

Mount Vernon MEMORIAL HIGHWAY



Part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway
Virginia, Maryland, and District of Columbia

Mount Vernon

MEMORIAL HIGHWAY • *Points of Interest*

Miles

- 0.0 *Arlington Memorial Bridge* ①, Virginia shore. Linking the Custis-Lee Mansion with the Lincoln Memorial, this bridge symbolizes the reunion of the North and South.
- .7 *Columbia Island* ②. Willow and pear trees predominate.
- 1.3 *Navy-Marine Memorial* ③ (waves and seagulls). Dedicated to Americans who lost their lives at sea.
- 1.4 *Pentagon* ④ (right) houses the Department of Defense. Note the Columbia Island Marina in the foreground.
- 1.6 *Highway Bridge* ⑤.

Miles

- 2.2 *Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary* ⑥. Waterfowl in marsh habitat.
- 3.4 *National Airport* ⑦. Site of "Abingdon," home of John Parke Custis, son of Martha Washington by her first marriage.
- 4.0 *Four Mile Run* ⑧. Site of Indian village. Across the river from this point was Natcochank, a large Indian settlement.
- 4.8 *Sailing Marina* ⑨, Daingerfield Island.
- 5.2 Colorful hawthorne and dogwood plantings on right ⑩.
- 5.8 *Traffic Circle* ⑪. The terminus of the Alexandria Canal, which joined the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, was located near this point.

Miles

- 6.6 *Alexandria, Va.* ⑫, first called Belhaven, was founded in 1749. An important 18th-century seaport, the town carried on a lucrative commerce with the East and West Indies and some European ports. It contains many fine homes and buildings associated with George Washington. Christ's Church and Gadsby's Tavern are two of the most prominent.
- 7.6 *Hunting Creek Bridge* ⑬. American egrets seen in summer. On the left is Jones Point (Restricted Area), the southern corner of the original District of Columbia.
- 8.5 *Belle Haven Picnic Area* ⑭. For the next half mile, the dogwood blossoms are especially showy in spring.
- 9.4 *Inlet of Tidal Marsh* ⑮. Aquatic plants, including spatterdock, cattails, and arrowhead, abound in this favorite habitat of egrets, red-winged blackbirds, and herons.

Miles

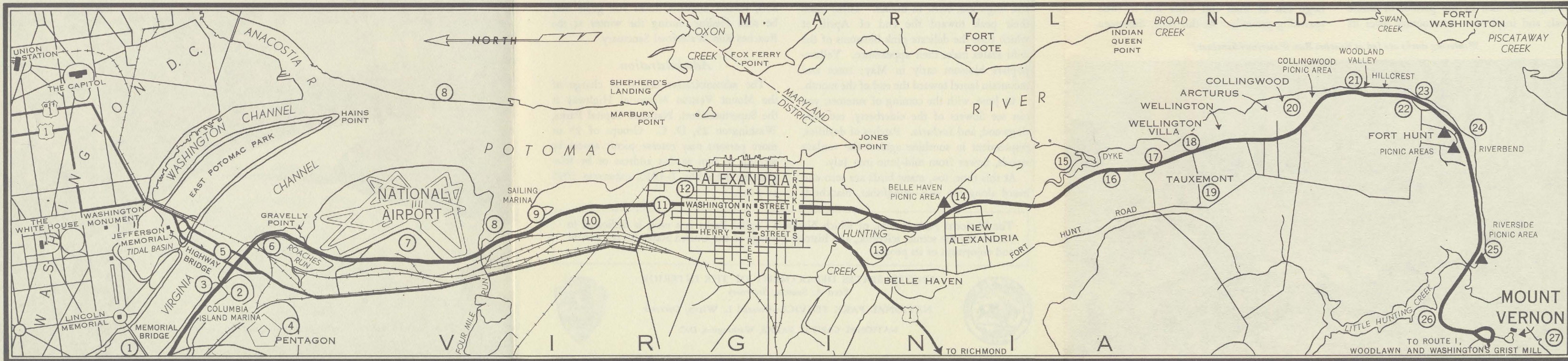
- 10.0 *Dyke Overlook* ⑯. This marsh is typical of much of the original Potomac shoreline. Deep woods extend up the hillside with a ground cover of may-apple, jack-in-the-pulpit, bloodroot, and other flowering plants in spring.
- 10.2 Here, each in its season, redbud, dogwood, and daylilies show to advantage against the thick green woods ⑰.
- 11.0 *Wellington Underpass* ⑱. Roses are at their best here in late May. Nearby a drive leads to Wellington, once part of the Mount Vernon estate and home of Tobias Lear, Washington's private secretary.
- 11.1 *Tauxemont* ⑲. This section takes its name from the old Indian village of Taux. Large eastern redcedars are a distinctive feature of the landscape.
- 12.0 *Collingwood* ⑳. The large white colonial-type house on the left is on land once part of the "Old River Farm" of the Mount Vernon estate.

