

The Courtship of George Washington  
and  
Martha Dandridge Custis

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Swansea Historical Society**

# George and Martha: A Love Story

Martha Dandridge Custis and George Washington met in the spring of 1758 at the home of mutual friends near the colonial capital of Williamsburg. George was on his way to see the Governor regarding military matters, traveling with Thomas Bishop, his white, hired “body servant,” who tended to many of Washington's personal daily needs.



# George and Martha: A Love Story

Martha and her children were visiting the Chamberlayne family who lived near Williamsburg. The family convinced George to stay for dinner. Upon entering, he met the young widow and her two children.



# George and Martha: A Love Story

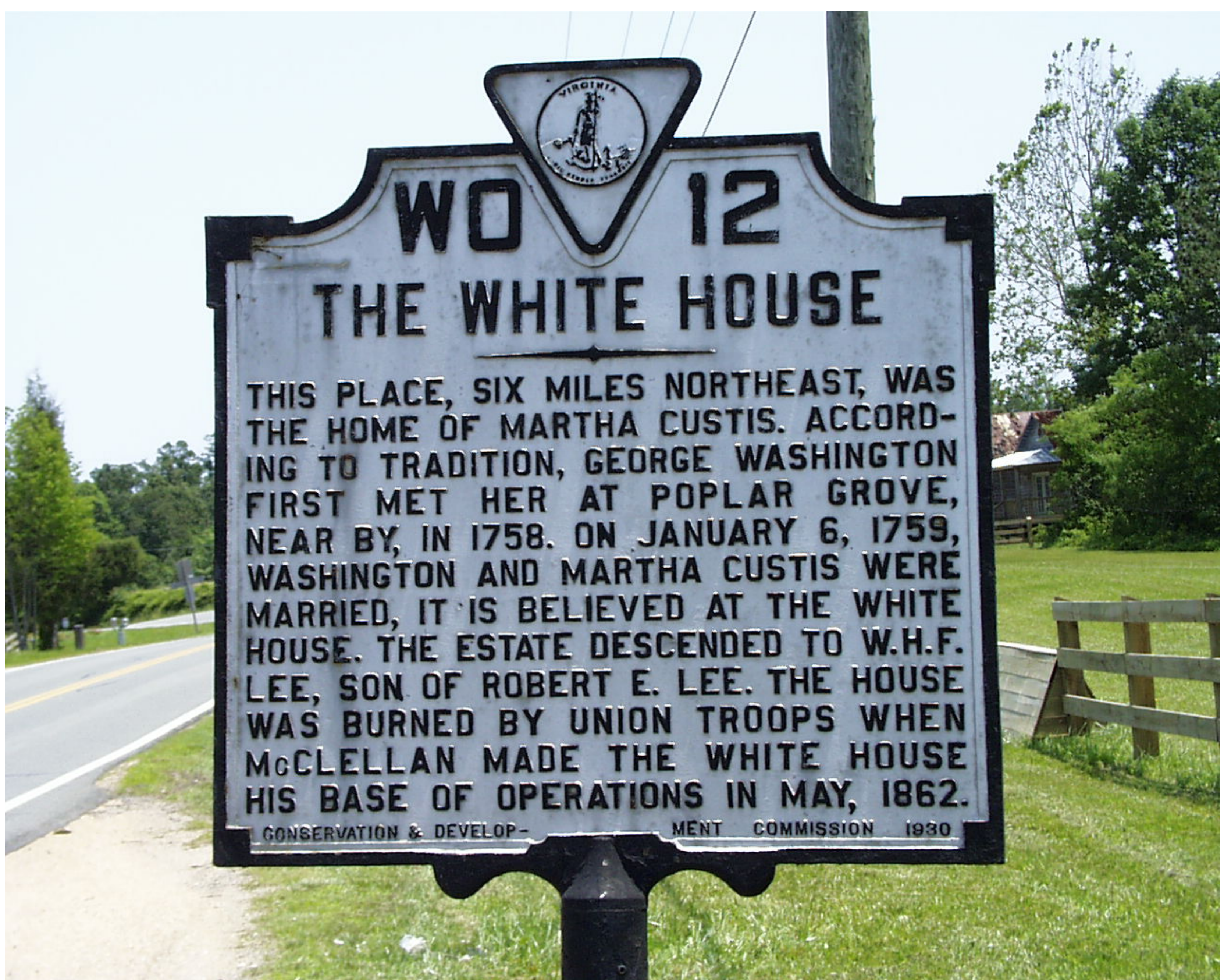
After meeting, George and Martha stayed in contact. Although it is unknown how much time they spent together before marriage, the pair were a favorable match.



