illustrator of *Family Magazine*, an early fully illustrated periodical. Lossing then established an engraving business that received patronage from several book and periodical publishers.

Only specialists in book arts would know Lossing if he had not turned his energy and talents to historical subjects. Beginning with a volume on the history of the fine arts, Lossing produced over forty titles on American history and biography. He initially gained acclaim for *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*, which appeared serially in thirty issues before being compiled into two impressive volumes. The work still holds value for historians because of Lossing's indefatigable efforts to collect oral testimony and to draw scenes during "more than eight thousand miles" of travel "in the Old Thirteen States and Canada." [1]

This compendium naturally included plenty of material about Washington. Lossing subsequently pursued three major works on the foremost figure in the nation's founding. Frequent conversations with George Washington Parke Custis, Washington's step-grandson, contributed substantial content to these books. Custis and his daughter Mary Custis Lee, the wife of Robert E. Lee, freely shared items belonging to Washington and his family

article continues after image gallery

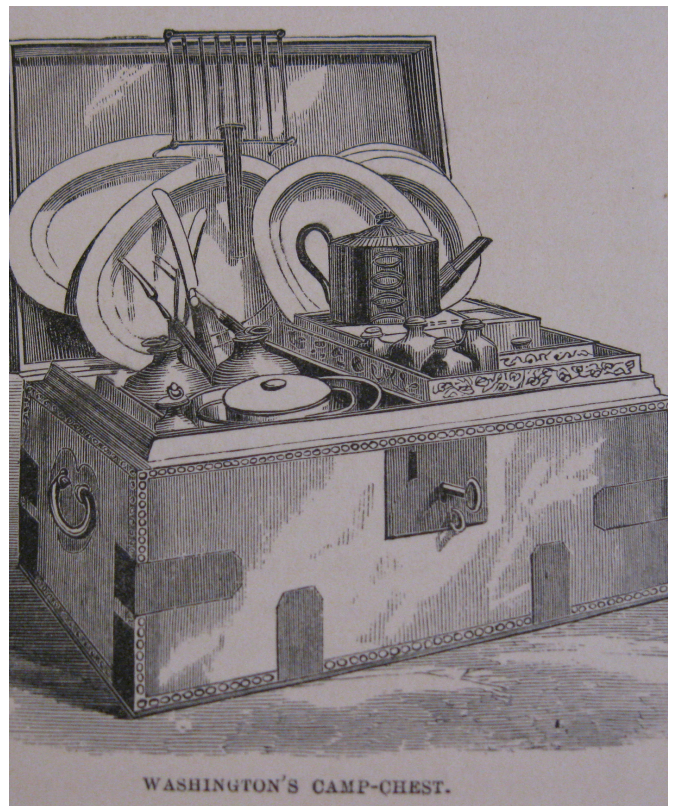
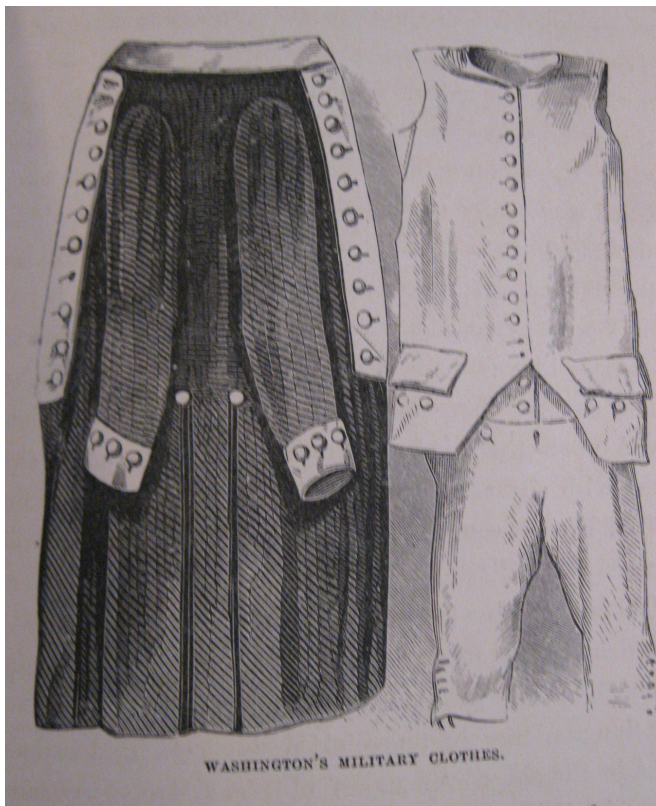
A Collection of Images from Lossing's Works

