

*George  
Washington  
Birthplace*

NATIONAL MONUMENT  
VIRGINIA



# George Washington Birthplace

## NATIONAL MONUMENT

*At his father's plantation on Popes Creek, Va., George Washington was born, February 22, 1732, and spent the first three years of his life*

HE who has gone down in history characterized as "... first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen," first saw life in the simple countryside of Tidewater Virginia. Here, in a land known for its many places of serene beauty, few scenes impress the senses and mind as do those at the birthplace of George Washington. The courage, wholesome character, unselfish devotion, and wise leadership of the man who was born here will forever make this a revered historical site for all Americans.

### The Washington Family

The first Washington ancestor of the first President to come to Virginia arrived in 1656. On February 28 of that year, an English ship, named "Seahorse of London," ran aground during a storm and foundered in the Potomac River near the mouth of

Mattox Creek. John Washington, the great-grandfather of George, was second officer on this ship, which had come to the colonies to obtain a cargo of tobacco. John Washington remained in Virginia and soon married Ann Pope, daughter of Col. Nathaniel Pope, a wealthy landowner living near Mattox Creek. Colonel Pope settled his daughter and son-in-law on a 700-acre tract of land nearby, which was given to them as a wedding gift. In 1664, John Washington moved to a new home 4 miles to the eastward on Bridges Creek.

John Washington, his son Lawrence Washington, and the latter's son, Augustine, the great-grandfather, grandfather, and father, respectively, of George, all had active and distinguished careers as planters and civic-minded leaders in Virginia affairs. Augustine, the father of George, was sent to Appleby School in England.

*View across lawn and Popes Creek from Memorial Mansion.*



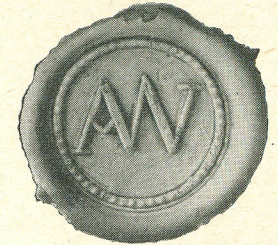
In 1718, Augustine Washington bought from Joseph Abbingtion 150 acres of land fronting on Popes Creek, a mile east of the Bridges Creek home. It is not known precisely when Augustine moved to this land. All that is known with certainty is that on February 23, 1726, a legal paper executed by Augustine Washington and his wife mentions owning the land in fee simple "where he now lives which land he . . . purchased of one Joseph Abbingtion." From other documentary evidence it may be inferred that Augustine Washington's house on Popes Creek was built by himself and was occupied some time around 1725-26.

Augustine's first wife, Jane Butler, died in 1729, survived by three of her four children, Lawrence, Augustine, Jr., and Jane. Augustine married his second wife, Mary Ball, a daughter of Col. Joseph Ball, of Lancaster County, Va., on March 6, 1730. Their first child, George, was born at the Popes Creek home on February 11, 1732, according to the old-style calendar, or on February 22, 1732, according to the new-style calendar, the date which is now celebrated as the anniversary.

After George, five other children were born to Augustine and Mary Ball Washington. They were: Elizabeth, Samuel, Charles, John Augustine, and Mildred, the last of whom died in infancy.

The first 3 years of George Washington's life were spent at his birthplace on Popes Creek. In 1735, Augustine Washington moved his family to the Hunting Creek plantation, now known as Mount Vernon, and in 1739 to the "Strother estate" on the Rappahannock River opposite Fredericksburg. There he died in 1743. In accordance with his request, Augustine Washington was buried with his ancestors at Bridges Creek.

The birthplace of George Washington on Popes Creek had gone to Augustine Washington, Jr., a half brother of George, in 1743, upon the death of Augustine Washington. Augustine, Jr., lived there until his death in 1762, and an inventory of his personal property offers valuable evidence of the old home. The farm passed to his son, William Augustine Washington, who was living in the birthplace house when it was accidentally destroyed by fire during the Revolutionary War. Tradition and some indirect



*Bottle seals found in excavations at Wakefield. Top seal bears name of John Washington; the bottom seal has monogram AW, the initials for Augustine Washington.*

evidence support the claim that the house was destroyed on Christmas Day, 1779. The house was not rebuilt.

