

GEORGE WASHINGTON



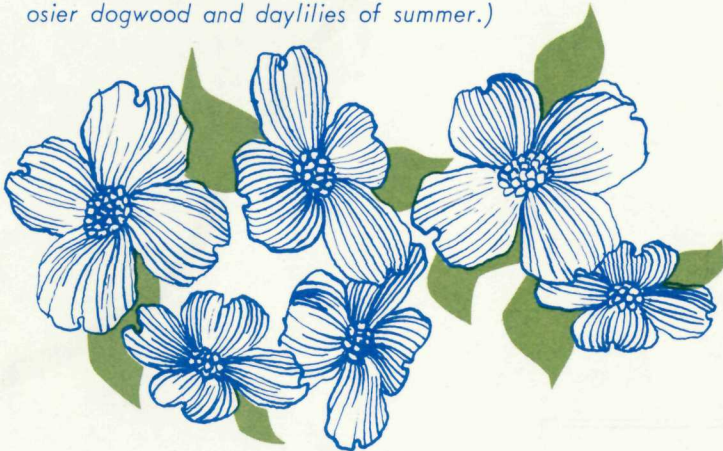
MEMORIAL PARKWAY

Mount Vernon Section

**Far off in the Appalachian highlands a trickle begins the ancient course of the Potomac River. Crossing the Shenandoah Valley, through the Blue Ridge Mountains, over the Piedmont to the sea—splitting mountains that have risen beneath it—the Potomac reaches fulfillment where here it meets the tides of the Chesapeake Bay. It is a river whose waters are mixed with those of the Shenandoah, the Monocacy, the Anacostia . . . mixed with many lives and much history of this great Nation.**

After taking a final tumble over the Great and Little Falls northwest of Washington, the Potomac slows and spreads quietly to wide banks and rolling hills. Marshlands and tide pools along its banks have harbored for thousands of years the wintering mallards and pintail and American widgeon. The sheltered wetlands, thick with spatterdock and cattail and arrowhead, have fed fish to herons and hungry egrets—hatched from as far as the southernmost swamps of Florida—and to great bald eagles wheeling over the river.

Among the earliest inhabitants were the Algonquian Indians who had their villages along the shore, usually where some large stream entered. They trapped fish and turtles, and hunted through the woods of sweetgum, sycamore, and oak. They were the first to observe in early spring the flowering of mayapple and serviceberry—the shadbush which blooms as the shad begin their run up-river to the spawning grounds. Then came dogwood and redbud, followed by wild azalea, and, in late spring, the yellow poplar. (Today many of the outstanding flowering plants are those that have been introduced—the crabapple, forsythia, hawthorne, and pear of early spring; the later-blooming mountain laurel; and the red-osier dogwood and daylilies of summer.)



Up the Potomac came Capt. John Smith in 1608—and with his coming began the commerce of the colonists, for "potomack" itself meant "trading place." In 1634 settlements began—usually on the site of an earlier Indian trading center or town—and from the first the colonists discovered that the Indians were excellent businessmen.

In 1726, Augustine Washington established a plantation on Little Hunting Creek which eventually came into the possession of his son George. "No estate in the United States is more pleasantly situated than this. It lies in high, dry, and healthy country . . . on one of the finest rivers in the world." This was early Mount Vernon, and the words were George Washington's as he looked from his veranda over the wide river to the opposite shore. Many of the most distinguished men of the period paid visits to Mount Vernon—men to whose ideas and inspirations our country owes its independence and foundation under the Constitution.

Few estates in the United States are as "pleasantly situated" as Mount Vernon. Here and along the Memorial Parkway that links Washington, D.C. with the home of the First President, much of what he saw remains. Man, it is true, has displaced the wilderness—Fort Hunt, Fort Washington across the river, the early homes, and growing Alexandria, of course—to say nothing of modern freeways or the turbojets shattering the air over Roaches Run as they leave National Airport. But the banks of the Potomac still have their willows, alders, and birches; and, in autumn, red maple, oaks, dogwood, sumac, hickory, and many others still adorn the hillsides in bright color. It has been many years since the last bear, or white-tailed deer was hunted. Yet the ancient flyways fill with migrant birds in spring and autumn much as always; and, in summer, kingfishers, blackbirds, wrens, and wood thrushes are seen and heard along the way.