# George and Martha: A Love Story

It is also unknown when they made the decision to marry, but the wedding took place at the bride's home known (coincidentally) as the White House.





WO 12  
**THE WHITE HOUSE**

THIS PLACE, SIX MILES NORTHEAST, WAS THE HOME OF MARTHA CUSTIS. ACCORDING TO TRADITION, GEORGE WASHINGTON FIRST MET HER AT POPLAR GROVE, NEAR BY, IN 1758. ON JANUARY 6, 1759, WASHINGTON AND MARTHA CUSTIS WERE MARRIED, IT IS BELIEVED AT THE WHITE HOUSE. THE ESTATE DESCENDED TO W.H.F. LEE, SON OF ROBERT E. LEE. THE HOUSE WAS BURNED BY UNION TROOPS WHEN McCLELLAN MADE THE WHITE HOUSE HIS BASE OF OPERATIONS IN MAY, 1862.

CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION 1930

# George and Martha: A Love Story

At the age of 26, Martha of New Kent County was the wealthiest widow in Virginia, managing a 17,500-acre estate that enslaved over 400 people.



# George and Martha: A Love Story

On January 6, 1759 less than nine months after meeting him, Martha Dandridge Custis married George Washington.



# George and Martha: A Love Story

When the couple wed, Washington had recently returned from the Forbes Expedition, where he served as an officer in the Virginia militia during the Seven Years' War.



# George and Martha: A Love Story

He resigned his commission shortly before marrying Martha and started this new chapter in his life.



# George and Martha: A Love Story

When Martha and George married, Martha had two young children, John Parke “Jacky” Custis, age four, and Martha Parke “Patsy” Custis, age two. Widows of Martha’s financial stature often entered another courtship shortly after the proper mourning period. George raised Martha’s children as his own with love and respect.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

Martha was born on June 2, 1731, making her eight months older than her husband, George. Martha was the first of eight children born to John and Frances Dandridge at Chestnut Grove, a plantation house on the Pamunkey River in New Kent County, Virginia.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

Unlike most women in Virginia in the 1700s, Martha learned to read and write. Young Martha was described as an attractive, socially adept woman with a lively personality.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

Martha married Daniel Parke Custis on May 15, 1750. Martha was 18 years old and Daniel was 38. Daniel's father opposed the marriage. Martha did not have the wealth he wanted his son to marry into. His father threatened to disinherit him if he married Martha. Regardless, Daniel married Martha and became a man of extreme wealth in a short period in time. Daniel died on July 8, 1757, after seven years of marriage. He left Martha with four children.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

Martha gave birth to four children all of whom she outlived. Her first child, Daniel Parke Custis, was born in 1751 and died in 1754 at age three from malaria. Daughter Frances Parke Custis was born in 1753 and died in 1757 at age of three (unknown cause of death). Martha and Daniel had two other children. John Parke “Jacky” Custis, born in 1754, and Martha Parke “Patsy” Custis, born in 1756. Patsy died of a epilepsy at age 17 on June 19, 1773. On November 5, 1781, two weeks before he was to turn 27, Jacky, Martha’s only remaining child, died. Jacky and his wife, Eleanor Calvert, had four children and he named his only son George Washington Parke Custis.



