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Magazine of the

Jefferson County Historical Society

Volume LXXIII
December 2007

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Magazine of the

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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"No man is fit to be entrusted with the control of the present who is ignorant of the past, and no people who are indifferent to their past need hope to make their future great."

"History by apprizing them of their past will enable them to judge of the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of man; it will enable them to know ambition under every disguise it may assume, and, knowing it, to defeat its views."

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JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Organized May 21, 1927
Post Office Box 485
Charles Town, West Virginia 25414
or
www.jeffersonhistoricalwv.org

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PUBLICATIONS

One copy of the Magazine is mailed to each person with a paid membership. Back issues, original or reprint, may be obtained by sending a check or money order to:

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Ho, for California! The Charlestown Virginia Mining Company

by P. Douglas Perks

By the Winter of 1848, news of the discovery of gold in California had reached the east. Thousands got the "gold fever" and began streaming to the west to seek their fortune. On January 8, 1849, the following notice appeared in the *Spirit of Jefferson*, Charlestown, Virginia.

> *"Ho, for California! It having been determined to organize a company for California whose principal pursuit shall be digging the soil for virgin gold, all who are desirous of joining the expedition will meet at the law offices of B. F. Washington on Tuesday the 9th instant at seven in the evening. An opportunity is now afforded to active and energetic young men of bettering their pecuniary position and at the same time they may see the garden spot of the world."*

The "gold fever" had struck Jefferson County!

At least three companies of treasure hunters were organized in Jefferson County, Virginia. The Harpers Ferry Company was organized by Col. Whiting, a Texas Ranger, and left for California on February 23rd, 1849. The Shepherdstown Company, whose president was Dr. Richard Parran, left "...in the spring of 1849."[1]

On January 9th, 1849, a third company, the Charlestown Virginia Mining Company, held its first organizational meeting in the law offices of Benjamin Franklin Washington. The men who assembled discussed what supplies each member of the company would need to provide for himself. It was initially decided to enroll a total of 60 men as members of the company. Each man would pay a fee of $300 to enroll. Organizers required that $110 had to be pre-paid by February 10th, 1849. There was also discussion about how the company should be organized.[2]

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[1] Turner, Ella May. *The Jefferson County Forty-Niners.* JCHS Magazine, Volume XV, 1949. pp. 30-49.

[2] Turner.

Two weeks later on January 22nd, 1849, the Charlestown Virginia Mining Company held its second organizational meeting. The membership committee reported that the quota of 60 men had been met and that there was a list of 50 applicants who met the membership criteria who had been rejected. The organizers announced that the company would provide each man with a knapsack. The knapsack would be used to carry each man's personal gear and could weigh no more than 50 pounds. Each man would be required to provide "...eight good shirts, four pairs of drawers and undershirts, two good shirts, one vest, one coat, one good overcoat, three pairs boots or shoes, eight pairs of woolen socks and four coarse towels." After these announcements the group decided that no further action would be taken until after the February 10th deadline.[3]

The formal organizational meeting of the Charlestown Virginia Mining Company was held on February 10th, 1849, either in the Odd Fellows Hall located on the 2nd floor of the market house (today known as Charles Washington Hall)[4] or in the Sappington Hotel that was next door to the market house.[5] Both places were on West Washington Street in Charlestown, Virginia. At this meeting the membership quota of the company was increased to 70 members and a constitution for the company was adopted. The following men were elected to lead the company:

- President: B. F. Washington
- 1st Commander: Robert H. Keeling
- 2nd Commander: Smith Crane
- 3rd Commander: Joseph N. Lewis
- Treasurer: E. M. Aisquith
- Quartermaster: Nathaniel Seevers
- Secretary: J. Harrison Keeley
- Surgeon: Dr. Wakefield Bryarly

To prepare for the trip to California, several committees were established. One committee was charged with the responsibility of securing weapons for the company. Another committee was given the responsibility of collecting information about mining for gold. Two more

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[3] Turner.

[4] Turner.

[5] McIlhany, Edward Washington. *Recollections of a '49er*. Edited and Annotated by Scott J. Lawson. Walsworth Publishing Company, 2006. pp. 18-19.

committees were formed to collect supplies, one to secure supplies for the eastern sector of the trip and another to secure supplies for the western sector of the trip.[6]

On March 3, 1849, the quota for the company was again increased. Now 75 men would get the opportunity to search for gold in California. Writing in 1887 John William Bowers would report that the company included as many as 85 men; it appears that 75 men left the depot in Charlestown.[7]

On March 27th, 1849, the men of the Charlestown Virginia Mining Company assembled at the Winchester & Potomac Railroad station on North Street in Charlestown to board a special train to Harpers Ferry. This would be the first leg of a journey over rail, road, and river that would eventually end in the gold fields of California.[8]

The trip west took five months. On August 29th, 1849, "...the Virginians decided that they really had arrived in California." However, eighty plus men was a rather large number to efficiently mine gold as a group, so the company began to consider what to do next.[9]

President B. F. Washington assembled the men on September 13th, 1849, at Sacramento City to discuss the company's future. After a lengthy discussion a vote was taken and by a vote of 41 to 32 it was decided to remain united. However, after sleeping on the matter, the next day the men reconvened and by a vote of 50 to 19 it was decided to dissolve the company.[10]

As a result of that vote the company's surplus property was sold and each member received a refund of $129. In addition, according to B. F. Washington, each member was supplied with *"... a gun, pair of woolen blankets, gum blanket and clothes bag which reduce our expenses $50 more. Thus far this is pretty well."*[11]

As these young men ventured into the unknown of the west, they communicated with their family and friends back home in Virginia. These letters afforded a firsthand account of the land beyond the Mississippi. From the mundane to the exotic, the Explorers of 1849 recorded their impressions of their journey west. Many wrote letters, some kept diaries;

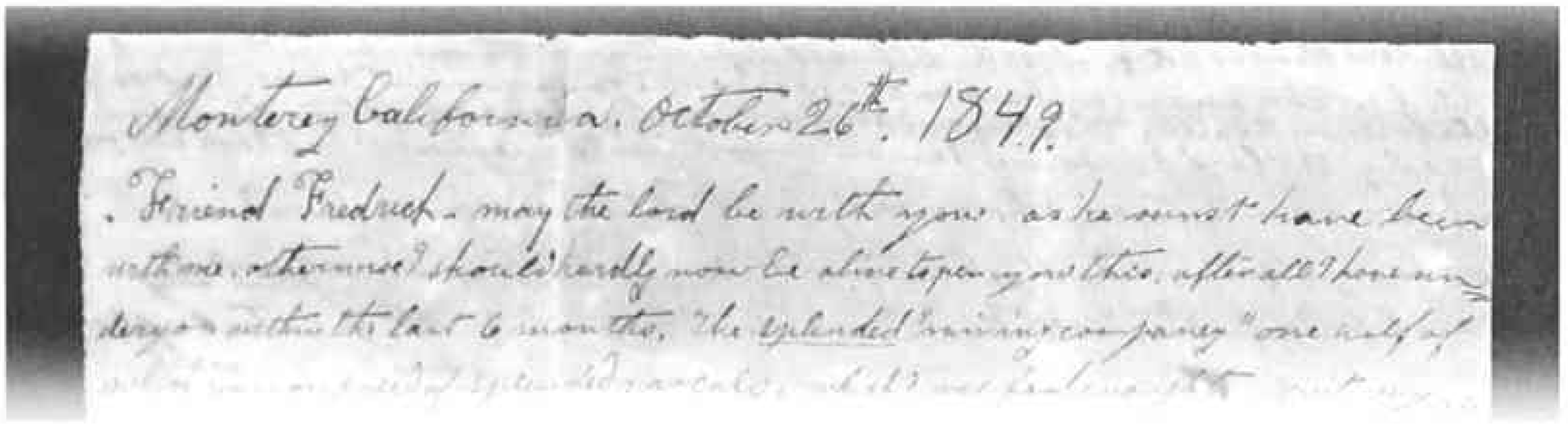
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6 Turner.
7 McIlhany.
8 Turner.
9 Turner.
10 Turner.
11 Turner.

whatever the format, each man recorded his personal account of the venture.

In the spring of 2007 the Jefferson County Museum was fortunate to receive a collection of documents associated with the Briscoe family. The Briscoes were a prominent Jefferson County, Virginia, family who came to the Lower Shenandoah Valley in the late 18th Century. The family of the late Paul and Frances Miller gave the collection to the Museum.

Among the papers was a letter from California written by Lawrence Berry Washington, one of Charlestown's '49ers. Washington wrote the letter to his friend Frederick Augustus Briscoe. Frederick Briscoe resided at *Piedmont*, the ancestral home of the Briscoe family in Jefferson County located west of Charles Town on the old Smithfield-Charlestown-Harpers Ferry Turnpike (Middleway Pike - SR 51).



Monterey California. October 26th. 1849.

. Friend Fredrick - may the Lord be with you as he must have been with me, otherwise I should hardly now be alive to open your letter, after all I have undergone within the last 6 months. The splendid swimming company "one half of

Top of letter written October 26th, 1849 by Lawrence Berry Washington

Lawrence Berry Washington was the older brother of Benjamin Franklin Washington, who was the president of the Charlestown Virginia Mining Company. Lawrence, born in 1811 at *Cedar Lawn* in Jefferson County, Virginia, was the son of John Thornton Washington, the great-grandson of Samuel Washington, and the great-grandnephew of George Washington. In *The Pedigree and History of the Washington Family*, Albert Welles describes Lawrence Berry Washington as "...a lawyer by profession," who served as a 2nd Lieutenant in Company K, 2nd Battalion, Virginia Regiment in the Mexican War. "...went to California in 1849, thence to Missouri in 185_, to Virginia in 185_, to Missouri, in 1856, where he died on a steamboat, on the Mississippi River, September 21st, 1856. Was an author and poet of no mean ability."[12]

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[12] Welles, Albert. *The Pedigree and History of the Washington Family*. New York: Society Library, 1879. p. 238.

Washington's letter to Briscoe is written from Monterey, California, six months after the Company had departed Virginia. He describes what happened to the Charlestown Virginia Mining Company once it has reached its destination. Washington also mentions some of the men who were known to both men. Apparently uninterested in searching for gold, Washington searches for employment in Sacramento and succeeds in procuring a pretty interesting job.

The letter is transcribed as it was written with no changes to spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.

"Monterey California, October 26th. 1849.

