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GEORGE WASHINGTON—HIS CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

ON THE eleventh day of February, 1732 (old style), or the 22nd day of February (new style), George Washington was born. Until his death, he considered February 11th as his birthday, even after the calendar was changed from the old to the new style. Officially and legally, however, February 22nd has long since been established as the birthday of the man who liberated and founded the nation which in the space of less than 150 years has become the richest and most powerful nation in the world.

This achievement alone would stamp him as a very great man, but he has accomplished much more than this, by reason of the profound influence he has exerted on all Americans during his life and since his death by his unselfish patriotism, his rugged integrity, his dauntless courage, his unending will, and his stainless character.

Unfortunately, there is but little extant concerning the events of George Washington, the boy. In this respect, he is like all other boys not born as princes in palaces, and no historians were at hand to record his wise sayings or his boyish pranks. It is true that after his death one Parson Weems, an ignorant itinerant preacher who falsely claimed to have been the minister of Mount Vernon Parish, pretended to have collected from certain persons unknown and unnamed a number of such incidents. These he published in book form with an account of Washington's official acts in later life, and peddled the book among the western pioneers. In this way, he undertook to supply the widespread demand for stories of Washington's early life by exercising his powers of exaggeration and imagination. Historians tell us that all his

stories of Washington's childhood are spurious, and that the famous story of George's little hatchet and the cherry tree, for instance, is without foundation in fact.

Personally, I am inclined to believe that it has a basis of fact, and that perhaps George did chop down the cherry tree and did tell the truth when charged by his father with commission of the act. I have known other boys to commit similar acts of vandalism and to confess when questioned by their stern parents. I never did know a boy, though, who answered in the stilted manner ascribed to George by Parson Weems, and I don't believe George was guilty of such priggishness, either. But let us take up the thread of our narrative in a more orderly fashion by returning to the birth of the infant and by briefly referring to his paternal and maternal ancestors.

George was born at Bridges Creek, Westmoreland County, Virginia, on his father's farm, which afterwards was given the name of Wakefield. The house was a frame building with four fair-sized rooms on the first floor and with a large attic on the second floor which was lighted by dormer windows in the hip roof above. The house was flanked by two large brick chimneys in accordance with the custom of the period.

George's father, Augustine Washington, was the grandson of Colonel John Washington who, together with his brother, Lawrence, emigrated from England to Virginia about 1656. They belonged to the Washington family of Sulgrave Manor, which for several centuries had supplied many names of some distinction in the mother country. They were educated, courageous, country gentlemen, who served their communities and their kings with loyalty and fidelity. Several of them were

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notable in their espousal of the cause of King Charles First in the civil war between the Cavaliers and the Round Heads, which ended in the beheading of the king. It is commonly believed that the emigration of John and Lawrence to the New World was due to their dissatisfaction with the rule of the Regicides, as the adherents of Cromwell were called by the Royalists.

The records now extant indicate that George's paternal ancestors in both the old and the new world were worthy progenitors of their famous descendant. Augustine Washington was twice married, his second wife, Mary Ball, being the mother of George, who was her eldest child.

Mary Ball was the daughter of Colonel Joseph Ball, of "Epping Forest," in Lancaster County, Virginia. His father, William Ball, emigrated from England in 1650 and settled at the mouth of the Corotoman River, a tributary of the Rappahannock. The Balls were people of influence and standing in the colony, as is indicated by the fact that Colonel Ball was a vestryman of White Chapel, and therefore a magistrate, and that he constructed a family pew in the chapel by special authority of Governor Spotswood and was made a colonel by the same governor.

Little is known of Mary Ball's early life, and a fragment of an unsigned letter found in a deserted mansion on York River which refers to her is therefore deemed worthy of quotation.

It is as follows: "Williamsburg, ye 7th of October, 1722. Dear Sukey, Madam Ball of Lancaster and her sweet Molly have gone Hom. Mama thinks Molly the comeliest maiden she knows. She is about 16 yrs. old, is taller than me, is very sensible, Modest, and Loving. Her hair is like unto flax. Her eyes are the Color of yours and her Cheeks are like May blossoms. I wish you could see her."

Senator Lodge, in his *Life of Washington* refers to her in the following terms: "She was of gentle birth and possessed a vigor-

ous character and a good deal of business capacity. The advantages of education were given in but slight measure to the Virginian ladies of her time, and Mrs. Washington offered no exception to the general rule. Her reading was confined to a small number of volumes chiefly of a devotional character. She evidently knew no language but her own, and her spelling was extremely bad, even in that age of uncertain orthography. Certain qualities, however, are clear to us. Even now, through all the dimness, we can see that Mary Washington was gifted with strong sense, and had the power of conducting business providently and exactly. She was an imperious woman, of strong will, ruling her kingdom alone. Above all, she was very dignified, very silent, and very sober-minded. That she was affectionate and loving can not be doubted, for she retained to the last a profound hold on the reverential devotion of her son, and yet as he rose steadily to the pinnacle of human greatness, she could only say that 'George had been a good boy and she was sure that he would do his duty.' Not a brilliant woman, evidently, not one suited to shine in courts, conduct intrigues, or adorn literature, yet able to transmit moral qualities to her oldest son which, mingled with those of the Washingtons, were of infinite value in the foundation of a great republic."

Lafayette's report of his interview with her to his friends at Mount Vernon was: "I have seen the only Roman matron living at this day."

Three years after George's birth, the family home was burned and the family moved to another estate in what is now Stafford County. The second house was similar to the first and stood on rising ground looking across a meadow to the Rappahannock, and beyond the river to Fredericksburg, which was nearly opposite. Here in 1743, Augustine Washington died, and here, too, the boyhood of George was passed.

