



# What do you think you know about Washington?

## By WB Lee Anderson

George Washington was born February eleventh, 1732 on the family's plantation located on Popes Creek, Westmorland County, Virginia. He was born to Augustine and Mary Ball Washington, with Mary being Augustine's second wife. His first wife Jane Butler had died in 1729, leaving him two sons, Lawrence and Augustine Jr, and a daughter Jane. George was the eldest of Augustine and Mary's six children.

In 1734, the family moved up the Potomac River to the Little Hunting Creek Plantation, which would later become known as Mount Vernon. In 1738, they moved again to the Ferry Farm Plantation on the Rappahannock River, near Fredericksburg, this being where George spent most of his youth.

When George was eleven, Augustine passed away. As was the tradition, most of the property went to the two oldest sons, Lawrence and Augustine Jr. Mary and her six children were left the Ferry Farm Plantation to live on.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, George never received a formal education. Lawrence and Augustine Jr were sent to England for their education but at the death of his father, funds became limited for education. We can only speculate, but George may have had a few private tutors, as well as, attending a local primary school in Fredericksburg. He did learn to read, write, and do basic legal forms. He excelled in geometry and trigonometry, skills which he put to good use in his first job as a surveyor.

As well as learning proper manners, which would shape his character for the rest of his life.

One of his exercises was the “Art of Surveying and Measuring Land”. In the late 1740’s, he was invited to join a survey party organized by his neighbor and friend George William Fairfax. This experienced team laid out lots within a large tract along the western frontier of Virginia. On that expedition, he learned much, not only about surveying, but also experienced living off the land

Washington began his Masonic journey at an early age. Being initiated and Entered Apprentice on the fourth of November, 1752, in the newly congregated Lodge at Fredericksburg, at the age of twenty. Washington paid an entry fee of two pounds, three shillings. It doesn’t sound like much today, but then it represented about twenty days labor of a skilled craftsmen.

The Lodge itself held its first meeting on September first, 1752. Records of the lodge have been preserved from its first meeting until 1771. It is interesting to note, the first Master of the Fredericksburg Lodge’s name is unknown. Because for some reason, it was stricken from the records, probably at a later date and more than likely because he was a loyalist. It has an unusual history as well. The lodge began its life as a “time immemorial lodge” meaning they can’t trace their operating authority to a Charter from any Grand Lodge. It probably was started by self congregating Masons

who lived nearby, or formed by a Military Lodge of the British Army. I think it may be a combination of both because the lodge had a definite Scottish York Rite influence.

On the third of March 1753, ten days after his twenty-first birthday, he was passed to the degree of a Fellowcraft. But wait, something doesn't add up here! Between his initiation and passing, America, Canada, and the United Kingdom switched from the old Julian lunar calendar to the new Georgian one. To make this happen, September went from the second to the fourteenth, dropping eleven days and changing his birthday from the eleventh to the twenty-second.

Alas, why do I think the Lodge of Fredericksburg was influenced by Scottish Masonry? Records show he joined the York Rite at another lodge a few days later and received his Mark Mason degree. As is the custom in lodges chartered by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, this being done before he would receive his third degree. The mark he chose was the beehive. On the fourth of August, 1753, he would be raised as a Master Mason.

From there on, his life as a military man, a statesman, and a prominent Mason are legendary and well documented. Washington passed away on the eleventh of December, 1799 at the age of sixty-seven. At his request, he would not be laid to rest until three days had passed. He wanted them to be sure he was dead. Brothers of the Alexandria Lodge performed Masonic Rites to honor his life and well known contributions and fidelity to the craft. He was buried wearing his apron.

At the time of his death, he was one of the wealthiest men in America. He owned over seventy thousand acres, many acquired when he was a surveyor. His Mount Vernon estate, which he purchased from the estates of his two older half brothers, consisted of five farms totaling eight thousand three hundred acres. He was a meticulous record keeper. In the end, however, he only wanted to be known as a Mason and as a farmer who introduced the mule into American agriculture.