Friend Fredrick.[13] *may the lord be with you as he must have been with me, otherwise I should hardly now be alive to pen you this. after all I have undergon within the last 6 months. The splendid "mining company" one half of which was composed of splendid rascals, which I was fast enough to put myself to great trouble to join. It busted up on arriving at the Sacrimento, property joint stoc sold & devided out. They devided up into partners, as they could agree, in order to go to work. Frank*[14] *went up the Sacrimento Monroe*[15] *Smith Cran*[16] *the 3 Moores,*[17] *Bradley,*[18] *Conway,*[19] *Garnhart*[20] *were messmates throughout the trip & still cling together you know the moores are shifty fellows. Smith if he sticks with the party must I think come out. Tell Miss luce Joe and John, Col.Manning is a working man and gets on in his usual quiet way. his health is excellent. but you wont believe me when I tell you. he is slender as I am. with his full-grown beard which we all ware. he has often past me as I him on the rout without knowing him in his altered shape. he often laughs and says he misses his legs when he gets up of a morning. The above was is the state of the company as I*

---

13 Frederick Augustus Briscoe

14 Benjamin Franklin Washington; b. 1820 - d. 1872 at *Cedar Lawn*; son of John Thornton Augustine Washington, great-grandson of Samuel Washington, and great-grandnephew of George Washington.

15 Monroe Manning

16 Smith Crane

17 Henry H., James H., and John Moore, Jr.

18 Thornton C. Bradley

19 Hugh Conway

20 John H. Garnhart

left it a month or 6 weeks ago. I am now some 250, or 300 miles from any of them and you in Jefferson will be apt to hear from them much easyer than I, for I dont know where to find any one of them but they can all write to Jefferson, where some day our friends in California may meet you and me again, I trust in the lord. As for my self I always thought I could do better in a company by my self. so I took shiping and sailed for this port, was delayed by baffing winds, put in 2 days at Sanfranciscoe waiting for another boat for this place seized with a violent fever, landed here exactly last sunday 3 weeks ago, (today is friday) too sick to stand went strate to bed burnt up with fever, crammed the calomel and quinine. I went to bed sunday, and sunday after one week I got up and dressed. the following week I was in bed about half the time tho I got up and dressed every morning.well a strainger in a strainge land, not a human face I had ever met, nearly run out of funds in no business, what was to be don? Well this you know is the seat of government. our Governor lives here. There are government houses here. The officies are "government headquarters," paymasters office "Quartermasters office" Commisaries office" all under one roof a big native California building. There is a fort here with a small garrison of soldiers with the necessary officers clearks & c. of all the different departments, the men hired to work & c. & c. The American banner waves over the government house, and over the forte on the hill. The "stars and stripes" all ways have an attraction for me by the lord, I exclaimed I am an unfortunate emegrant, but I am an American Citizen. Where ever my countries banner waves, there I will make myself at home. I will go to headquarters, so of I put to the governer Gen. Riley[21] now before I go further, I will tell you I consider this Gen. Riley the greatest officer and the best man since the days of Boniparte, and that man in the bible that was said to be after Gods hart . The lord never made a better a braver a kinder biger soled old man and some day I will convince you that what I say is so. Well I went to him told him my condition showed him some letters cirtificates of character & c. told him I wanted imployment. he sent me to the different

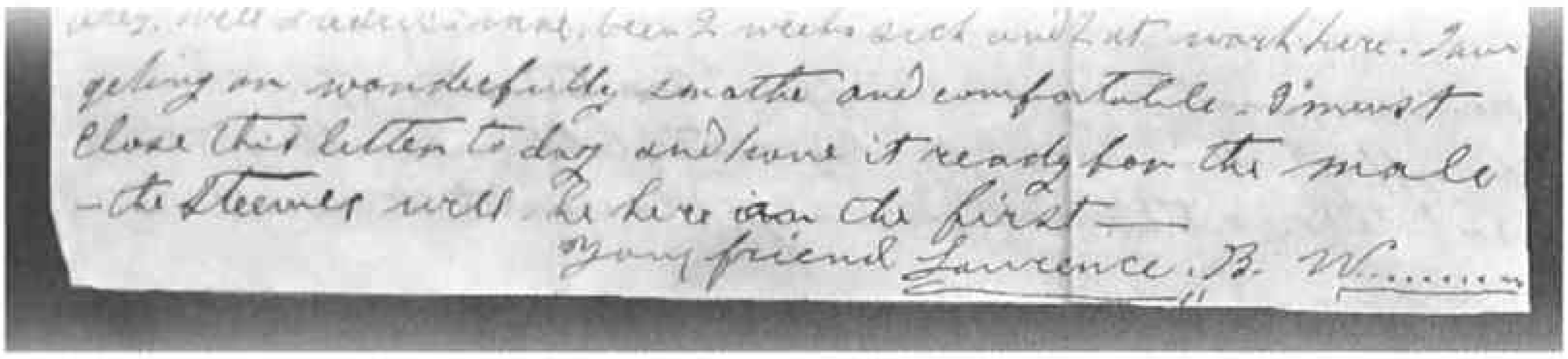
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[21] Maj. Gen. Bennet Riley was military governor of California April - December 1849; a Veteran of the War of 1812, the Indian Wars, and the Mexican War; Riley commanded the first wagon train escort along the Santa Fe Trail

indeviduals at the heads of the various departments told my to apply and he would back my application for anything. In the mean time there was a convention assembled here for the perpose of forming a State Constitution (which is since accomplished) Theold General introduced me to the secritary of that convention who was very polite and when applied to for business he gave me a job right in hand by which I made $18 at a clip in about 6 hours writing, coppying documents. I had but one quarter dollar in my purse when I made this hall. The Secritary told me if I had been there from the beginning of the Convention I could have mad at least $600 or $800 but the convention desolved a day or two after. I am now imployed writing handling money and taking account of stores in the government department. I get $100 per month. it is a certain support but devilish light wages for California. but if my wages are light my work is lighter that is if its all to be as it has been for the 2 weeks Ive been implied, I'll content my self for the present keeping a sharp look out for something better. I must do a business of at least $250 or $300, to get along and now Fredric I wish I could say more, but as I sent this in an a letter to george it must be short. the boat that carries the male wont leave for 4 or 5 days yet I will leave space for a line on the last day. mean time my warmest regards and most respectful compliments to your mother whos kindness to me I will ever remember with graitude. Tell Dr John that I always thought him a man of good sense, but that of all the times he ever shared sound wisdom the time when he refused to take charge of the "Sanitary department" of the C. T. Va M. Company for California, tell him to remember me to the chickens, and not to forget that I have a brassback mul running about the premises. I must have him. Tell Mr Grove I think of him often and tell him to tell Aunt Molly I wont miss her. I come so near sliping of the hinges while sick that I have been very harmless ever since (and that's a fact). tell him soon as I get funds enough a head, tho I dont know how soon it will be I will step across over on tother side the world to see how you all get along over there.

Oct 28th sunday the 4th that I have seen in Monterey. Well Frederic I have been 2 weeks sick and at work here. I am geting on wonderfully smothe and comfortable. I must close his letter to day and have it ready for the male - the steemer will be here the first -

Your friend Lawrence. B. W.....



Bottom of letter written by Lawrence Berry Washington

For additional information about the '49ers from Jefferson County, two articles have been published in previous editions of *The Magazine*. "The Jefferson County Forty-Niners" by Ella May Turner appeared in the *Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society*, Volume XV, December 1949, on pages 30-49. "Jefferson County's Fourty-Niners" by Julia Davis Healy appeared in the *Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society*, Volume XXXVIII, December 1972, on pages 30-49.

"Noblet Herbert to Mrs. John Augustine Washington" transcribed, with introduction and notes, by John A. Washington in the *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Volume XXIX, Number 4, is a letter written by Herbert "to his aunt and foster mother"[22] living at *Mount Vernon*.

For a more in depth look at both the trip to California and a description of what the men experienced while searching for gold, you may read either Recollections of a '49er by Edward Washington McIlhany, Edited and annotated by Scott J. Lawson or Trail to California: The Overland Journal of Vincent Geiger and Wakeman Bryarly edited by David Potter.

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[22] Washington, John A. *Noblet Herbert to Mrs. John Augustine Washington.* California Historical Society Quarterly, Volume XXIX, Number 4. p.297

John Augustine Washington, III et al

by John A. Washington

Editor's note: Earlier this year, Walter Washington, descendant of Samuel Washington, George's brother, said that he possessed unpublished photographs of John Augustine Washington, III, the last Washington to own Mount Vernon, and some other family members. He solicited his cousin, the Washington family historian, John A. Washington in Chevy Chase, Maryland, for biographies to go with the images. This article is the compilation of the photographs, a John Augustine letter, also held be Walter Washington, and the biographies.

John Augustine Washington, III (1821-1861) was born at Blakeley on May 3, 1821, and named for his father and for his great-grandfather, John Augustine Washington (1736-1787), brother of General Washington. His older brother George died about 1827, and so John Augustine grew up knowing he would inherit Mount Vernon. The family divided its time between Mt. Vernon and Blakeley, both before Judge Bushrod Washington and his wife died in1829 and after. His father inherited the place in 1829, and dying in 1832 left it to John's mother, Jane Charlotte. She turned it over to him in 1843 when he married Eleanor Love Selden (1824-1860) of Exeter, near Leesburg, daughter of Wilson Cary Selden and Louisa Elizabeth Fontaine Alexander, his first wife.

Educated at the University of Virginia, he settled down to the life of a farmer at Mt. Vernon. The struggle to support the place with the inadequate fraction of the family resources which had descended to him, along with dispensing hospitality to hordes of uninvited visitors and curiosity seekers, soon made it obvious that the family could not continue to live there indefinitely. Neither the Federal government nor the state of Virginia, still believing in the founding fathers' principle of limited government, could envision using public resources to preserve a private citizen's home, even that of George Washington. No honorable private sale could be imagined, until that redoubtable invalid, Miss Anne Pamela Cunningham, eventually convinced Washington that her concept of a Mt. Vernon Ladies Association was an acceptable solution to his apparently impossible problem. Thus after his mother's 1855 death, when in her will



she confirmed his ownership, he sold Mt. Vernon in 1858 to the private group which still maintains it.

John Augustine then purchased the farm in Fauquier County called Waveland, and there he moved with his wife and seven young children.

Then tragedy succeeded tragedy. On Oct. 9, 1860, his wife died, apparently because of yet another pregnancy. The election of Lincoln, the secession of Virginia, and Washington's consequent volunteering to defend Virginia when it was invaded, came, one upon the heels of the other. He was commissioned Lieutenant Colonel, appointed to General Lee's staff, and shared Lee's tent. On Sept 13, 1861, while reconnoitering in the Cheat Valley in what is now West Virginia, he was shot from ambush and killed. General Lee immediately ordered John's only brother, Richard Scott Blackburn Washington, who had quixotically insisted upon volunteering as a private, to resign and go home, to protect John Augustine's seven orphans, as well as his own young brood.

John Augustine, his wife, and their seven children, all very devout Christians and faithful Episcopalians, are buried in Zion Churchyard, as well as a number of their descendants.

The following is John Augustine's last letter written to Doctor W. Fontaine Alexander, one week before he was killed.