When old enough to take up the study of the three R's, George was placed under the tutelage of Mr. Hobby, the parish sexton. He soon exhausted his teacher's store of knowledge, and a short while after his father's death he was sent back to Bridges Creek, where he lived with his half brother, Augustine, and attended a school kept by a Mr. Williams. There he obtained what would now be called a common school education with the emphasis placed on mathematics instead of on more cultural subjects. He then returned to his mother's home and attended the school of Mr. Marye, a Huguenot gentleman who had settled in Fredericksburg, and from him he received lessons in department in addition to more erudite subjects.

When about fourteen, he returned to Mr. Williams's school and spent two more years under his tutelage in the study of surveying, in which he became very proficient. This was the extent of his schooling, although in after life he read good books whenever his unending tasks permitted him to have the opportunity.

It is known that he was a conscientious student at school, that he matured rapidly, and that he was tall and vigorous physically. He could outrun and outride any of his companions and probably was superior to any of them in fisticuffs. Naturally, therefore, he was a leader among his school fellows. We also know that he was honest and true, a lad of unusual promise, and was liked and trusted by such men as his eldest brother, Lawrence, and Lord Fairfax.

George's earliest ambition was to follow the sea as a profession, but he was dissuaded from doing so by his mother, and instead of visiting strange places by ship and perhaps becoming an officer of the British navy, he turned his eyes westward and undertook to make a survey of the enormous estates of Lord Fairfax.

His acquaintance with Lord Fairfax came about through his visits to his oldest brother, Lawrence, at Mount Vernon,

which was near Belvoir, the seat of the Fairfax family in America. Lawrence had served as an officer of one of the Colonial regiments which had taken part in the unsuccessful expedition against Cartagena on the Spanish Main. On his return home, he named his estate on Hunting Creek and the Potomac River "Mount Vernon" in honor of the British admiral who had commanded the naval and military forces.

Lawrence took great interest in George's education by employing Mr. Van Bran as his fencing master and by prescribing a course of study in the technique of arms and other military subjects.

Lawrence Washington had married the daughter of William Fairfax, the agent of the Fairfax estate, and George became a frequent visitor at Belvoir, where he came to know Lord Fairfax, the head of that distinguished family.

At Mount Vernon and at Belvoir George had many opportunities for association with the leading families of Virginia and likewise appears to have endured many heartaches and many disappointments in his youthful love affairs with the charming maidens whom he met there and at Fredericksburg. Among his papers which have come down to posterity are a number of sonnets to fair ladies, which, although valuable historically, do not possess literary merit.

He and Lord Fairfax became fast friends, and from that accomplished gentlemen, familiar with courts and camps, George gained a knowledge of men and manners which no school can give. They hunted and rode together, and George's expert horsemanship, his good sportsmanship, and his genial disposition made him an agreeable companion to the nobleman of sixty.

George impressed greatly every one with whom he was associated. He unflinchingly exhibited a high and unwavering courage, hard common sense, and, above all, unusual strength of will and force of character.

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It is not surprising, therefore, that Lord Fairfax should have entrusted to him the important mission of surveying and mapping the vast Fairfax estates.

This was the beginning of George Washington's great career, and fortunate indeed was it for the American colonies that this boy of sixteen should have been given this opportunity to fit himself for the military service of his native land and to widen his vision of the future possibilities of the growth of the colonies to the westward. Thus even in early youth, he not only became a potential empire-builder, but also by his battling with nature in its wildest form, by overcoming the obstacles which confronted him, by practicing painstaking efforts to achieve accuracy, and by constant exposure to the elements, hardship, and danger, he so toughened his physical fiber, so developed the quality of his mind, and so strengthened his naturally strong will that he became splendidly equipped to take up the rôle of leadership, first in the minor field of the French-Indian War, and afterwards in the vastly greater field of the American Revolution.

That his three years' work as a surveyor was well done is demonstrated by the facts that his surveys were regarded as authoritative by his contemporaries, and that their accuracy stands unquestioned to this day.

As I understand it, my task ends here with the entry of the youth at the age of nineteen into the arena where his life's battles were fought; and I will therefore conclude my remarks with an expression of my belief that he was neither a dull nor priggish youth, but was a manly, upstanding boy and young man, full of the joy of living and very human; and that beneath his agreeable and pleasing manner there slumbered a fierce temper and fiery passions which even in youth he held under stern control by the exercise of his unyielding will.

Truly the youth was father to the man, and even now, it is not difficult to under-

stand that he was, in reality, throughout his conspicuous career, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

JOHN A. LEJEUNE

THE RESEARCH RACKET

A GREAT many teachers, both in school and college, develop a sort of inferiority complex because they are not personally engaged in what passes under the name of "research." It may be worth while for those of us who still believe that teaching is an honorable and self-respecting profession to demand a definition of the overused term "research." It is meant that only those whose minds constantly react to a given mass of material can hope to teach it effectively, we can only reply that this is a truism; that no person of active brain who teaches can refrain from constantly examining and reflecting upon his subject matter; but if it is insinuated that he ought also to publish monographs on the subject, we ought to answer that the publishing of monographs need not necessarily invigorate teaching. There has grown up in our American colleges, particularly under the influence of wealthy research foundations, what can only be called a "research racket," designed to stimulate the accumulation and publication of facts regardless of the researcher's capacity to interpret them. More and more the various disciplines taught in our educational system come under this influence. In my own discipline, history, such shibboleths as "scientific method" are bandied about without the least clear conception of what they actually mean—for example, to a scientist. We teachers should decline to be beaten over the head with empty terminology. If, for example, "scientific method" in historical research means a clear understanding of one's material and intelligence and truth in working upon them, we ought to answer that we already knew those traits were