A talented artist and engraver himself, Benson J. Lossing prepared many of the illustrations for his books, but his volumes also featured other skilled practitioners. These included **John R. Chapin (1823–1904)**, who studied under Samuel F. B. Morse, worked as a field artist during the Civil War, and spent most of his career in Buffalo, New York. Chapin is best known for military depictions. Also noted for his skill with military subjects was the engraver **Robert Hinshelwood (c.1812–1879)**. He came to the United States from Scotland and found employment with several New York City

publishers. **Michael Angelo Wageman (1820 or 1821–1898)** primarily drew scenes from eighteenth-century wars. He died in England. **John McNevin (1821–1894)** produced a wider array of historical drawings, with topics ranging from the Revolutionary and Civil wars to Irish subjects. Among the most prolific engravers of his time, **John Rogers (c.1808–c.1888)** worked extensively with Wageman as well as other nineteenth-century artists. Living before photography, or when the technology could not capture images with precision or clarity, these men enlivened words with visual representations that bring the past into better focus for modern viewers.



(in clockwise order) "Mary Ball," "The Washington Residence Near Fredericksburg," "M. Washington," "The First Mansion in Fredericksburg," all images from Lossing's *Mary and Martha*.



(in clockwise order) "Surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown," painting by John R. Chapin, engraving by Robert Hinshelwood, from Lossing's *George Washington*; "Washington's Military Clothes," "Washington's Camp-Chest," both from Lossing's *Mount Vernon*.



(top) "Washington Taking Command of the Army at Cambridge, 1775," painting by Michael Angelo Wageman, engraving by John Rogers; (bottom) "Reception of President Washington at New York, April 23d 1789," painting by John McNevin, engraving by John Rogers; both images from Lossing's *George Washington*.

for Lossing to sketch as illustrations for his volumes. These objects also provided "inspiration" for his narratives. [2]

Lossing's first major Washington title was *Mount Vernon and Its Associations, Historical, Biographical, and Pictorial* (New York, 1859). He dedicated the work to the women who recently had purchased the property to guarantee its preservation. That dedication reads: "To His Patriotic Countrywomen, by whose efforts, The Home and Tomb of Washington Have Been Rescued from Decay." A contemporary reviewer praised the book for its fine engravings and "easy, graceful narrative, rich in descriptive detail, in characteristic anecdote, and in the wide diversity of materials." [3]

Lossing next completed a three-volume biography of Washington that another author had begun before suffering a debilitating illness. Though Lossing wrote three-fourths of the first volume and all of the final two, he credited his predecessor with having planned the work and selected the illustrations. The volumes appeared as *Life of Washington; A Biography: Personal, Military, and Political* (New York, 1860). The images that accompanied this work are noteworthy for their size and interesting conception.

A quarter century passed before Lossing undertook his last major Washington book. It bothered him that no accounts of Washington's mother and wife existed apart from treatments of his career; so, from oral sources, supplemented by "bits of trustworthy information picked up here and there . . . during the past thirty-five years," he spun "threads of knowledge" into a joint biography titled *Mary and Martha: The Mother and the Wife of George Washington* (New York, 1886). Lossing believed his account instructive and opened the 348-page book with this dedication: "To My Young Countrywomen: This brief sketch of the Lives of Two of the Most Illustrious Exemplars of True Womanhood."

Lossing's smooth prose and striking pictures gained him a large readership and engaged audiences eager to know more about the women's histories and that of the famous George Washington. Although Lossing lacked access to the full documentary record contained in *The Papers of George Washington*, giving way for modern scholarship to improve upon many of his contentions, Lossing's books can still be read for pleasure and to see what people in the nineteenth century considered entertaining.

1. Benson J. Lossing. *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*. . . . 2 vols. (New York, 1851–52), 1:v.

2. Benson J. Lossing, *Mary and Martha: The Mother and the Wife of George Washington* (New York, 1886), vii–viii.

3. *North American Review*, 90 (January 1860): 281–82.