Camp of Valley Mountain Sept. 6th 1861

My dear Doctor

I have long intended to write to you, but the uncertainty of letters reaching you or at last what I supposed was the uncertainty, has prevented me. But learning by the newspapers which sometimes reach us in this Mountain Wilderness that the Enemy no longer occupies the Valley, I write to let you all know something of me, and to request you to give some little attention to my affairs in Jefferson, provided the war has left me any thing there to be attended to.

I have been in the Mountains since the 29th of July and at this post since the 6th of August, and have rarely known as rainy a season. We have had from twenty to twenty five days rain since I came up. I have literally had my feet wet for a week at a time and though on top of a high mountain am really in all the mud and mire of an alluvial bottom, such is the soil on these mountains, a rich black vegetable mould that when the trees are cleard off a greensward (tentatively Blue grass) such as I have never seen except on the most carefully tended lawns springs up. My health has been perfect thus far, lost thirty lbs of flesh - "superfluous beef" as the

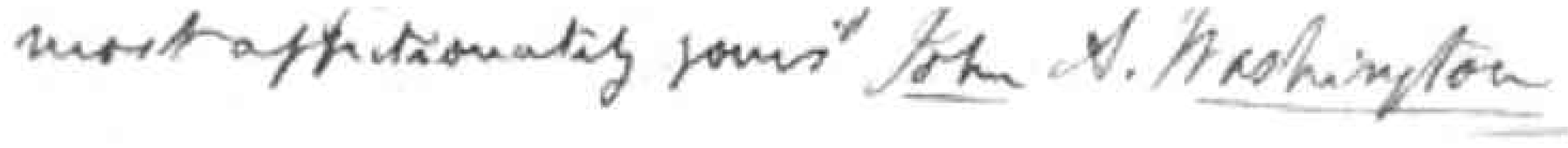
estimable Reid said of Dr. Blackburn - and have come down to a solid 150 & in better condition for service than I have been for many years. Rains & bad roads have impeded our operations and though we daily hope to advance & attack the Enemy, yet we can from no idea as to when we shall positively do so.

If I have any wheat in Jefferson to sell and there is sale for it, may I ask the favour of you to attend to it for me. Sell it if you can, pay the taxes out of the proceeds, and if there is any balance remit to Aunt Judy to assist her in providing for the wants of my children. Please also sell any corn or other grain that may be due me. In other words collect my rents in Jefferson, if I have any, and dispose of them as above requested. That is pay taxes and other necessary expenses & remit balance to Aunt J. For the purposes mentioned. Please ask her, if you remit to her, to expend it for the support of herself and her children as she thinks best & not turn it over to them.

I don't know when I shall leave this region, or indeed whether I ever shall do so, as of course my chances are the same as those of other men, and I know some of us will never get away. From the present aspect of affairs, I think we shall make our attack in a few days, but as I said above there is no certainty of it. Please give my love to Sister May (your wife must permit me to call her so) to Charlotte & the little girls. Charly I hear is in the Army & believe me my dear Doctor

Most affectionately yours

John A. Washington



[Post script]

As you see, paper is scarce, and I write to add, that if you are sending Herbert Alexander to School and the proceeds of my land in Jefferson will possibly do it after meeting taxes, I authorize you to pay his tuition out of them, & remit balance if any as requested. I regret to be unable to do more. My resources are cut down to my farm in Fauquier which I fear at the low rates of produce will give but a poor support to my family. At least, they write me that they

given up tea & flour until they can have the latter ground from their own wheat. I don't know whether I shall receive pay or not, but my own idea is that I shall get none. If I do I shall be agreeably surprised. I regretted to hear that Sister Hannah had withdrawn Dick from Waveland, for he might have been there schooled & supported without expense, which I am unable at this time to incur for him elsewhere.

Affect yours John A. Washington

[This letter is still contained in its original envelope, which is addressed to Dr. W. Fontaine Alexander, Halltown, Jefferson County, Virginia and shows a return address "From Lt. Col. John A. Washington, A.D.C. to Genl. Lee." It bears a postmark of Sept 8 in Staunton Va.]

Jane Charlotte Blackburn was born Sept. 23, 1786, at Rippon Lodge, Prince William County. She was the eldest of the four children, all daughters, of Maj. Richard Scott Blackburn (ca1764-1803) and his first wife Judith ("Pretty Judy") Ball. Her mother died in 1795, when Jane was nine. Her father's career in the U. S. Army seems to have kept him away from Rippon Lodge, and he married a second time, apparently away from Virginia, and left a son by this marriage, who soon died in infancy. Jane was just seventeen when he died. She and her three younger sisters were raised by their Blackburn grandparents, Col. Thomas Blackburn (1742-1807) and Christian Scott (1745-1815) at Rippon Lodge, but spent a great deal of time with their childless aunt, Ann Blackburn Washington (1768-1829), and her husband, Justice Bushrod Washington (1762-1829) of Mount Vernon.

Thus she and her sisters were frequently with Judge Washington's five orphan nephews and nieces, whose parents, Corbin Washington and Hannah Lee his wife, had died in 1799 and 1801. After these children's uncle, Thomas Lee of Park Gate, died in 1805, they lived entirely at Mt. Vernon, and so it is not surprising that two of Judge Washington's orphan nephews married two of Mrs. Judge Washington's orphan nieces.

On 27 Sept. 1810 at Rippon Lodge Anna Maria Thomasina Blackburn (1790-1833) married Bushrod Corbin Washington (1790-1851). They soon became the builders of Claymont. Then, on Nov 14, 1811, her older



sister Jane Charlotte Blackburn (1786-1855) married his older brother, John Augustine Washington (1789-1832), and they set about building Blakeley. The oldest of these Washington brothers, Richard Henry Lee Washington (1788-1817) had not married, and it may have been apparent that he was afflicted with the consumption (tuberculosis) which had killed his parents at an early age and which soon killed him. At any rate, as the elder surviving brother, and thus heir apparent of Mt. Vernon, John Augustine, and his wife Jane Charlotte built a smaller house at Blakeley than his younger brother did at Claymont. Yet the two houses faced each

other across a small valley, within easy walking distance, and the two families lived in terms of the greatest intimacy.

The four Blackburn sisters, influenced no doubt by their grandmother, Christian Scott Blackburn (1745-1815), who was the daughter of a Scotch minister, for thirty-seven years the rector of Dettingen Parish, Prince William Co., were devoted adherents of the Episcopal Church during its revival in the early years of the nineteenth century, and Bishop Meade speaks of them in the highest terms.

Jane Charlotte and John Augustine Washington had five children. The three who survived childhood are shown with their mother in Chapman's group painting of the family, shown on the piazza at Mt. Vernon soon after the 1832 death of John Augustine Washington. By his will his widow, Jane Charlotte, became the owner of Mt. Vernon, with authority to give the property to such of their descendants as she chose.

The family always moved in the summer from Mt. Vernon to Blakeley, to avoid the oppressive heat, humidity, and indeed fevers, of lower Virginia. When in 1843 her elder surviving son, John Augustine Washington (1821-1861) married, he settled at Mt. Vernon, and by her will of 1854 she formally bequeathed it to him. Thus, after 1843 she seems to have spent greater and greater parts of the year at Blakeley. It had long been understood that her other son, Richard Scott Blackburn Washington (1822-1910), would inherit Blakeley, as indeed he did under her will.

Jane Charlotte Washington died Sept. 6, 1855, at Blakeley. Numerous requests of members of the extended Washington family to be buried at Mt. Vernon had forced the owners to decide, after the death of John Augustine Washington in 1832, that no further burials would occur there, with the exception of that of his widow, Jane Charlotte. Therefore, her funeral at Mt. Vernon in Sept. 1855 was the last family burial. The occasion aroused such great interest that a special boat was engaged to bring the mourners down the river from Alexandria for the service. After its conclusion her younger son Richard, it is said, hurled the key to the vault out into the Potomac, to symbolize the closing of the family cemetery to further burials.

Although "Grandmother Jane," as she was long known, had only three children who left families, she had twenty-three grandchildren, sixty-five great-grandchildren, and 102 great-great-grandchildren, many of whom are now grandparents. All her children, twenty of her grandchildren, and many further descendants are buried in Zion churchyard.



Elizabeth Clemson Washington (1845-1911) was born at Blakeley, oldest of the nine children of Richard Scott Blackburn Washington (1822-1910) of Blakeley, brother of John Augustine Washington, III, and his wife (and third cousin) Christian Maria nee Washington of Harewood. She was thus the first member of the family born who was descended from both John Augustine and Samuel Washington, two brothers of General Washington, from one or the other of which most Jefferson County Washingtons descended.

She was named for her great-grandmother Elizabeth Baker (Mrs. Thomas Green Clemson) (ca1773-1857) of Philadelphia. She grew up at Blakeley until the fire of 1864, and then lived at Harewood until her marriage.

It is said that she was devoted to her double second cousin, George Washington (1842-1863) of Claymont, and that they would have been married, if he had not been killed. However, a member of Baylor's Light

Horse, he was injured in an encounter at Brownsburg, in Rockbridge County, and died at Front Royal.

After the war, in 1868, she married George Hite Flagg, (1838-1900), a widower with two young sons, whose first wife had been Ella Browne. Flagg was Charlestown's postmaster when Rural Free Delivery was initiated in 1896. They lived at the corner of Washington and Church Streets in Charles Town. She died without issue in 1911, and both are buried in her brother John's lot in Zion Churchyard.



John Augustine Washington, IV (1847-1923) was born at Blakeley, the second of the nine children and oldest son of Richard Scott Blackburn Washington and Christian Maria nee Washington. As he grew up, a severe curvature of the spine became apparent. In those days

a "hunchback" was commonly explained as a child having been dropped as a baby and injured. It is now clear that instead he suffered from Pott's Disease—that is, tuberculosis of the spine. It seems likely that he might have contracted the disease, then of course not understood to be contagious, from his aunt Maria Washington Alexander, who died of the disease, as did most of her seven children.

He grew up at Blakeley, and was fourteen when the war broke out. In 1864 a chimney fire gutted and almost destroyed Blakeley, and the family crowded in with his mother's family at Harewood. Obviously unqualified for service in the army, he was at home helping the family survive and be fed, while the war was fought around them. Moving some cattle one day from one field to another, he was taken by Union soldiers and sent to a prison in Washington. Fortunately his mother's mother, Mrs. Louisa Clemson Washington (1805-1882) of Harewood was a Philadelphia native. War or no, she made her way down to Washington and went to see President Lincoln, explained the situation to him, and he allowed John to be released into the custody of some Lee cousins, the family of Dr. Thomas Miller, and attend school.

There he remained several months until the end of the war. After the war he seems to have settled down to help farm at Harewood and help support his relatives. He formed with two cousins the firm of Washington, Alexander, and Cooke, which did a real estate, and insurance business. He participated in the founding of the Bank of Charles Town. He particularly negotiated to clarify and gather together the different inherited interests in the Harewood property into a coherent whole. In all these activities, his active partner was his next younger brother, Samuel Walter Washington (1853-1923). Finally around 1899 they built the brick house at 216 South George Street, and moved their father, Richard, and their sister, Miss Christine, there with them from Harewood.