Landscaped primarily with native plants, the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway was completed in 1932 to commemorate the bicentennial of George Washington's birth. Over the years it has become a well-traveled route for those visiting his home, enjoying much of the same charm he enjoyed. Many walk the paths along the Potomac, fish from its banks for carp or catfish or perch, or bird in the marshes or on the wooded hills. Others picnic, or explore Fort Hunt, or simply stroll the grounds of Mount Vernon and gaze out over the Potomac to the opposite shore, preserved today much as it looked many years ago.

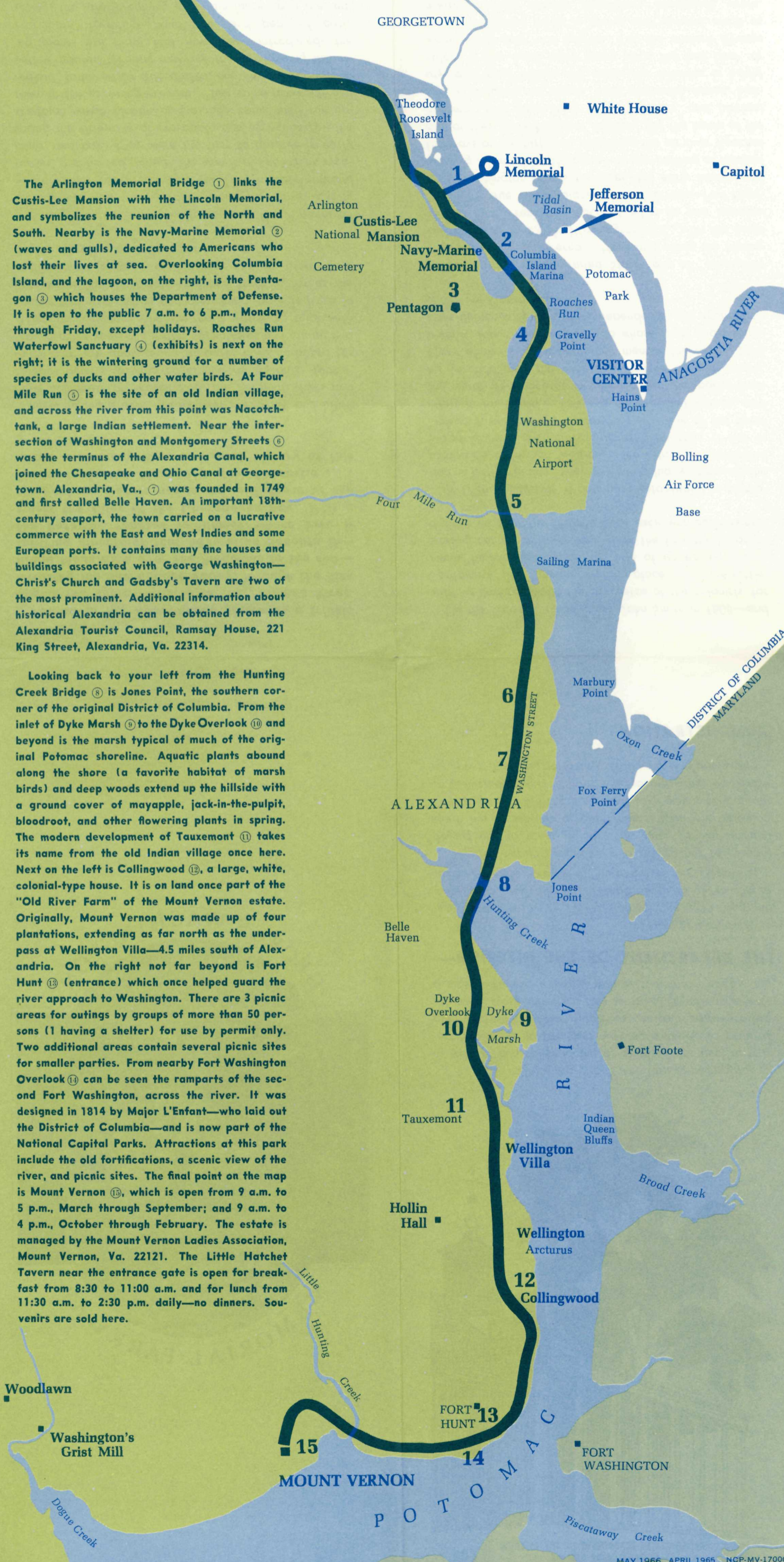


The Memorial Parkway joins the Nation's Capital with the countryside of George Washington—and the history of its cities and towns mixes with the memory of the wilderness they replaced.

The Arlington Memorial Bridge ① links the Custis-Lee Mansion with the Lincoln Memorial, and symbolizes the reunion of the North and South. Nearby is the Navy-Marine Memorial ② (waves and gulls), dedicated to Americans who lost their lives at sea. Overlooking Columbia Island, and the lagoon, on the right, is the Pentagon ③ which houses the Department of Defense. It is open to the public 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Roaches Run Waterfowl Sanctuary ④ (exhibits) is next on the right; it is the wintering ground for a number of species of ducks and other water birds. At Four Mile Run ⑤ is the site of an old Indian village, and across the river from this point was Nacotchtank, a large Indian settlement. Near the intersection of Washington and Montgomery Streets ⑥ was the terminus of the Alexandria Canal, which joined the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at Georgetown. Alexandria, Va., ⑦ was founded in 1749 and first called Belle Haven. 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 houses and buildings associated with George Washington—Christ's Church and Gadsby's Tavern are two of the most prominent. Additional information about historical Alexandria can be obtained from the Alexandria Tourist Council, Ramsay House, 221 King Street, Alexandria, Va. 22314.