Young Jacky and Patsy

# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington



Jacky age 19



Patsy age 16

# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

All of Martha's children from Daniel Parke Custis had to bear the name Parke in order to receive a portion of the family estate. This came from her husband's grandparents, John Custis IV (1678-1749) and Frances Parke Custis. Their marriage united two major colonial families.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

After Washington left Mount Vernon in 1775, he would not return again for over six years. Every year, during the long winter months when the fighting was at a standstill, the General asked Martha to join him at his winter encampment.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

Every year she made the arduous journey to his camp, whether it was at Cambridge, Valley Forge, Philadelphia, Morristown, Newburgh, or elsewhere. She stayed with him for months at a time. In fact, during the period from April 1775 until December 1783 Martha was able to be with her husband for almost half the time he was away.



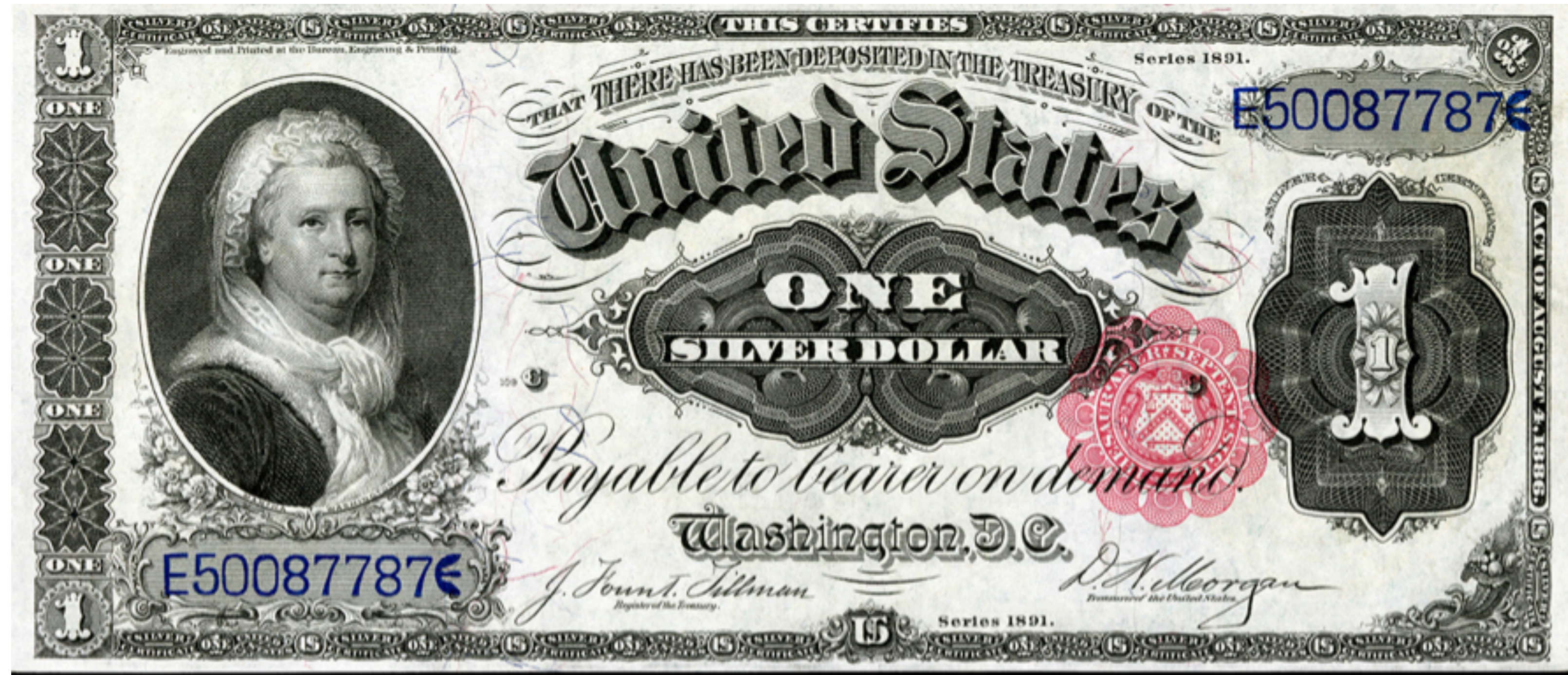
# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

Martha was Washington's closest confidante, and while visiting the encampment, she served as his secretary, sponsored social activities to raise morale and offered devoted care to soldiers.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

Martha was the nation's inaugural first lady and appears on the U.S. \$1 Silver Certificate



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

First issued in 1886, it marked the only time a woman was featured as the primary portrait on U.S. paper money.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

George willed his 123 enslaved people to Martha on the condition that they would become free after Martha's death. Fearing that the slaves might hurt her, Martha freed them right after George's death.