The Amblers, who lived at Megwillie, near Harewood, were distant cousins and close friends. When, in 1890, it was becoming clear that Miss Jennie Ambler was dying of tuberculosis, Uncle John married her and took her to Florida in the hope that it might help her regain her health. In less than a year, however, she died, and he never married again.

When he died in 1923, he provided for his sister Christine and left Harewood to his brother Walter, his lifelong partner, and his only brother who had stayed in Jefferson County.

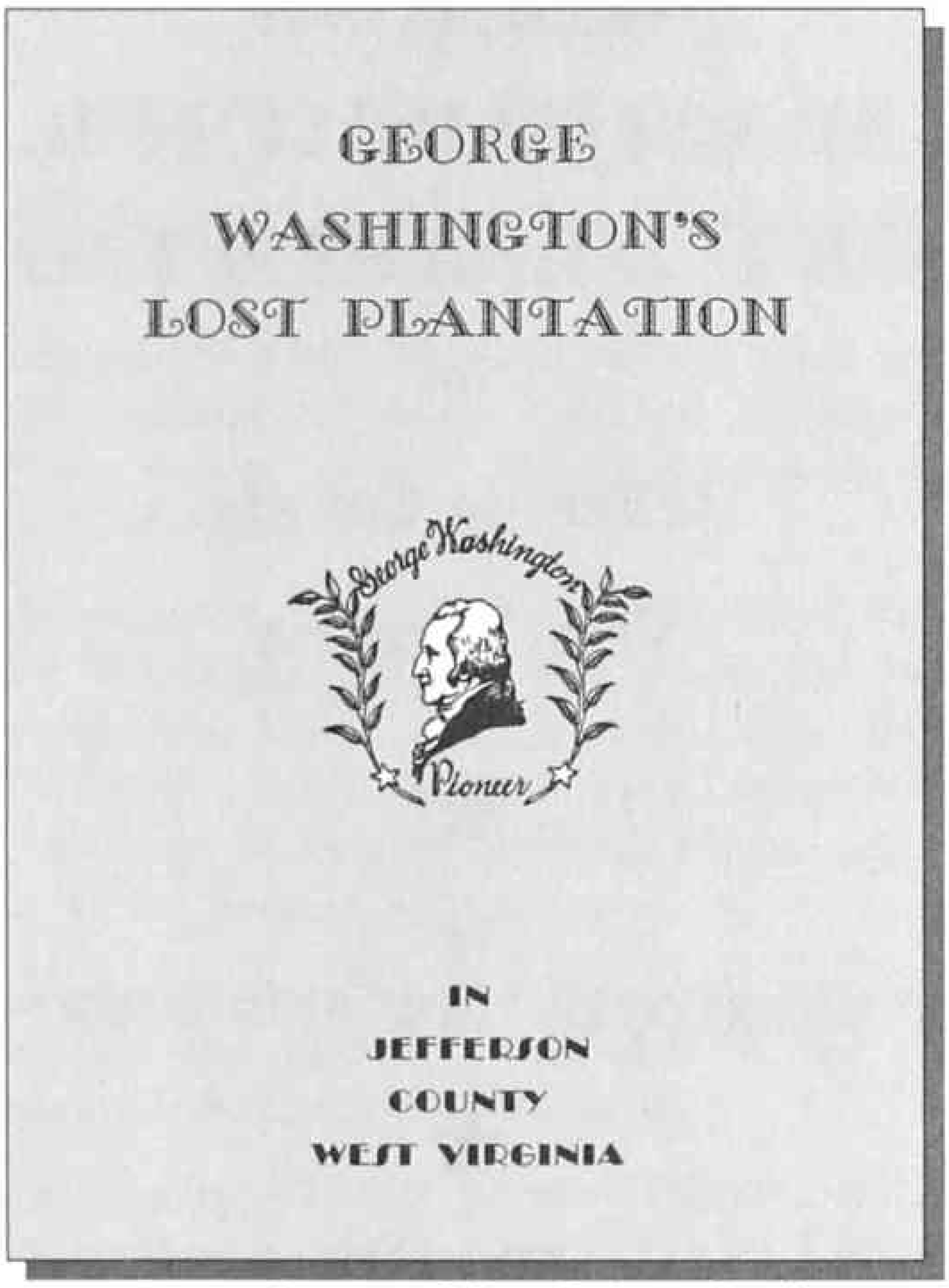


This photograph was with the family collection. Her name is **Ginny**, but sadly, that is all we know. She must have been an important part of the family to have her photograph taken and for it to be kept with the others.

George Washington's Lost Plantation

by Charlotte J. Fairbairn Crouch

Illustrated by Gertrude G. Judd



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Note from Tom Fairbairn: Mrs. Crouch's (Fairbairn's) sons are delighted that this publication of our mother's is being reprinted. We hope the information will be found of interest and be helpful to the readers. Our mother was author, also, of two other publications, "The Washington Homes of Jefferson County" and "Historic Harper's Ferry," both written and published during her residency in Jefferson County during the 1950s and under her name at the time, Charlotte J. Fairbairn. Mother's collection of original letters written by John Hall during his residency at Harper's Ferry and by Robert Harper, many with typewritten reconstructions by her, were presented to the Jefferson County Museum in Charles Town by her sons, and are in the Museum's archives.

Both of her sons are now living in the Minneapolis, Minnesota area with their families and grandchildren.

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S LOST PLANTATION

in

Jefferson County

West Virginia

★

by

CHARLOTTE JUDD FAIRBAIRN

★

Illustrated by
GERTRUDE G. JUDD

★

Published by
THE BLUE RIDGE PRESS
Berryville, Va.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Deepest appreciation is due to the following individuals without whose knowledge and encouragement this booklet could not have been written:

Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman, for his many letters and his monumental work, "George Washington", which was used by the writer for basic research on the life of Washington.

The Washington Family of Rock Hall: Mrs. Samuel Walter Washington and her two sisters, the Misses Eliza and Patty Willis, and her brother Mr. Thomas Hite Willis and family, for their verbal story of Rock Hall, guidance in locating pertinent papers, and correction on the finished manuscript.

My Mother, Mrs. Trenor Parke Judd, for her unfailing help and encouragement, and for her pencil drawings which illustrate this booklet.

Miss E. Stanley, Clerk of Jefferson County, and Mrs. T. Grove Henkle, of the County Clerk's Office, for their courtesy, interest and assistance over a period of several years.

ROCK HALL

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S LOST PLANTATION

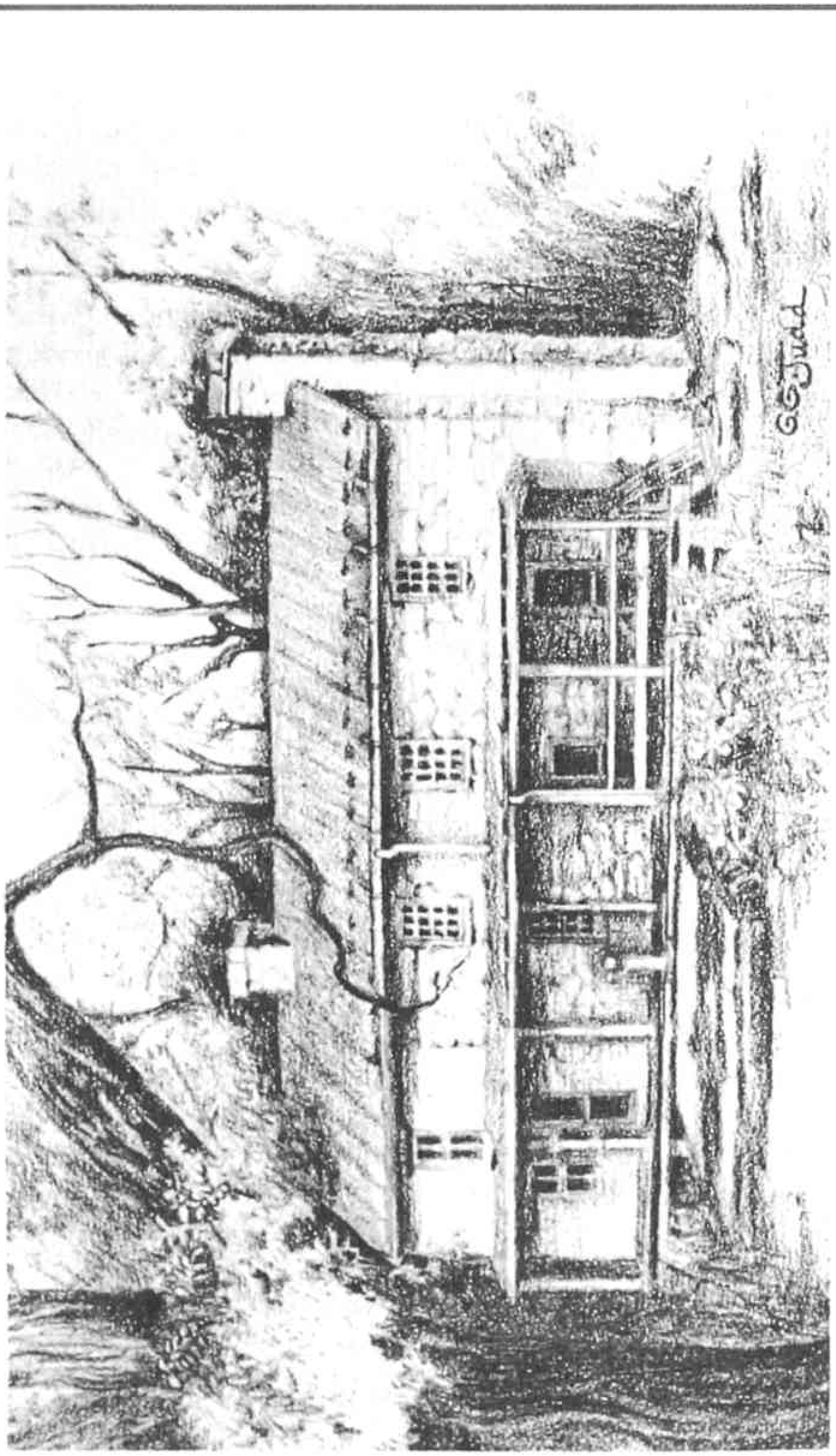
Even the name is lost today. During the past several years, thousands of visitors to old Jefferson County, West Virginia, have passed the entrance without a second glance. Skimming along the pleasant rolling country road between Charles Town, West Virginia, and the quiet village of Summit Point, they may have noticed on the left a white signboard marking a Victor Products Farm called "Romance."

But few if any passers-by had any reason to turn into the shady lane, follow it through rock-walled woods and over a small ford. Therefore they will never know what real "Romance" they have missed.