Miles

- 12.5 *Woodland Valley Overlook* ㉑. As you view the Potomac, note how the bank is being cut away by action of the river, causing the oaks to fall.
- 13.2 *Entrance to Fort Hunt* ㉒. At one time this was an Army post guarding the river approaches to Washington. One large recreation center with picnic accommodations is maintained in this area for outings by groups of more than 100 persons under permit from National Capital Parks. There are also 12 additional groves suitable for smaller parties.
- 13.2 *Fort Washington Overlook* ㉓. Across the river are seen the ramparts of the second Fort Washington, designed in 1814 by Major L'Enfant. Likewise a former Army post guarding the river approaches to the Capital, it is now part of the National Capital Parks.
- 14.1 *Fish weirs in river* ㉔. These weirs

Miles

- are similar to those used by Indians of the Piscataway village once located directly across the river.
 - 14.9 *Riverside Picnic Area* ㉕, Little Hunting Creek. Mount Vernon may be glimpsed through the cleared strip on the hill, opposite. A bald eagle, searching for fish, may often be seen circling above the river and the marshland on either side of the road.
 - 15.9 At the base of hardwoods and pines, dogwood and daylilies border the road as it approaches the historic estate ㉖.
 - 16.1 *Mount Vernon* ㉗. (Open 9 a. m. to 5 p. m., March through September; 9 a. m. to 4 p. m. October through February.)
- ▲ Large picnic areas which may be reserved.
Smaller picnic sites are situated all along the highway.



THE MOUNT VERNON MEMORIAL HIGHWAY, which links the Nation's Capital with the home of the First President, was built in 1932 to commemorate the bicentennial of Washington's birth. It is a unit of the George Washington Memorial Parkway which eventually will extend from Mount Vernon to the Great Falls of the Potomac, 15 miles upstream from Washington.

The highway was designed to provide easy access to Mount Vernon and it passes through a countryside rich in history and natural beauty. The earliest inhabitants were Algonquin Indians who lived in villages along the shore, usually where large streams entered the river. By the beginning of the 18th century, most of the Indians had moved farther west and a few settlers had taken up farms in the area. One of the pioneers was Augustine Washington, who, in 1726, established a plantation on Hunting Creek which eventually came into the possession of his son George, whose home it was from 1754 until his death in 1799. Many of the most distinguished men of the period, to whose ideals and inspiration our country owes its

Wintering ducks are fed at Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary



independence and foundation under the Constitution, visited here.

Many people from all over the world have been attracted to Mount Vernon. Their number has increased enormously since the completion of the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. As in Washington's time, each traveler derives some measure of inspiration and renewed faith in our Nation and its institutions by visiting the home of our First President.

Seasons Along the Highway

The woods and marshes along the way do much to enhance the natural beauty of the highway. Some places have been filled in, cultivated, or landscaped with naturalistic plantings. Each season has its own attraction, but spring along the highway is especially beautiful. Early April brings a spectacular display of blossoming trees and shrubs—flowering crabapple, yellow forsythia, pear, hawthorne, and shadbush. The blooming of the latter coincides with the large run of shad and other fish to their spawning grounds. At this time, fishermen



Dogwood

along the banks also catch bluegills, carp, catfish, yellow perch, crappies, and bass.

About 2 weeks later, the most colorful small trees along the highway, the redbud and dogwood, come in bloom. These reach their peak toward the end of April, at which time the delicate pink blossoms of the wild azalea make their appearance. Yellow-poplars blossom early in May; roses and mountain laurel toward the end of the month.

In June, with the coming of summer, you can see flowers of the elderberry, red-osier dogwood, and *Sorbaria*. Patches of daylilies, resplendent in sunshine against the verdant woods, flower from mid-June into July.

At this time, too, many birds are seen and heard along the way—kingfisher, blackbird,

Carolina wren, tufted titmouse, wood thrush, and numerous warblers, among others. Hundreds of American egrets, large white wading birds, spend the summer here after nesting in southern swamps. The bald eagle, our national bird, with a wingspread of over 6 feet, lives here throughout the year and may often be seen circling over the river.

With the arrival of fall, beginning in late September, the highway is adorned with bright color. Trees of outstanding brilliance are red maple, yellow-poplar, dogwood, sumac, hickory, sweetgum, and northern red, white, and willow oaks. Other oaks, the black willow, and sycamore are equally numerous but less spectacular.

In winter, the Virginia pine, eastern redcedar, and holly add a touch of green to the landscape. Years ago, huge flocks of migrating waterfowl wintered in this section. Large tracts of the original marshland have been filled in for river-shore developments thus reducing waterfowl feeding grounds and causing the birds to dwindle in number. Still, several hundred ducks and geese may be seen feeding during the winter at the Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary.

Administration

The administrative official in charge of the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway is the Superintendent, National Capital Parks, Washington 25, D. C. Groups of 25 or more persons may reserve picnic spaces by writing to him at this address or by telephoning REpublic 7-1820, extension 2095 or 2403.

The National Park System, of which National Capital Parks is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fred A. Seaton, *Secretary*
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE—Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*
NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS, Washington, D.C.

