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His Own Vine and Fig Tree: Review of *The Papers of George Washington: Retirement Series*. Volume 1-March 4-December 28, 1797; Volume 2-Janual) 2-September 15, 1798; Volume 3, September 16, 1798-April 9, 1799; Volume 4-April 20-December 15, 1799. Dorothy Twohig, editor; Philander D. Chase, senior associate editor; Beverly H. Runge, associate editor; Frank E. Grizzard, Jr., Edward G. Lengel, Mark A Mastromarino, Elizabeth B. Mercer, and Jack D. Warren, assistant editors; W. W. Abbot, editor emeritus.

Mary A. Y. Gallagher

Editor, Papers of Robert Morris

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His Own Vine and Fig Tree

MARY A. Y. GALLAGHER

The Papers of George Washington: Retirement Series. Volume 1—March 4–December 28, 1797; Volume 2—January 2–September 15, 1798; Volume 3, September 16, 1798–April 19, 1799; Volume 4—April 20–December 15, 1799. Dorothy Twohig, editor; Philander D. Chase, senior associate editor; Beverly H. Runge, associate editor; Frank E. Grizzard, Jr., Edward G. Lengel, Mark A. Mastromarino, Elizabeth B. Mercer, and Jack D. Warren, assistant editors; W. W. Abbot, editor emeritus. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998–1999.

The four-volume Retirement Series of *The Papers of George Washington* includes the ex-president's correspondence from March 4, 1797, the day following John Adams's inauguration as the nation's second president, until December 10, 1799, four days before Washington's death. The fifth and final subset of *The Papers* and the third to be completed, it provides us with an immeasurably richer portfolio on the final years of Washington's life than is available from John C. Fitzpatrick's previously published *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799* (Washington, 1931–1944). While Fitzpatrick published a substantial number of the letters written by Washington during this period, he only occasionally reproduced portions of other documents the former president generated or letters Washington received.

The reader must look to *The Papers* edited by Dorothy Twohig, Philander D. Chase, Beverly H. Runge, and their assistants for access to all Washington's writings that are currently known to exist, for incoming correspondence, and for other document types. These include his instructions to the overseers and managers of his farms, specifications for the houses being built on his lots in the new federal city, accounts related to various business ventures, addresses from admirers and replies to them. Most appear as individual entries in chronological order. Readers are alerted to correspondence published as part of the annotation by "see" references appropriately located in the table of contents. The source line for each document acknowledges all extant manuscript copies of it.

Mary A. Y. Gallagher is the editor, with Elizabeth Nuxoll, of *The Papers of Robert Morris*, a recently completed edition.

Readers will be able to find unannotated transcripts of them as well as of routine documents omitted from the letterpress edition on the forthcoming CD-ROM edition. The worldwide search conducted by the editors has discovered double the number of items in the Library of Congress collection of Washington documents. The project will make its catalog available on its website in the course of the present year. On-line images of Washington manuscripts in the Library of Congress collection can be viewed on its American Memory website.

Among the issues about which editors must make decisions are selection, transcription, and annotation. In this final phase of his career, Washington usually left only an ALS or an ALS and a letterbook copy, thus minimizing textual issues for his present-day editors. The brief and virtually identical editorial apparatuses in the four volumes of the Retirement Series concentrate on transcription issues. They describe a policy that follows a fairly standard prescription for editions of eighteenth-century letters. It combines a concern for fidelity to the original manuscript with achieving a degree of legibility that will facilitate use by both scholarly and general audiences. Since Washington's letters are likely to attract a broad spectrum of young, old, and inexperienced readers, the decisions seem judicious. The texts avoid threatening visual challenges but provide a sufficient indication of where omissions, emendations or other problems that necessitated editorial intervention occur. Random sampling of some of the manuscripts on the American Memory website suggests that the average reader will clearly prefer *The Papers* to struggling with the sometimes faded or torn pages of the originals. Comparison of its transcriptions with those made by Fitzpatrick indicate that the new edition is justified on that front alone.