For here is George Washington's first plantation—distinct from his heritage of family lands. Here were his chosen acres of all the rich virgin farmland available by shrewd purchase from early settlers in the domain of Lord Fairfax, Proprietor of 5,200,000 acres in the Northern Neck of Virginia. This was George Washington's first farm, bought with his hard-earned savings as a young surveyor for Lord Fairfax.

He had marked the land for his own in the spring of 1748, when he and young George William Fairfax, nephew of the Proprietor, were granted the privilege of joining the surveying party under James Genn, county surveyor of Prince William, who was running the lines of Lord Fairfax's boundaries in this section.

Even then, at sixteen, George Washington had a good farmer's love of good land. His possession of Ferry Farm, near Fredericksburg, left to him by his father's will, seemed much too remote. His mother was making her home there, until he



OLD QUARTERS, ROCK HALL

would come of age, and the impatience of youth made him feel already a man, entitled to land of his own. As soon as he saw the fertile meadows of Bullskin, he knew that this must be his farm. Quietly, after his return to Mount Vernon, he began to save his surveying fees.

This wasn't easy. His importunate brothers, who regarded him as family banker, began to find that their small loans were entered with distressing accuracy in a small account ledger, and that the debts were duly collected in full, with interest. One entry records the settlement of a loan to "Austin" for 1 pound, 13 shillings, by the payment of Austin's breeches, valued at 1 pound, 15 shillings. But slowly the pence grew to shillings, the shillings to pounds.

George's older half-brother, Lawrence Washington, head of the family fortunes since his father's death, had been in failing health since his return from naval service at Cartagena under Admiral Vernon. Young George's contagious enthusiasm for the frontier persuaded Lawrence to accompany him on a second visit, in July of 1750.

George had learned, on his first trip, of the Indian healing-waters at Berkeley Springs, which were gaining in reputation. It was agreed that Lawrence would try a treatment there, for his persistent cough. But the promise of an opportunity to acquire fertile farmlands at exceedingly low cost was undoubtedly an added attraction.

Lawrence was impressed. During the next two years, before his tragic early death in 1752, he made contiguous purchases totalling 2089 acres of wonderful farmland. Meanwhile, on October 16, 1750, George Washington at eighteen years had signed deeds for the purchase of 453 well-watered acres near Bullskin Creek, owned by Robert Rutherford. Proudly, he drew up a survey, and named his new kingdom "My Bullskin Plantation."

Nearby lay 550 acres still held by Lord Fairfax. On October 25th, George added them to his holdings. 456 acres that belonged to James McCracken were beyond young George's immediate ability to pay for, but they were part of his dream. Returning to Mount Vernon, he scraped together 45 pounds, took a deed, and gave McCracken his promise to pay off the balance within a few months. Surveying fees paid off the debt as promised, and on March 16, 1752, the proud young landowner was able to round off his Bullskin Plantation with another purchase of 552 acres from George Johnson.

So when Lawrence Washington died, in July of 1752, the two brothers owned at least 4000 acres of beautiful land, on both sides of the Bullskin Run between its headsprings and its mouth, the Shenandoah River. This included the land later given to their younger brother, Charles, on which he built Charles Town, now county seat of Jefferson County, West Virginia.

Lawrence's Bullskin lands, and Mount Vernon, were left to his widow and his small daughter Sarah. In the event of their deaths, the lands were to be divided between Lawrence's brothers. Apparently, the frontier farmland was already being cleared and worked, as the settlement of Lawrence's estate mentions slaves both at Mount Vernon and on his lands on the Bullskin.

Deprived of his guardian, mentor and idol, (Lawrence), young George Washington rapidly matured in his position as head of the family. Mrs. Lawrence Washington shortly began to talk of marrying George Lee, of Westmoreland County. In the interest of keeping Lawrence's Mount Vernon estate in the family hands, George Washington offered the widow a fair price for its purchase, which she accepted.

Soon afterward, Lawrence's only surviving child, little Sarah, died. Now, in addition to managing the sizable farm at Mount Vernon, and his own Bullskin lands, George Washing-

ton had the eldest brother's responsibility of managing the frontier lands which reverted to Samuel, John Augustine, and Charles. Now it was his time to be head of the family.

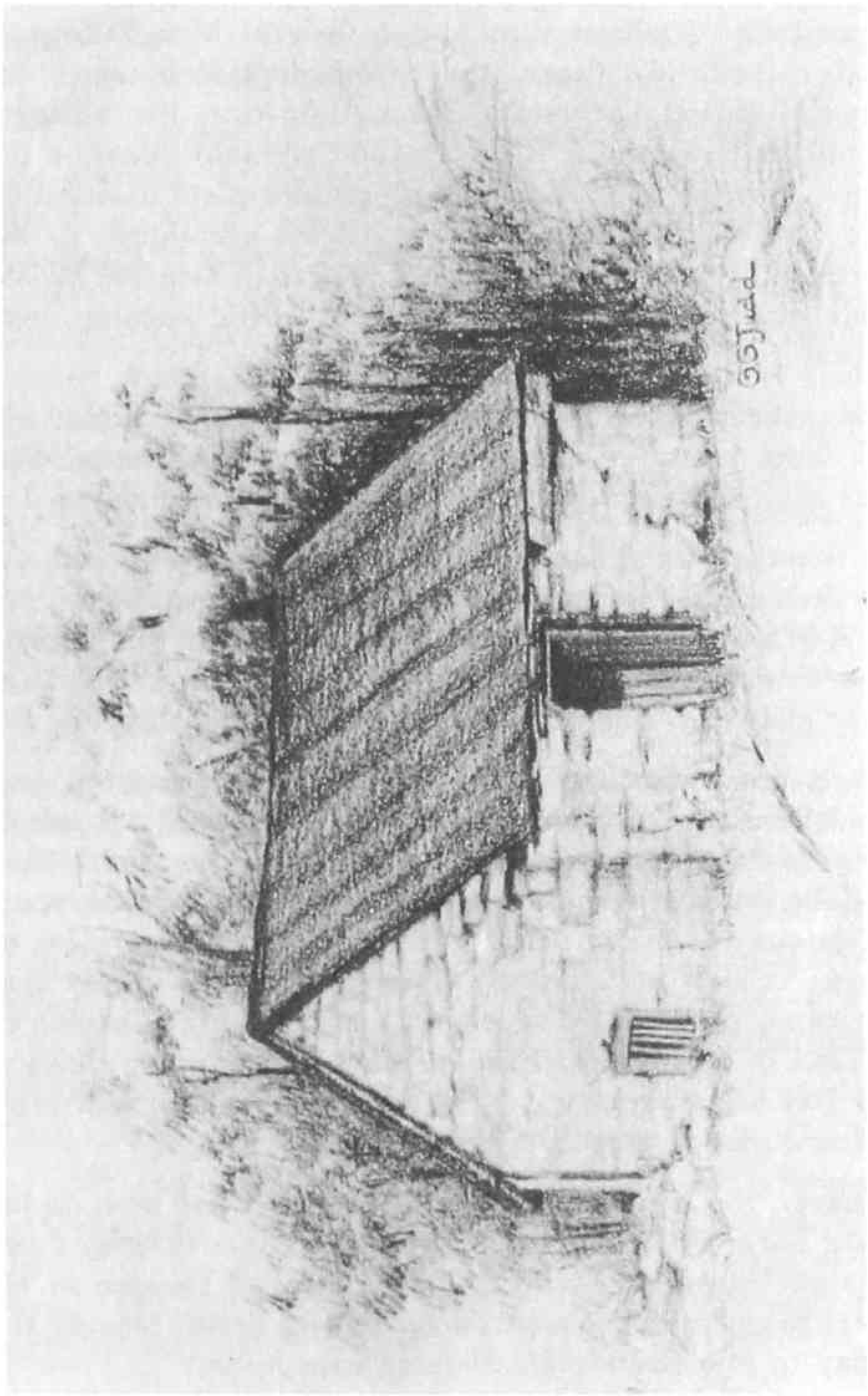
From 1754-56, George Washington was stationed at Winchester, Va., as lieutenant-colonel in charge of frontier fortifications. He was looking forward to the time when his younger brothers would reach maturity, and take up their lands on the fertile frontier. In their interest, he kept a watchful eye on its development.

Washington's official correspondence for the period indicates that he took his responsibilities with characteristic seriousness. He wrote laboriously detailed requests to headquarters concerning the needs of his men, and the urgency of immediate supplies in the frontier defense.

His letters were either refused or ignored, and consequently grew rapidly more blistering in their condemnation of the blunderings of top brass. But they reveal a great deal about the young officer's character, including his fixed habit of personal attention to detail. A life-long habit, it undoubtedly brought him frequently from Winchester to the Bullskin, where 4000 acres of rich farmland was being cleared and planted in the family interest, and the building of stone and brick houses begun.

In view of George Washington's propensity for detailed recording of matters of personal or family interest, it may seem strange that no diaries exist detailing the development of Bullskin properties, and the building of George's "Rock Hall", Samuel's "Harewood", John Augustine's "Blakeley", and Charles' "Happy Retreat". But the diary of 1754 is by Washington's own notation merely a series of hurried notes made during his military expedition. Those of 1755-59 are reported in his compiled diary as "lost, or not kept."

After General Washington's death, and subsequently his



SPRING HOUSE, ROCK HALL

widow's, his letters and papers became the property of his nephew, Judge Bushrod Washington, heir of Mount Vernon. At Judge Bushrod's death, they were divided between his nephews, Bushrod Corbin and John Augustine, the brothers who built large houses at Blakeley and Claymont Court on the Bullskin. Both of these houses suffered complete destruction by fire, and were rebuilt. Missing diaries pertaining to the properties in this section, and other papers of General Washington's that would have been in the brothers' keeping, may have been lost in these fires.

Today, the story of the Bullskin lands must be pieced together from scattered records and the factual material that verifies the traditional history told by living descendants.

Old county writing refers to the building of Harewood and Happy Retreat as "under the supervision of George Washington." A Washington descendant has a receipt for the hauling of stone for Harewood in 1756, when one Shirley Smith was paid for his work "one acre of land per team per day."

Elderly descendants of the last Washington family to own Rock Hall remember a hand-drawn and illustrated map, made and signed by George Washington, platting his Rock Hall farm. The four corner markings, (a tree, a large stone, etc.), were elaborately drawn as decoration in the four corners of the map. It was only recently discovered by the family that this priceless paper had disappeared, perhaps in the burning of Rock Hall, or later theft. Each member of the family thought that it was being preserved by another, until a frenzied series of letters revealed that it had disappeared.

However, the fact that George Washington had built on his Bullskin Farm by 1755 is established by a letter to Sally Fairfax, dated "Bullskin, April 30, 1755." He had stopped at his quarters to check on his plantation business before leaving the next day to join Braddock's ill-fated expedition.

In 1760, Washington's diaries were resumed at Mount Vernon, and they contain repeated references to his active farming of the Bullskin lands.