Highlight of Volume 32: General Washington Urged to Come to Virginia

Ben Huggins, Associate Editor

In 1781, British armies invaded Virginia. They were opposed by only the small army of the Marquis de Lafayette and Baron Steuben. On May 28, hard-pressed Virginia governor Thomas Jefferson appealed to Gen. George Washington, who was then commanding the Continental main army in New York state, to bring an army to his native Virginia to counter the British invasion:

We are too far removed from the other Scenes of War, to say whether the main force of the Enemy be within this State. but I suppose they cannot any where spare so great an Army for the Operations of the field: Were it possible for this Circumstance to justify in your Excellency a determination to lend us your personal aid, it is evident from the universal voice that the presence of their beloved Country man, whose talents have been so long successfully employed in establishing the freedom of kindred States, to whose person they have still flattered themselves they retained some right, and have ever looked up as their dernier resort in distress, that your appearance among them I say would restore full confidence of Salvation, and would render them equal to whatever is not impossible.

Joseph Jones, a delegate to Congress from Virginia, made a similar plea to Washington three days later, as did Lafayette on June 3. Washington's "presence," wrote Lafayette, "would do Immence good."

The general replied to Jefferson on June 8 explaining the necessity of keeping his army in New York, ready for a siege of British-occupied New York City:

Were it prudent to commit a detail of our plans and expectations to paper I could convince Your Excellency by a variety of reasons that my presence is essential to the operations which have lately been concerted between the French Commanders and myself and which are to open in this quarter provided the British keep possession of New York. . . . Should I be supported by the Neighbouring States in the manner which I expect, the enemy will, I hope, be reduced to the necessity of recalling part of their force from the Southward to support New York or they will run the most eminent risque of being expelled with a great loss of stores from that Post which is to them invaluable . . . Your Excellency may probably ask whether we are to remain here . . . should the enemy evacuate New York and transfer the whole War to the Southward? To that I answer that we must, in such case, follow them at every expence, and under every difficulty and loss.

When he learned in August that a French admiral intended to take his fleet to Chesapeake Bay, Washington resolved to go to Virginia with an army as Jefferson had asked—a decision that resulted in the decisive victory at Yorktown in October.

This exchange of letters is just one of the many stories revealed in the correspondence appearing in *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, volume 32, due to be published in 2023. Other highlights include Washington's conference in Wethersfield, Conn., with French lieutenant general Rochambeau, at which the two generals

set the strategy for the 1781 campaign; the movement of the French army from Newport, R.I., to join the Continental army in New York for operations against New York City; and Maj. Gen. William Heath's special mission to the New England governments in an effort to persuade them to recruit the men and provide the provisions so vital to the Continental army.

Jennifer E. Steenshorne: *In Memoriam*

The Washington Papers mourns the untimely loss of Jennifer E. Steenshorne, who served as the director of our department from January 2018 to June 2019. Steenshorne—or Jenn, as friends and colleagues better knew her—joined us at the University of Virginia after an interestingly varied career. She had worked in archiving, publishing, and even the music industry. Prior to assuming her role at The Washington Papers, Steenshorne had been an editor for the *Selected Papers of John Jay* at Columbia University for more than a decade.

Steenshorne enlivened our workspace during her tenure: she built connections across projects and departments, she shared in the pleasures of discovery both small and large, and she encouraged exploring all that our city and university communities had to offer.



With her passion for the work of editing, her vast knowledge of American history and culture, and her charisma, Steenshorne was a strong and welcome addition to our team. We will miss her.

Staff News

Publications

In February 2021, PGW associate editor **Benjamin Huggins** reviewed historian Peter R. Henriques' newest book, *First and Always: A New Portrait of George Washington* for the *Journal of the American Revolution*. Huggins concludes that the book shows there is more to be learned about George Washington and "is a must read for everyone wanting to understand the Father of Our Country." The review is available [online](#).

Last summer, undergraduate student worker **Samanta M. Pomier Jofré** interned at George Washington's Mount Vernon, in a position sponsored by the University of Virginia's John L. Nau III Center for Civil War Studies. Pomier Jofré detailed this unique experience in [a blog post](#) published by the Nau Center.

Supervised by **William M. Ferraro**, PGW's managing editor for development, a team of four undergraduate student workers—**Sarah Combs**, **Samanta Pomier Jofré**, **Lela Trainer**, and **Cooper Arnold**—have written introductions for earlier volumes of *The Papers of George Washington*. These introductions summarize the events and themes featured in a given volume. Quotes and some interpretation enliven the basic

facts. Their efforts over a single semester have produced five introductions ready for final copyediting and four additional drafts ready for initial review. The students selected volumes according to their interests. To date, they have addressed one volume in the Colonial Series, three in the Revolutionary War Series, two in the Confederation Series, and three in the Presidential Series. Excluding the six volumes of GW's diaries, forty-six volumes need introductions. This initiative will continue until these volumes receive introductions that open their contents to the widest possible audience.