The editors do not provide readers of the Retirement Series with any discussion of their annotation policy. The very first volume of the Colonial Series may have carried an explanation of it, but this seems a long way from the final three years of Washington's life. Because readers' interests may be confined to one or several of the component parts, editors of forthcoming multiseries

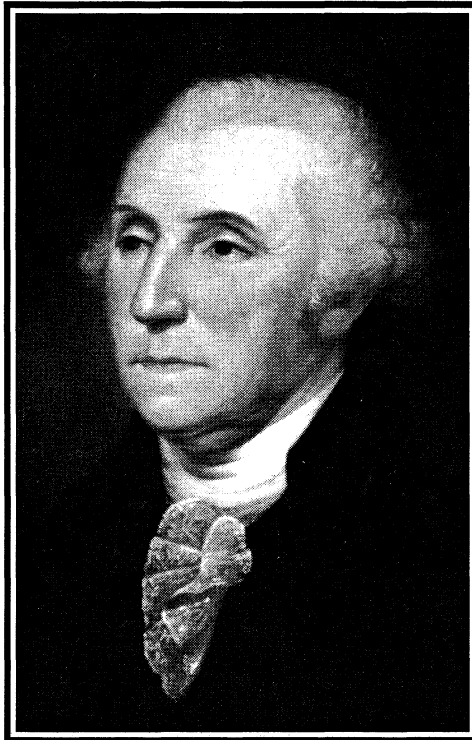
editions might want to consider to what degree it is appropriate to restate the principles that govern their edition at least in the first volume of each subset. While strong arguments can be made for carrying policies adopted at the outset throughout the entire series, editors might also want to assess whether annotation policies appropriate to one phase of their project are equally valid for all others.

The copious notes that accompany many documents demonstrate that the Retirement Series's editors have drawn on years of prior research and intimate knowledge of their subject to explain each letter printed in full type as completely as they saw the need or felt the inclination. Most of the individuals who make an appearance—close and distant relatives, cabinet members, debtors to Washington, solicitors of political and military appointments or letters of introduction, hired help and slaves—are fully identified. Washington's land claims, interests, and deals are traced, and records searched to determine whether or not purchasers and tenants made payments on schedule or defaulted when land prices plummeted and cash shortages beset the infant nation once again.

One of the unanswered questions about editorial policy to which these volumes give rise is why substantial portions or the entire text of letters written to or by Washington were published as part of the annotation of other documents and not as separate documents. Is such a decision governed by chronology, the importance that the editors assign to the topic, or some other factor? An example may make this clearer. An interesting topic that presents itself in various letters was gifts received—which seem never to have been a simple matter in the mind of the former president. First and foremost he wished to be sure that what he accepted was indeed a gift and not an item (a bull, for instance) for which the presenter would eventually demand payment (see, for example, 1:190). On other occasions, presents arrived by very circuitous routes. Appended to a letter from Washington to John Quincy Adams of June 25, 1797, is a note that runs over several pages (1:211–14). It describes and details the strange path by which a sword crafted for Washington by a Palatine

German who intended his son to present it ultimately reached its destination through other hands. The story is told in a lengthy note largely by quoting correspondence between Washington, John Quincy Adams, and the man who made the sword, Theophilus Alte, of Solingen. Most of these letters precede the opening date of the Retirement Series and might conceivably have been included in full type in the concluding volumes of the Presidential Series.