"Had 15 Hogs arrived from Bullskin." "Wrote to Hardwick (his overseer) ordering down 2 mares from there and desiring him to engage me a ditcher. Inclosed a letter from my brother Jno. to his overseer Farrell Littleton."

"Received letter informing me that the smallpox had got among my quarters" (at the Bullskin). On this unhappy occasion, Washington directed that "if any more at the upper Quarter gets it, to have them removed to my Room, and the Nurse sent for."

This "Room" was the original house at Rock Hall. Later, according to local descendants, George Washington enlarged this structure into a comfortable house, which he then named Rock Hall. After his death, it was further enlarged by Thomas Hite Willis, much as Mount Vernon was built around an earlier and smaller house.

In spite of the smallpox, work went ahead at George Washington's Bullskin plantation. His diary records that the crop made there in 1760, by Christopher Hardwick with 14 hands, was 12,862 lbs.

In March of 1769, Washington made a trip to the frontier to survey lands he had bought from the heir of "King" Carter. Part of the famous Carter's 21,000 acres lay in what was then Frederick County.

While Washington was executing the deeds in Winchester, he made the first of a series of leases to tenant farmers to be settled upon his Bullskin lands. He divided a substantial portion of his holdings into 200-acre tracts, put a reliable tenant farmer in charge of each tract, and signed with each farmer a remarkably detailed lease.

The fine handwriting runs over three pages in the deed

books, but briefly, Washington's standard requirements were these:

Each tenant should build on the property committed to his charge a 20-ft. dwelling house and a good 40-ft. barn, plant and care for specific crops, install certain "creatures", erect and maintain fences, plant an orchard and vineyard, and preserve the woodlots without overcutting.

Each farm was to be open to inspection by Washington's overseer at any time without warning, and in the event of any breach of contract, the property was to revert to Washington.

On October 6th, 1770, George Washington made another recorded trip to the frontier, on his way to see about the Ohio lands he had petitioned for his regiment. His diary mentions a dinner visit with his brother Samuel, who had moved to Harewood from Fredericksburg on September 16, 1770. On this trip, Washington stopped by Rock Hall, as well.

Through all these years, Colonel Washington had been serving in increasingly responsible military offices. By March of 1774, he was in Winchester again, tightening up his holdings against the brewing storm of war. On the 16th and 17th, he signed leases with three more tenant farmers, for standard lease agreements on his Bullskin land.

A careful check of the boundary lines mentioned in these agreements shows that Washington rented tracts all around the 550 acres on which his Rock Hall stood. But there is no lease for his manor tract.

In the ensuing busy years, General Washington's property was under management of his cousin, Mr. Lund Washington. It is not until December of 1785 that General Washington's name again appears on rental leases for four further tenants on the Bullskin lands.

Except to historians, the study of these leases may seem a little dull. But they prove conclusively that General Washing-



ROCK HALL IN 1890

ton not only owned the Bullskin plantation in Jefferson County up until the time of his death, but was farming it with his customary good planning and careful farm management.

It is small wonder that between the rental leases to so many tenants, and the conflicting claims of numerous heirs, General Washington's Bullskin lands lay in complicated litigation from the time of his death, in 1799, until late in the fall of 1819, when the controversy was finally settled by court order.

Partitioning of the rest of General Washington's lands on the Bullskin between the various descendants of his brothers is a study of its own. His original plantation, by then known as "Rockhall", was thrown into a suit in chancery, finally decided in the Superior Court in Richmond. Thomas Lee was declared to have been the purchaser of the Rockhall property, and his heirs were required to pay the full amount of the purchase price.

On their failure to comply, the land was duly advertised for sale, and on November 20, 1818, Lawrence Lewis became the purchaser, for the sum of $17,115. The following October, Mr. Lewis sold Rockhall to Matthew Ranson, of Jefferson County. In March, 1830, Matthew Ranson sold to Thomas Hite Willis of Jefferson County, and Elizabeth his wife.

And here a strange combination of circumstances provided that the property should again return to Washington descendants.

John Augustine Washington III, of Mount Vernon, great-grandson of General Washington's beloved brother of the same name, had given up in despair the impossible task of trying to raise his large family at Mount Vernon. There was a terrific overhead for necessary repairs and upkeep, and a constantly increasing reception and entertainment of admirers of Washington, and plain curiosity seekers. He regretfully sold the estate to the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, and moved to a new home near Warrenton, Va.

His daughter, Jane Charlotte Washington, married Nathaniel Hite Willis, son of Thomas Hite Willis of Rock Hall. In this roundabout fashion, Rock Hall again became the property of direct descendants of George Washington's brother.

At Rock Hall, the Willis's large family was born, and lived until the total destruction of the big house by fire in 1906. The family then moved to Charles Town, where three of the sisters still live, and a brother, Thomas Hite Willis, has his summer home.

During the Willis's residence at Rock Hall, the Washington families of Harewood, Blakeley, Claymont Court, Happy Retreat and Rock Hall visited back and forth constantly. Gay family parties, with dozens of cousins, were held on every occasion or without any excuse. Christmas was a festive day, with cousins from the "low-country" arriving to help in the celebrations. "My mother", says one of the Willises proudly "had Christmas in her bones."

After the tragic burning of the big house through fire in the adjoining kitchen wing, the Willis family settled in town, and sold Rock Hall to Mr. John Burns, on October 1st, 1912. His heirs leased the farm in December of 1944, to the Victor Products Corporation.

Rechristened "Romance", historic Rock Hall, *nee* "Bullskin", became a part of the Victor Farms, one of the successful projects of Mr. R. J. Funkhouser, West Virginia industrialist, who recently purchased the Raskob estate on Maryland's Eastern Shore. With Rock Hall, Mr. Funkhouser also bought and restored other Bullskin estates of the Washington family, —Claymont Court, Blakeley, Happy Retreat and Cedar Lawn, and leased and redecorated Locust Hill.

These Washington Homes, all built by the Washington brothers or their immediate descendants on the land owned by Lawrence and George Washington, have become a focal

point of county interest to thousands of visitors in Jefferson County. Harewood, home of Samuel, eldest full brother of George Washington, is now being beautifully restored by Dr. John Washington, a direct descendant and present owner.

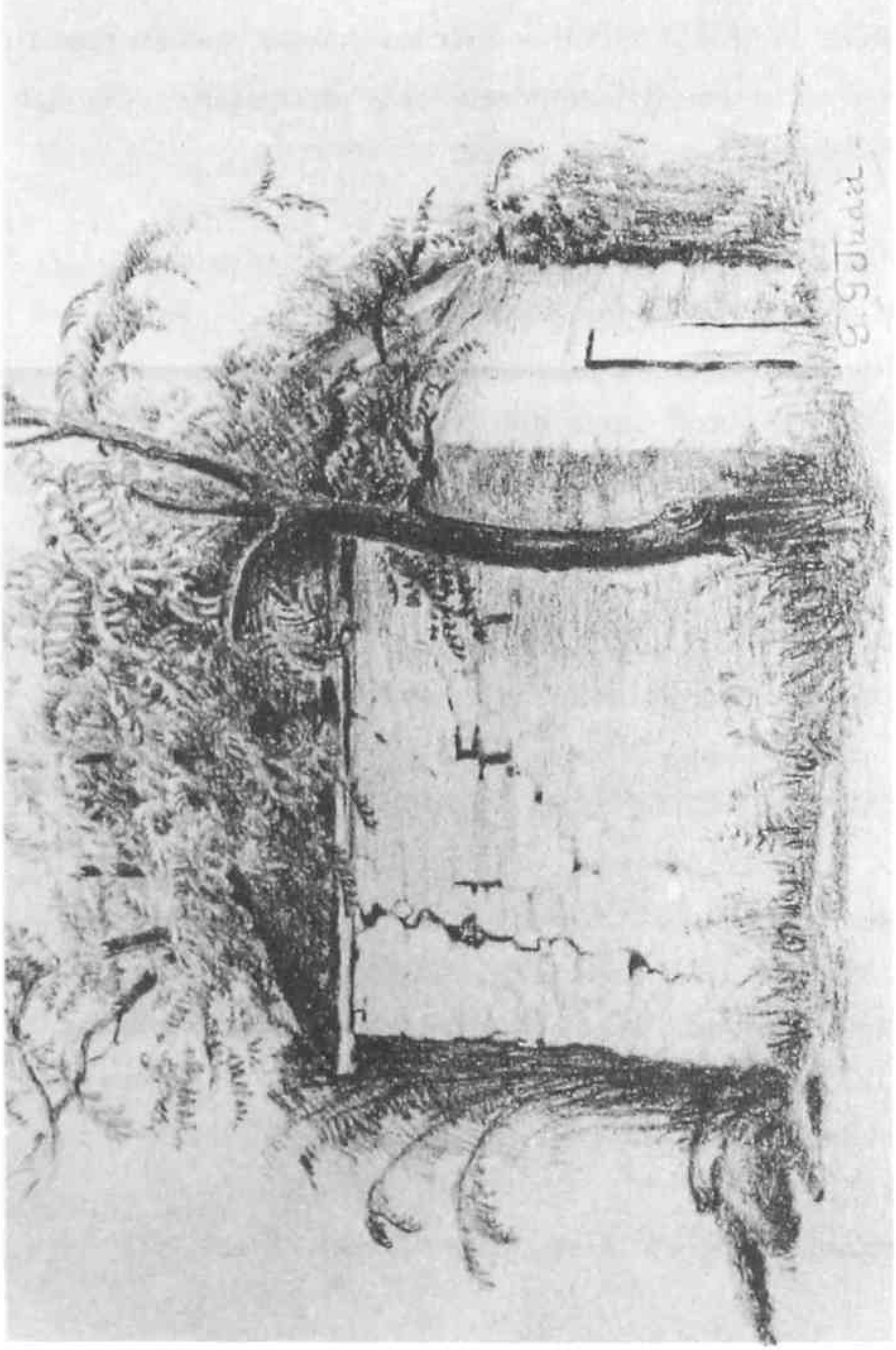
Recently, George Washington's own plantation, Rock Hall, was sub-leased by Mr. Funkhouser to Mr. Frank Mower, Charleston industrialist, who also bought Claymont Court. Mr. Mower will continue to use it as part of a large Hereford farm operation. A tenant family lives quietly and happily in George Washington's old tenant house.

So to those of the county who remember its past, Rock Hall remains virtually unchanged. A bevy of small colored children hang on the gate, as children have through long generations. The Run still flows cool and clear across the drive and past the old stone spring house. Prize Hereford steers slowly follow the Run, as George Washington's "steers from the Bullskin" did in his lifetime, their rich red coats a perfect color note against the lush native bluegrass. Overhanging the road are enormous locusts, perhaps planted by George Washington, who loved them.