### Public Ownership of Site

In 1882, Washington heirs and the State of Virginia donated to the United States the old Washington family burial ground and a 60-foot-square plot of land at the house site, together with a right-of-way to each. In 1883, the United States Government bought some 11 acres of land at the birthsite for greater protection and for necessary connecting roads. In 1896, a granite shaft was erected by the Federal Government near the site of the birthplace house at a point where an earlier stone marker had been set by members of the family and friends in 1815.

In 1923, the Wakefield National Memorial Association was organized under the leadership of Mrs. Josephine Wheelwright Rust. The stated purpose of this Association was to recover the birthplace grounds of George Washington, restore them, and make the place a shrine for the American people. An act of Congress, in 1926, authorized the As-

found only those flowers, vines, herbs, and berries that were common to Virginia gardens during that period.

### *Family Burial Ground*

Located about 1 mile northwest of the Memorial Mansion, on the banks of Bridges Creek, are the family burial plot and the site of the 1664 home of Col. John Washington. Among the members of the Washington family whose remains are interred in the vault in the burial ground are Col. John Washington, immigrant great-grandfather of George, with his wife, Ann Pope; his brother, Lawrence; his sons, Major Lawrence and Capt. John Washington; Augustine Washington, the father of George, and his first wife, Jane Butler; and Augustine Washington, Jr., half brother of George. There are 32 burials in all within the enclosure. Two original gravestones remain, one dated 1690 and 1696 and the other 1729. Upon his death in 1799, George Washington was buried at Mount Vernon.

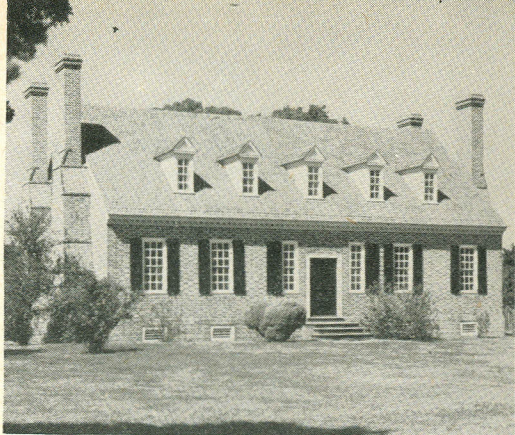
In 1930, considerable improvement work was done within the old burial plot under the auspices of the Wakefield National Memorial Association, and in that year five new tablestones were erected, the central stone, over the vault, being to the memory of Col. John Washington and Ann Pope Washington, the progenitors of the Washington family in Virginia.

### *The Monument*

George Washington Birthplace National Monument was established by act of Congress, approved January 23, 1930, although the Federal Government had a small holding at the site as early as 1882. The area now comprises 393.68 acres of federally owned land, most of which was within the old Augustine Washington plantation.

### *How To Reach the Monument*

Washington's birthplace is situated on the Potomac River in Virginia, about 38 miles east of Fredericksburg. It is reached by a 2-mile entrance road off Virginia State High-



*The "water front" view of Memorial Mansion.*

way No. 3. A system of good highways connect the area with Washington, D. C., Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Williamsburg.

### *Services to the Public*

The monument is open to the public from 8 a. m. until 5 p. m. every day of the year, including Sundays and holidays. No admission is charged visitors. Special interpretative talks are given to organized groups if arrangements are made in advance with the superintendent.

Picnic grounds with standard facilities are located at a nearby site on Popes Creek.

Light refreshments, supplies, and souvenirs may be purchased at the Washington Birthplace Post Office, located at the main parking area.

### *Administration*

George Washington Birthplace National Monument is a part of the National Park System and is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. Communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Washington Birthplace, Westmoreland County, Va.