Visualizing Objects, Places, and Spaces: A Digital Handbook—a peer-reviewed collection of digital projects that may serve as an instructional tool for those working to develop their own projects—published two visualizations created by project developer **Erica Cavanaugh**, and two more by undergraduate student worker **Madeline Pannell**. Cavanaugh's visualizations map out the locations where correspondence was written during an important period of George and Martha Washington's lives; Pannell's visualizations present data and information about two enslaved individuals at Mount Vernon, Isaac and Will. All four visualizations can be found on [our website](#).

Staff News

Presentations & Interviews

Research editor **Kathryn Gehred** was featured in an episode of America's Hidden Stories that examined the relationship between George Washington and Sally Cary. Titled "George Washington's Secret Love," the episode premiered on Feb. 15, 2021 on the Smithsonian Channel.

In June 2021, project developer **Erica Cavanaugh**, joined by well-known digital humanist Quinn Dombrowski, held a lecture at the online edition of the University of Victoria's Digital Humanities Summer Institute. Together they reflected on the human relationships involved in digital projects by discussing successful forms of collaboration and "graceful degradation."

On Oct. 28, research editor **Kathryn Gehred** participated in a virtual presentation hosted by Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. During the presentation, Gehred discussed the digital work behind a forthcoming online database that details the collections of America's earliest museums. A recording of the presentation is **available online**.

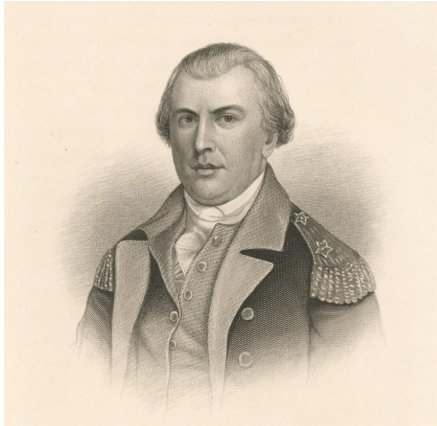
New Roles

Last year, three of our editors received promotions. In recognition of her many and varied contributions to the project, which notably include her independent efforts to edit omitted or newly found Washington documents, **Adrina Garbooshian-Huggins** became an associate editor. Additionally, **Thomas E. Dulan** and **William M. Ferraro** both became managing editors. Dulan's and Ferraro's new roles involve supporting the coordination of the volume production schedule in addition to their regular editing work.

In June 2021, **Katie Blizzard** and **Kathryn Gehred** were elected to new roles in the Association for Documentary Editing (ADE). Blizzard was elected secretary, a position that involves maintaining the organization's records and membership database. Gehred was elected to serve on the Nominating Committee, where she will help identify individuals to stand for election to leadership positions within the organization. Gehred also serves as the ADE's webmaster.

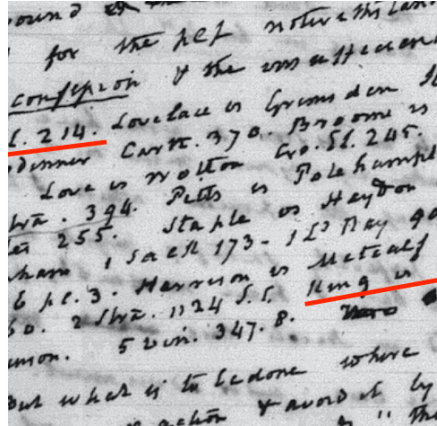
Posts from Our Blog

Washington's Quill



A Peek into George Washington's Mind: A Letter to Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene, April, 18, 1781

by William M. Ferraro



Bushrod Washington Papers & the Challenges of Transcription

by Kathryn Gehred



George Washington and Charity

by Adrina Garbooshian-Huggins

Our Supporters

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

- National Endowment for the Humanities
- National Historical Publications and Records Commission
- Florence Gould Foundation
- Mount Vernon Ladies' Association
- Packard Humanities Institute
- William Nelson Cromwell Foundation

You can donate to The Washington Papers online. **Click here to donate.**

CREDITS

Editors

Katie Blizzard, Tom E. Dulan,
Christopher F. Minty,
Jennifer E. Stertzner

Images

Katie Blizzard, William M.
Ferraro, Library of Congress,
New York Public Library

.....
www.washingtonpapers.org
Facebook | Twitter
.....