Looking back to your left from the Hunting Creek Bridge ⑧ is Jones Point, the southern corner of the original District of Columbia. From the inlet of Dyke Marsh ⑨ to the Dyke Overlook ⑩ and beyond is the marsh typical of much of the original Potomac shoreline. Aquatic plants abound along the shore (a favorite habitat of marsh birds) and deep woods extend up the hillside with a ground cover of mayapple, jack-in-the-pulpit, bloodroot, and other flowering plants in spring. The modern development of Tauxemont ⑪ takes its name from the old Indian village once here. Next on the left is Collingwood ⑫, a large, white, colonial-type house. It is on land once part of the "Old River Farm" of the Mount Vernon estate. Originally, Mount Vernon was made up of four plantations, extending as far north as the underpass at Wellington Villa—4.5 miles south of Alexandria. On the right not far beyond is Fort Hunt ⑬ (entrance) which once helped guard the river approach to Washington. There are 3 picnic areas for outings by groups of more than 50 persons (1 having a shelter) for use by permit only. Two additional areas contain several picnic sites for smaller parties. From nearby Fort Washington Overlook ⑭ can be seen the ramparts of the second Fort Washington, across the river. It was designed in 1814 by Major L'Enfant—who laid out the District of Columbia—and is now part of the National Capital Parks. Attractions at this park include the old fortifications, a scenic view of the river, and picnic sites. The final point on the map is Mount Vernon ⑮, which is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., March through September; and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., October through February. The estate is managed by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, Mount Vernon, Va. 22121. The Little Hatchet Tavern near the entrance gate is open for breakfast from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. and for lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. daily—no dinners. Souvenirs are sold here.

# WASHINGTON



## ADMINISTRATION

The George Washington Memorial Parkway is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The National Park System, of which this parkway is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the great natural, historic, and recreational areas of the United States, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.

For additional information, or picnic reservations for groups of 25 or more, address the Superintendent, Lynn Building, 1111 19th Street North, Arlington, Va. 22209, or telephone 381-7417.

## THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—

the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute their full measure to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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