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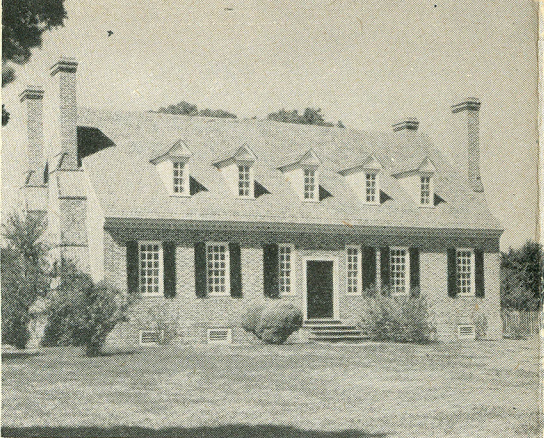
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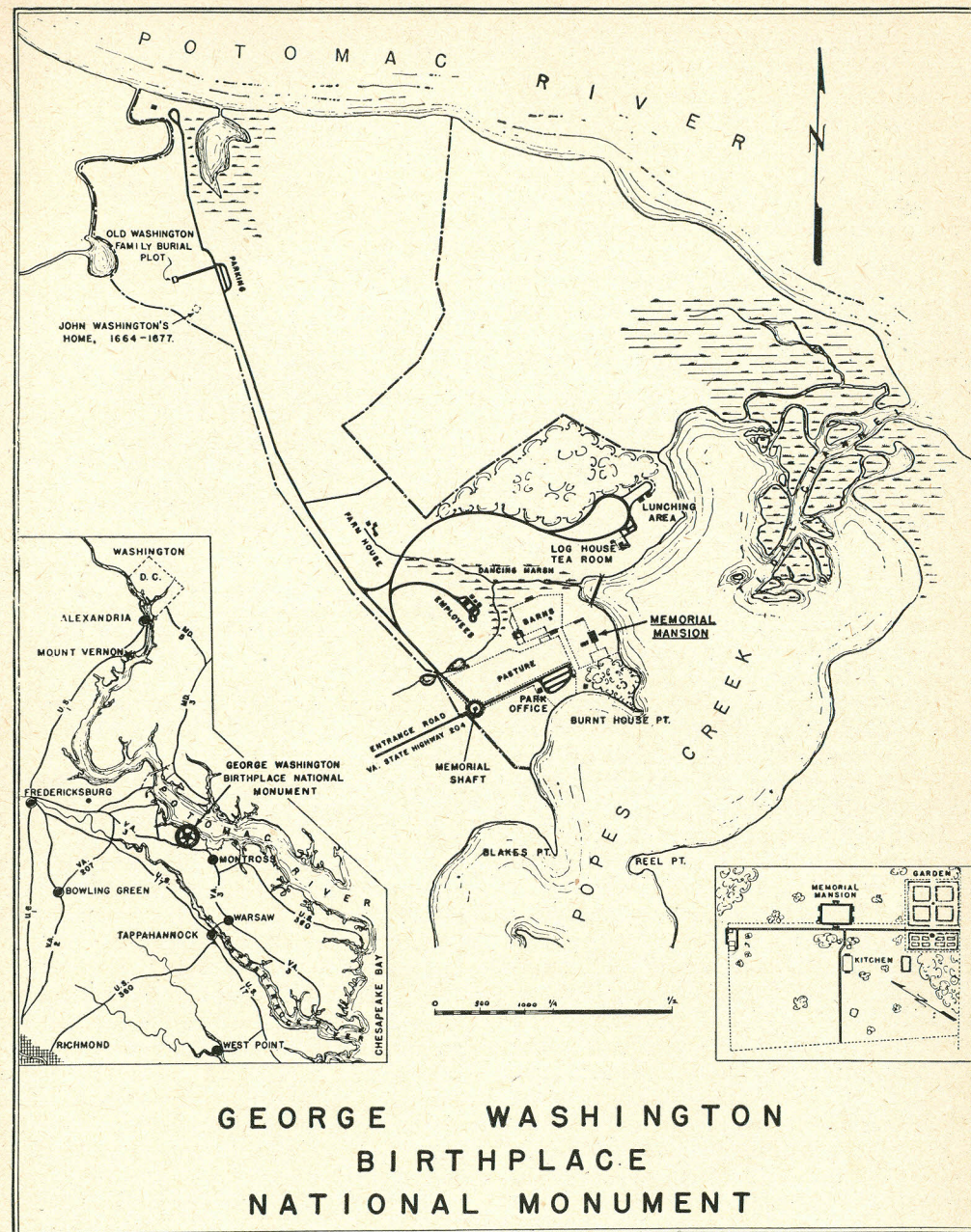
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Oscar L. Chapman, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, Newton B. Drury, *Director*

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