A springhouse, a meathouse, a long narrow tenant house, a barn, and the overgrown foundation hole of Rock Hall, George Washington's Bullskin farm, are all that a visitor could see today.

But there is, too, the "Romance" of old stone buildings, peace and contentment of a charming pastoral setting, the play of light and shadow on water and meadow, and the inescapable feeling that General Washington's chosen land is still, perhaps, his favorite place to be.

As we say in the County, it isn't *really* George Washington's "Lost Plantation",—it's been here all the time!



MEAT HOUSE, ROCK HALL

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(3) p. 243—George's first purchase, from Rutherford

(4) footnote 136, same page

(5) p. 244—George's purchase from McCracken

(6) p. 245 second trip to Berkeley Springs

(7) p. 259-60—George's purchase from George Johnson

(8) p. 264—Lawrence's will, disposition of Bullskin land

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PERSONAL INTERVIEWS—

Mrs. Samuel Walter Washington, nee Willis,

Charles Town, Jefferson County, West Va.

Major T. T. Perry, Charles Town, West Va.
President, Jefferson County Historical Society
Dr. A. D. Kenamond,
Former President, J. C. Historical Society
West Va. War History Commission,
Morgantown, West Va.

James B. Washington: An Often Forgotten One-Time Resident and Descendant of the George Washington Family in Jefferson County

by James A. Beckman[1]

One of the untold stories of the Washington family of Jefferson County pertains to Major James Barroll Washington (a great, great grandnephew of George Washington), one of four children born to Colonel Lewis Washington (1812-1871) and his wife Mary Ann Barroll (1817-1844), and a one-time resident of Jefferson County and Colonel Washington's Beallair estate. However, it is not merely James B. Washington's fleeting residency in Jefferson County that is worthy of note. Rather, this one-time son of Jefferson County can be said to be tangentially connected to the story of John Brown's raid in 1859, as the event relates to the Corps of Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and how the cadets collectively reacted to this divisive raid. Further, some two years later, Washington finds himself the subject, along with George A. Custer, of one of the famous photographic images of the Civil War. This brief article recounts these two incidents in the life of James Washington and provides a few more particulars of his life for the reader.

James B. Washington was born on August 26, 1839, in Baltimore, MD, the second of two sons of Colonel Lewis Washington; the first son being George Corbin Washington who was born in March 1837 and died in September 1843. His two sisters, Mary Ann Washington and Eliza Ridgely Beall Washington, were born in June 1841 and November 1844, respectively. Eliza Washington, the youngest of Colonel Washington's children, was born in Jefferson County, presumably at Beallair. Colonel Washington had relocated from Baltimore, Maryland

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[1] James Beckman is an associate professor at the University of Tampa, in Tampa, Florida, and currently serves as the chair of the Government, History and Sociology Departments at the University of Tampa. He is also a part-time resident of Jefferson County.

to Beallair in Jefferson County in 1840.[2]

In 1859, James Washington began his plebe year at West Point, representing Jefferson County, Virginia. During his two year stint at the Academy, Washington certainly met and befriended many young men who would go on to serve with distinction and honor in the coming national conflict on both sides—men like Patrick O'Rorke and Alonzo Cushing—who would both serve in the Union Army and give their lives at Gettysburg on the second and third days of the battle at Little Round Top and the center of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge, respectively. On the Southern side, men like John Pelham from Alabama—the "gallant Pelham"—as Robert E. Lee called him in the official Confederate battle reports following Fredericksburg. Indeed, Robert E. Lee's comment about Pelham that "it is glorious to see such courage in one so young," could equally apply to the whole generation of cadets during Washington's time at the Academy. However, of all the individuals, Washington thought that George A. Custer, a flamboyant cadet from Ohio, to be the most memorable—describing him (Custer) to be "the rarest man I knew at West Point."[3] Indeed, Custer created this impression on Washington at one of their very first meetings. In seeing Custer arrive back at West Point after a furlough, Washington remembered a crowd gather, presumably on the plain (parade ground), with the collective uttering of "Here comes Custer."

When John Brown raided Harpers Ferry only a few months later, it doubtlessly had a profound impact on James Washington and his fellow cadets. According to historian Thomas Fleming, John Brown's raid "had appalled and infuriated almost every Southern cadet" and "an added grievance" to the Corps of Cadets was "Brown's seizure of Colonel Lewis Washington, father of cadet James B. Washington..."[4] Of course, adding fuel to the proverbial fire was that John Brown's men had also killed an alumnus of the Military Academy, George W. Turner (Class of 1831). Turner, living at Wheatland, was a prominent farmer in Jefferson County and was killed by the raiders when he went to investigate on October 17, 1859.

As the Southern Confederacy was formed in the early months of 1861,

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[2] Jefferson County Historical Society, *Between the Shenandoah and the Potomac: Historic Homes of Jefferson County, West Virginia*, Charles Town, WV: 1990, at page 61.

[3] Wert, Jeffrey P., *Custer*, Touchstone, New York, New York: 1996, at page 55

[4] Thomas J. Fleming, *West Point: The Men and Times of the United States Military Academy*, William Morrow and Company, New York, 1969, at page 142

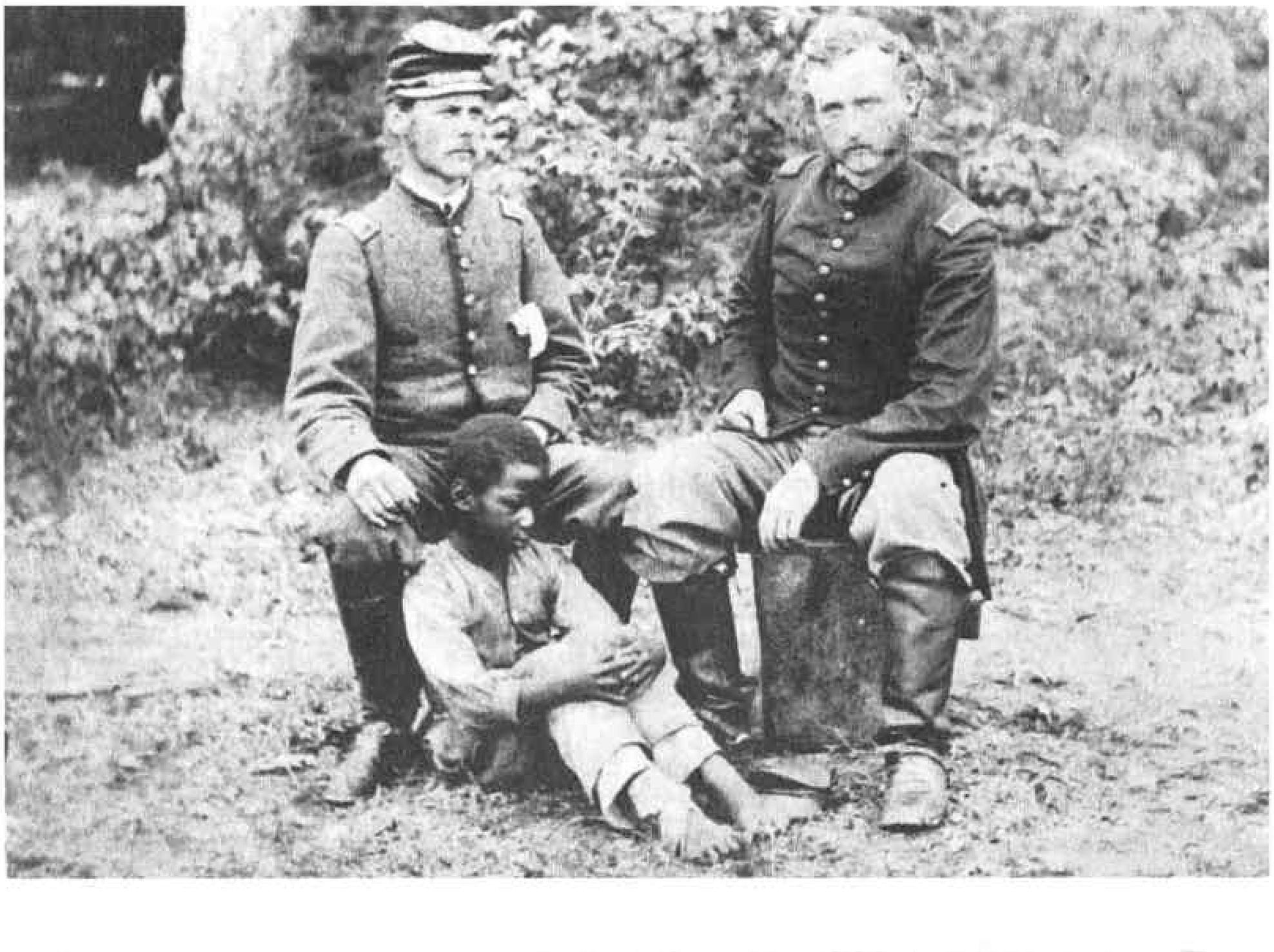
a majority of the southern cadets at West Point resigned from the academy to accept commissions in the newly forming Confederate Army or in state militias. James Washington did so as well, and was assigned to the staff of Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston in Virginia. However, James Washington did not quickly forget "the rarest man" he had met while at West Point. During the Peninsula Campaign of 1862, while Washington was serving on the staff of Confederate General Johnston, he had another brush with the flamboyant George Custer. During the initial stages of the Battle of the Seven Pines on May 31, 1862, Washington was sent by Johnson to reconnoiter the Federal lines when the first aide that Johnson sent for reconnoitering purposes did not return.[5] Unfortunately for Washington, he stumbled into Federal picket lines, was captured, and sent to General McClellan's headquarters after his capture. While at headquarters, he met Custer and the two presumably reminisced about old times. Custer was assigned to the Fifth U.S. Cavalry and as an aide on McClellan's staff. It was during this meeting that one of the famous images of the Civil War was taken by photographer James F. Gibson.

James Gibson was assigned by Civil War photographer Alexander Gardner to photograph images as General McClellan commenced his campaign towards Richmond. Gibson recognized that a photograph of one-time West Point classmates might make for a very poignant image that would embody the much larger fraternal conflict between North and South. Thus, Gibson had Washington and Custer pose together for a photograph. Gibson ended up taking two different photographs—-one of Custer and Washington posing together and one with a young Black child.



Library of Congress

[5] Stephen W. Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign*, Ticknor & Fields, New York, 1992, at page 123



Library of Congress

Including the Black child in one of the two versions of the photograph was presumably intended to add another dimension of poignancy to the photograph—the idea of brother fighting against brother presumably in part to determine the fate of the countless enslaved. It is also reported that it was Washington who suggested that Gibson entitle the image "Both

Sides, [and] the Cause."[6] If one looks at the image with the child, the child is clearly sitting closer to Washington than to Custer. Some subsequent captions to this photograph erroneously declared the child to be the slave or servant of Washington—a declaration which is highly improbable given that Washington was captured behind enemy front lines while reconnoitering. It is much more likely that the child was one of the many Blacks that flocked to the Union Army as it moved from the James River towards the city of Richmond. Indeed, according to the memoirs of Custer's wife, Libbie, she was told that the slave sat closer to Washington (and the Confederate side) at the specific request of Washington.[7] While somewhat speculative, one could argue that Washington insisted on the positioning of the child in order to give the appearance of the South being the alleged beneficent protector of such individuals, as opposed to the enslaver, or that the Black population in the South had a loyalty to the Confederacy.