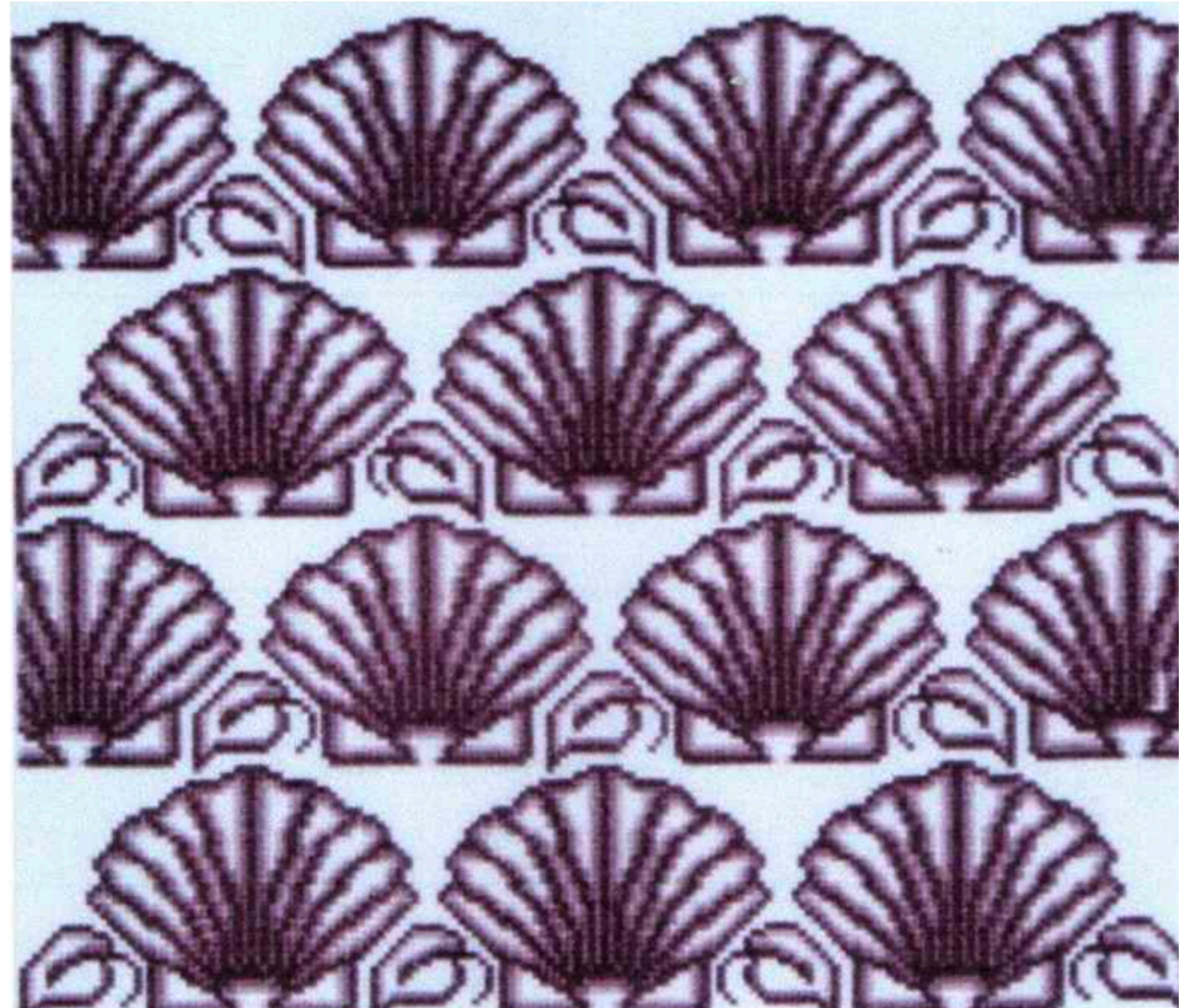
# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

In addition to her unmatched hospitality, Martha secured her own place in history with her sewing and needlework skills.