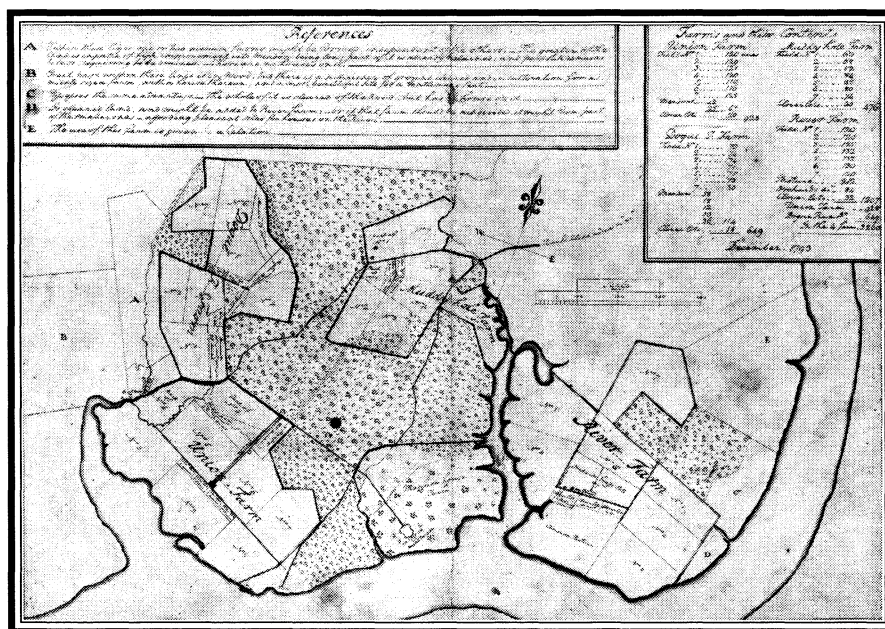
In another instance, a gift of shoe buckles from David Humphreys, Washington's aide-de-camp during the war, can be traced through correspondence in the same volume from Timothy Pickering, Washington, and Humphreys, some of which appears in full type, and some in annotation. "Presents," Washington remarked in his thank you note, "are of all things the most painful; but when I am so well satisfied of the motives which dictated yours, my scruples are removed; and I receive the Buckles (which are indeed very elegant) as a token of your regard and attachment; & will keep, & wear them occasionally, for your sake" (1: 219). Washington no doubt experienced a different sort of pain from a gift from a far-sighted benefactor, Thomas Dockery, who provided him with hair from his own "baird." Dockery had originally intended the clippings to serve as padding for Washington's saddle, but now suggested that it should be used as stuffing for his funeral pillow. The letter to Dockery appears in full type,



Charles Willson Peale's 1795 bust portrait of George Washington. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

perhaps because Washington noted that it was "singular" (1:155), or because no other document could be found to which it could be appended.

Most of what Washington received, however, was much more mundane. Seed, cheese, pamphlets, Bibles, prints, and poetry figured on the list, and raised fewer questions in Washington's mind about the motives of the giver and the risks of receiving them. Compared with some of the issues that occupy much more space in the retirement correspondence, gifts are not a matter of great significance, yet they provide perspective on Washington's character, interests, and the degree to which the life of so public a figure could be "privatized." The editors clearly



George Washington's map of the farms composing his Mt. Vernon Estate, drawn from field notes, 1793. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

intend to call this topic to readers' attention by their decisions to publish the correspondence in full type or in annotation, but why they choose one over the other at any given time is not always obvious.

When the series opens, we find Washington on the first day of his ex-presidency, making the necessary arrangements to dispose of items he did not wish to take with him and to begin the journey to his beloved Mount Vernon—his own vine and fig tree. He would find his estate very much in need of his attention, and of staff and supplies to repair the damage it had suffered when his public responsibilities made it impossible for him to exercise the meticulous supervision he intended to bestow on it during the days of life that remained to him. While former associates in his government—Timothy Pickering, James McHenry, Oliver Wolcott, Jr., for instance—continued to write to him about matters of domestic and foreign policy, and while he would have to devote considerable attention to his private financial affairs, he found at least a small measure of private space. "I am alone *at present*," he wrote to Tobias Lear—"Unless some one pops in, unexpectedly, Mrs Washington and myself will do what I believe has not been [done] within the last twenty years by us, that is to set down to dinner by ourselves" (1:281).

Washington brought the same great energy and rational purpose to his private affairs as he had to his public responsibilities, and in several instances met frustrations he seems not to have expected. Despite a steady stream of advice and admonition, he was unable to generate the requisite

willpower in his ward, George Washington Parke Custis, to make the young man profit from a college education. Tensions with France that led to the decision to raise a "New" American army finally provided the prospect of a stint in the service which Washington hoped might serve as his bridge to adult responsibility. Surprisingly, his anxieties about the young man's lack of interest in improving himself did not stand in the way of Washington's naming him one of the executors of his estate. Troubles also began almost immediately with James Anderson, the overly sensitive manager of Washington's farms, who responded to every instruction from their now-present owner with an offer to resign. It took a number of letters and a considerable period of time before Washington was able to convince the man that he could hardly be expected to have no opinions about how well and profitably his resources were allocated and developed.