The image of Custer and Washington appeared in Harpers Weekly a short time later and both images were published and circulated around the country. According to author James S. Robbins, the resulting photograph was so well known in the North, that "James B. Washington dog tags were minted and distributed as collectables in the North."[8] At the conclusion of this meeting, Custer reputedly gave Washington some money before he was sent to the rear and "Washington and his family never forgot the kindness."[9] Again, according to Robbins, "Washington's mother later gave Custer a button made from a piece of conch shell, originally from one of George Washington's coats. Custer had the button mounted on gold and gave it to Libbie as a brooch."[10]

While Custer's fame and fate after the War is the subject of countless articles and books, little has been written about the other individual of the photo. So, what became of Washington? After 1859, there does not appear to be any record of James Washington returning to Jefferson County, and he is listed as a resident of New York in the 1860 census (presumably, as a cadet of the U.S. Military Academy). His father,

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6 Thomas R. Flagel, *The History Buff's Guide to the Civil War*, Cumberland House Publishing, Nashville, 2003, at 189

7 Taylor, 2005, at 80

8 James S. Robbins, *Last in Their Class: Custer, Pickett, and the Goats of West Point*, Encounter Books, New York, 2006, at page 260.

9 Wert, 1996, at 55

10 Robbins, 2006, at page 456 (content appearing in endnote number 17)

Colonel Lewis Washington remarried a young bride, Ella Bassett, in 1860. After the War started, he left Beallair in charge of his overseer, John Earnest, and moved to his father-in-law's home, Clover Lea, in Cold Harbor, Virginia, approximately 7 miles from Richmond. While at Clover Lea, Ella Washington writes in her diary,[11] that she asked Custer, now a general, to protect them from renegade northern troops. He provided a guard and visited her at Clover Lea.

According to a letter written by Ella Washington on October 12, 1896, the Washingtons were surprised to learn that the property (Beallair) was confiscated by the Federal government as abandoned property and "that the man we left in charge of the place had been appointed agent of the Government to hold it for the United States. This man, named John Earnest, now dead, held Beall Air[12] and endeavored to purchase the estate for a trifling sum from the parties who gave him the authority to hold it. After the close of the War, in 1866, I went to Washington and urged an investigation of the matter which was finally settled in our favor and we returned to our wrecked and desolate home."[13] When Lewis Washington died in 1871, Ella Washington sold Beallair.

In the meantime, after James Washington's capture in 1862, he was sent as a prisoner of war to Fort Delaware in June 1862. He was exchanged two months later, in September 1862, for a Lieutenant James Blair. Upon his return, he rejoined Johnston's staff. By 1864, Washington is serving in Alabama where he meets and marries a woman named Jane Bretney Lanier (the wedding took place on February 23, 1864). Her marriage to Washington was her second marriage. In another quirk of history, Jane Bretney Lanier's first husband—a man by the name of Powhatan Bolling Cabell—died the same month that Jefferson County saw the execution of John Brown, namely in December 1859. After the war, James Washington and his wife are listed in the 1870 U.S. Census as residing in Baltimore, MD. By 1880, again according to census material, he had moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he lived until his death on March 6, 1900. He was employed by the B&O Railroad, apparently as an accountant, and seems to have lived a fairly quiet existence after the war. His postwar life can certainly be contrasted with the life of West

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[11] Jefferson County Museum

[12] Ella Washington preferred the two word name of her home.

[13] Letter of Ella Bassett Washington to James E. Taylor, dated October 12th, 1896, and reprinted in *The James E. Taylor Sketchbook*, The Western Reserve Historical Society, Publication Number

Point classmate, George Custer.

While James Washington never returned to Jefferson County, and while accounts of John Brown's raid and the history of the Beallair Estate in Jefferson County today almost always omit any reference to James Washington, he remains a part of Jefferson County history. James Washington's legacy is forever preserved in that image that was taken by James Gibson in the Virginia countryside outside of Richmond back in May 1862 and he is a reminder that even individuals that reside in Jefferson County for only a short time often contribute in unperceivable and unnoticeable ways to the fabric of Jefferson County history and culture—unperceivable and often unnoticeable—but nonetheless, often importantly. This was true for James Washington, and it remains true today for the countless individuals moving in and out of Jefferson County each year.

The Portrait of Charles Washington

by John A. Washington

Editor's note: Mr.Washington of Chevy Chase submitted this article in 1992 for publication in the Magazine; for some reason it was not used. While corresponding with him on another matter, he mentioned it to me. I thought it would be a great addition to our Washington family edition.



Courtesy George Washington's Fredericksburg Foundation

A photograph of a portrait of Charles Washington (1738-1799), founder of Charles Town, has long hung in the Clerk's office in the County Court House. Copies are common, and appeared in store

windows up and down Washington Street during the 1986 Bicentennial celebration.

The location of the original portrait has been unknown, and suspicion about the picture's authenticity has naturally arisen. It seems important, therefore, to present the following excerpts from letters which establish the history of the original Charles Washington portrait and its ultimate fate.

Letter, June 10, 1947, from Margaret Ball Thompson Wirt (Mrs. William N. Wirt) 3161/2 Howard Avenue, Rockville, Indiana, to John A. Washington:

> *" ... My beautiful house burned last year and I lost much of the data I had saved. You know I had three old paintings of Chas. Washington, wife, and another I was not sure. They were all destroyed. It was fortunate the other things had been sent to Kenmore, or they would be lost ..."*

Letter, Feb. 3, 1948, same to same:

> *" ... As to those portraits, some one in Washington, I think a Ball, wrote me asking me to send them at his expense. He was writing a history of the Washingtons. They were old and frail, so my Husband took them in the yard and made a copy. He wrote and thanked me but said they were too late for his book. Now if I remember, copies of them are at Kenwood (sic: Kenmore). Earlier I could have sent you some. Yes, one was Chas W. wife. They were painted on looked like oil cloth, little black frames. Aunt Kitty said they were painted by a travelling artist, her mother told her. They hung over my stair way. That part burned, and it was fortunate the Relics was at Kenwood (sic)for I lost every thing in that closet. I no doubt told you before the entire upper story was burned and all my papers ..."*

With this information the history of the ownership of the portraits can be deduced. When Charles Washington (1738-1799) and his wife Mildred Thornton (ca 1739-ca 1804) died, the portraits were doubtless at Happy Retreat. At this time they must have been taken to her home in Leesburg by the eldest daughter, and eldest surviving child, Frances Washington (1763-1815), widow of Burgess Ball and wife of Dr. Francis H. Peyton.

When Mrs. Peyton died in 1815, the portraits came into the possession of her eldest surviving child, Mildred Thornton Ball (1786-1854), who married in 1820 William Mills Thompson (and thus, incidentally, became



Courtesy George Washington's Fredericksburg Foundation

Mildred Thornton Washington

stepmother of Richard Wigginton Thompson, Secretary of the Navy in the Garfield administration.) At her death in 1854, Mrs. Thompson left two daughters and a son.

The elder daughter, "Aunt Kitty" of Mrs. Wirt's letter, was Catherine Mildred Thompson (1822-ca 1901), wife of Richard C. Littleton, of Loudoun County. When she died without issue, and her younger sister had also died without issue, the portraits came into the hands of the family of their only brother, George Washington Lafayette Thompson (1825-ante 1900)

Mr. Thompson had married in 1855 Sarah M. Bryant, daughter of William Perkins Bryant, who became Attorney-General and then Chief Justice of Oregon. They had two surviving children. A son, George Littleton Thompson (1863-1913) died without issue, survived by his sister, Margaret Ball Thompson, (1859-post 1948) who in 1887 married Dr. William N. Wirt of Rockville, Indiana. Dr. and Mrs. Wirt had no children. It was in her home that the portraits were burned.

The George Washington's Fredericksburg Foundation (originally the Kenmore Association, Inc.) has graciously permitted the magazine to reproduce Dr. Wirt's photographs of the three portraits.

Kenmore's records identify the third portrait as Frances Washington



Courtesy George Washington's Fredericksburg Foundation

Frances Washington or Mildred Gregory Washington

(1763-1815), wife of Burgess Ball and later of Dr. Francis H. Peyton. It would seem that this identification must rest on information provided to Kenmore by Mrs. Wirt when she gave her relics, was younger, and perhaps had a better memory. Absent this identification by Kenmore, it would be tempting to identify the third portrait as Mildred Gregory Washington (1772-1804), wife of Thomas Hammond, who continued to live at Happy Retreat with her parents after her elder sister, Mrs. Ball, had moved to Loudoun County. Mrs. Hammond thus would logically have been present when the itinerant painter came along and painted her parents.

Summer Picnic

It was very appropriate to have our summer picnic at Happy Retreat, since the 2007 Magazine is dedicated to the Washington family in Jefferson County. Mr. and Mrs. William Gavin own the home of the founder of Charles Town and were very gracious to allow us to use it. Many people have driven by the front of the house or seen pictures, but not everyone has seen the back.



Back yard of Happy Retreat

The Gavins (Bill in the front hall and living rooms and Mary in the dining room) narrated the tour of the house which was another plus for the guests. Curt Mason and other members of "Friends Of Happy Retreat" discussed the plans for purchasing and utilizing the home.

Magnolia Tree, the caterer, once again, did a great job. The dishes brought by the guests are always good, especially the deviled eggs. A big thanks to Betsy Wells who organizes the picnic every year.

Editor's Note

I was pretty excited when Carmen Creamer (former editor and current President) asked if I would like to be editor of the Magazine. I love history, but have written very little about it. Since I was a computer person for thirty plus years, all my published work is database, data management and other exciting data-things. Editing is not publishing, but it is the next best thing. Sorry to say, I was not overly excited that this was going to be a Washington family in Jefferson County edition. I was afraid that it would be hard to collect interesting articles. After all, the Washingtons have been around for a long time and their stories have been repeatedly told. Well, I was pleasantly surprised. I think we have four very interesting articles plus the reprint of the great little booklet on Rock Hall. The best part is that there are some excellent pictures and there are several that have not been previously published. I hope everyone enjoys this issue.

I am not finished! Next year is just around the corner. I need your work. You have plenty of time to get an article written. The only article criteria for 2008 is, as usual, Jefferson County. The deadline is the end of August or the first of September if that sounds better. Make my job easy!

Thanks to Doug Perks for his Jefferson County history knowledge and to Clare Hendrix, Winchester Printers, for her patience and expertise.

Jim Glymph