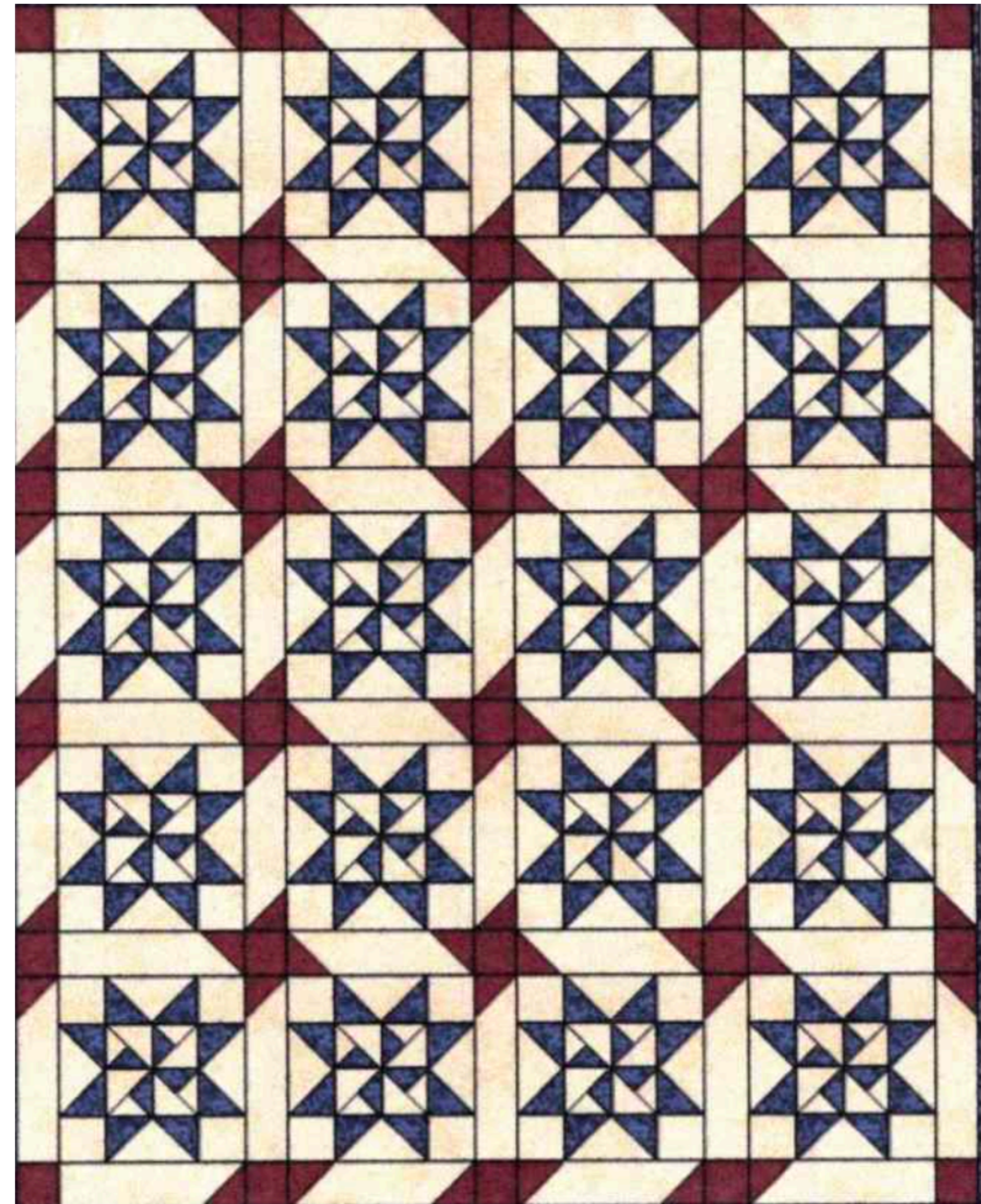
# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