Scarcely a year after his return to Mount Vernon, Washington saw his opportunity to indulge his interest in agriculture and in the development of the new federal city and the houses he was constructing there, his concern for the management of his properties, and his ability to enjoy the joys and pains of private life significantly diminished by the Federalists' determination to maintain an adequate and credible professional military force at the executive's disposal. France, whose policies toward the new nation vacillated as her revolution evolved and her financial and military situation changed, presented them with an opportunity to build a narrow majority in Congress in favor of sub-

stantially expanding the regular force of three thousand men it had authorized in 1796 to put it in position to deter or respond to the possibility of a French invasion. On June 22, 1798, President Adams penned a letter that substantially ate into Washington's leisure and altered the content and increased the volume of his correspondence. "In forming an Army," Adams wrote, "I must tap you, Sometimes for Advice. We must have your Name, if you, in any case will permit Us to Use it" (2: 352). Washington understood this as a request that he should lead the force. Although he believed that only the deception spread and divisiveness cultivated by France's partisans on American soil could persuade the French Directory that an invasion was feasible, he told Adams that, if the need arose, he would reluctantly exchange "the smooth paths of Retirement for the thorny ways of Public life" (2: 369).

These words were all it took to pave the way for his appointment, three days later, as commander in chief of the New Army. Washington was fully involved in advising about recruitment and the appointment of its officers, but he made it clear from the start that he would take the field only if urgent circumstances required his presence. He also intended Adams to understand that he would serve only if his recommendations for the officers next in rank were accepted. A testy discussion followed when Adams failed to see this clearly enough and balked at compromising his own authority as constitutional commander in chief. In the end, Washington prevailed, but other military and political concerns rose to trouble his tranquility. His insistence that rank in the Continental Army would not constitute a claim for preference in the New Army raised howls of protest at all levels. Despite his best efforts to explain the considerations that prompted him to recommend that Charles Coatsworth Pinckney and Alexander Hamilton should rank first and second, Washington was unable to persuade Henry Knox to accept appointment as third-ranking major general in the new force. In addition to the mail generated by these matters, Washington received such a flood of letters soliciting commissions or recommending others for them that he inquired whether the War Department would pay for a secretary to help him manage the correspondence his new responsibilities generated. While the domestic and financial management issues that fill the first volume and half of the second do not disappear, military affairs dominate the remainder of the series until the last few months of his life and deprive Washington of the retirement he so sincerely craved and reluctantly parted with.

This said, Washington remained interested in and never managed to distance himself from the partisan con-

flicts that emerged during his administration and intensified thereafter. He was so bitterly stung by *A View of the Conduct of the Executive of the United States*, James Monroe's defense of his conduct as ambassador to France (to which post Washington had appointed him), that he penned detailed and scathing comments on a copy of the work that he had received from Timothy Pickering (2: 169-217). Washington's federalist political passions had not waned when he left the presidency. His doubts about the French threat were mentioned above, yet he supported the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts (3: 216-217), and suspected all "partisans" of France of treason. More than a few discussions about candidates for military appointments express the fear that certain men sought them in order "to divide, & contaminate the Army, by artful & Seditious discourses; and perhaps at a critical moment, bring on confusion" (3: 59).

What does the series tell us about the private, if not-so-retired, Washington? A concern for propriety governs most of his private letters. Heartfelt affection and friendship are most easily discerned in his correspondence with and about the Marquis de Lafayette. Letters to family members are more often patriarchal than paternal or fraternal in tone. Those which deal with military and political affairs somehow seem less practiced, more natural. The clearest, most astounding glimpse of the private Washington comes, however, from his will (July 9, 1799), which he drafted without professional help. The order of his priorities commands attention: speedy payment of any outstanding debts; his wife, who received the bulk of her husband's property for the remainder of her life—a bequest far more generous than the customary widow's portion; freedom for the slaves he held in his own right and lifetime support and maintenance for them whether they chose to accept it or not; and finally his bequests of assets and mementos of special significance to his family and dependents.

The concern for his slaves, mentioned immediately after his wife, is expressed in great detail. He was, as he remarked several times in other correspondence, accustomed to having his orders carried out, and he took special precautions to ensure it in this case. During his life, Washington fed and clothed his slaves adequately but as economically as possible. He expected all who were in any way able to work to do so assiduously and noted those who performed well and those who did not. In death he paid special attention to his "Mulatto man William" and provided for all the rest generously, without consideration of their merit or productivity. He was concerned that their marriages not be disrupted, that young and old be ad-

equately cared for, that none be sold outside Virginia “under any pretence whatsoever.” He enjoined that all his provisions regarding them “be religiously fulfilled . . . ; without evasion, neglect or delay;” that a fund be established for their support “not trusting to the <u>ncertain provision to be made by individuals” (4:480). Washington leaves the considerations that motivated him to end the bondage of his slaves at his death unexplained. There is no hint in his retirement correspondence that he condemned the institution or feared its consequences personally although he repeatedly noted that, if the French ever did invade American territory, they would target the South where they could arm “our Negroes against us.” He did not reply to appeals from a pair of abolitionists (2:94–96; 167–168) to use his preeminence to strike a blow against the institution, but perhaps their arguments found their mark—or perhaps a deep-seated sense of himself as a patriarch compelled him to protect and provide for the most vulnerable members of his extended “family.”

What can scholars look for in the Retirement Series? What is its value and significance? Who will use it? A recent work, Robert F. Dalzell, Jr., and Lee Baldwin Dalzell’s *George Washington’s Mount Vernon: At Home in Revolutionary America* (Oxford University Press, 1998), would surely have tapped its resources for their discussions about the structure of the house and its staff had it been available to them while their work was in progress. A quick survey of books on Washington listed by on-line book vendors suggests that few authors currently in print have any deep interest in the final years of the life of one of the most significant figures in American history. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick’s *The Age of Federalism* (Oxford University Press, 1993) is surely the most significant recent work on the period as a whole, but it makes little use of Washington’s correspondence from the Fitzpatrick edition. While Washington’s retirement left him neither out of sight nor out of mind, as he truly wished to be, present-day political historians have largely treated his final days as if this were the case, and have ignored the fact that only his death definitively removed him from the national political scene.

What could and should be done to alert potential users to the assets they might discover in the series? Volume introductions that highlighted some of the issues of significance and provided an overview of the contents and their relevance would have helped immeasurably in this regard. Another aid that might have been offered is greater attention in the index to subject as opposed to name entries. Willingly or unwillingly, Washington received political news and discussed political issues, was concerned about Anti-Federalist tactics and their victories at the polls. How-

ever, no main entries in the indexes point the readers to these discussions. Resort must be had to name entries, where subentries are arranged chronologically rather than alphabetically. Topics are, thus, somewhat harder to pick up. Military affairs, which predominate in the middle volumes, must be accessed through the main entry “New Army,” its proper title, but one that might be missed by general readers who searched under “Army” or “Military affairs.” The series uses cross-references only to refer readers to identifications of individuals that appear in other volumes. Washington’s lands are, however, much better served. Information can be accessed under the individual names of tracts, under “Lands of GW” and as a subentry under the main entry “Washington, George.”

The Retirement Series offers scholars an unparalleled glimpse at the private Washington, head of an important Virginia family, and the much-revered icon of the nation’s independence and its successful inauguration of stable republican government. It is an invaluable resource for students of agriculture, landholding, and the plantation economy as well as for those interested in the federalist mindset. Its flaws are few, its virtues many. It waits for scholars to publish articles that will call the attention of the historical profession to the wealth it contains.

Erratum

Owing to an error in electronic transmission, the last paragraph of Leigh Johnsen’s article, “Annotation Control and Computers: A Case Study of the Salmon P. Chase Papers Project,” was incomplete. The full text of that paragraph follows.

Logic and experience suggest that conditions responsible for the Chase Papers’ system will not disappear soon. In short, there is little evidence that funding will suddenly stabilize. Nor is the end in sight for a workforce of low-paid editors often essentially migratory in nature, especially at newer and smaller projects that lack visibility and firm financial foundations. For editing projects that operate on shoestring budgets, sound management will most likely remain crucial for years. Annotation control may lack glamour and glitter compared to other, cutting-edge issues in documentary editing. But, as editors at the Chase papers learned, integration of strategy and technology can help projects stay on schedule, maintain cordial relations with foundations and funding agencies, and bolster the likelihood of survival and success.