Over a period of 36 years, Martha, being a skilled needleworker, produced her famous "shell" patterned cushions for the chairs at Mount Vernon. This picture, from Mount Vernon's shop, shows a cross-stitch kit inspired by her cushions.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

The Martha Washington Star Block is a popular quilt block, a favorite amongst quilters.



# Martha Dandridge Custis Washington

Martha Washington died on May 22, 1802, at age 70, three years after her beloved husband, George.



# George Washington

George Washington was born on February 22, 1732, to Augustine Washington and Mary Ball Washington at his family's plantation on Popes Creek in Westmoreland County in Virginia.

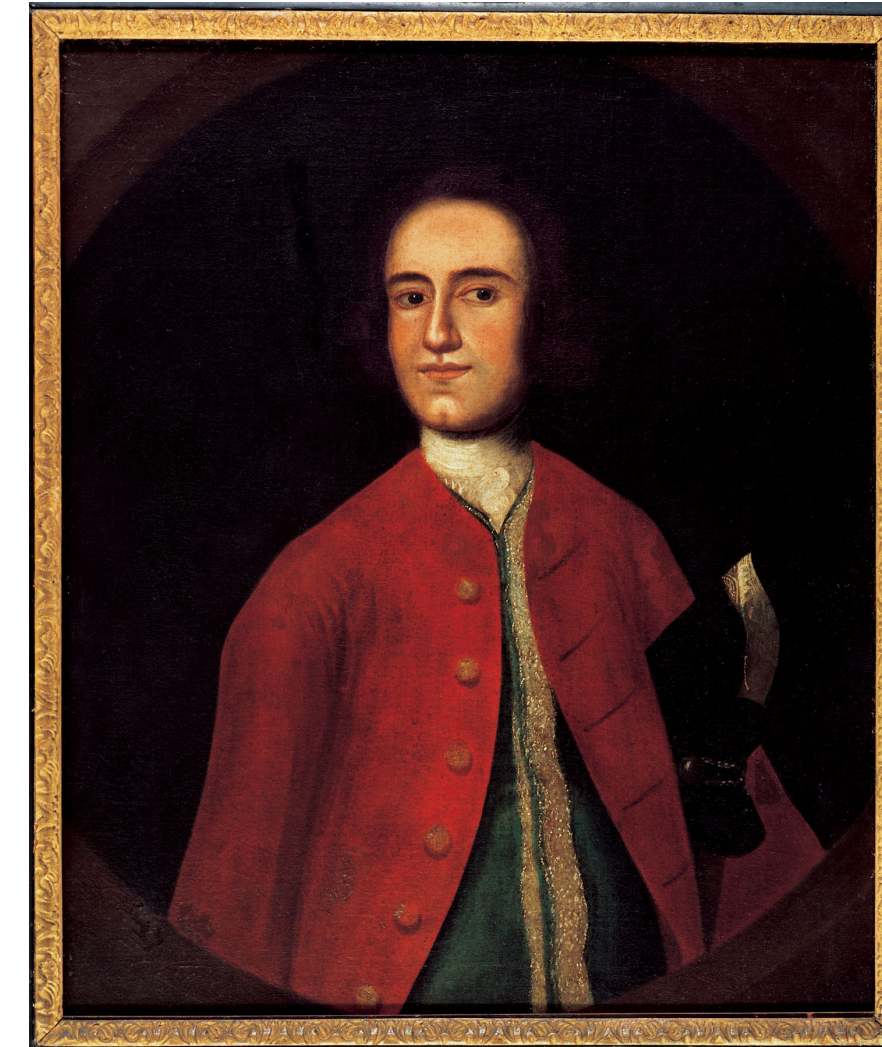
Augustine Washington was a planter, justice of the peace and an iron ore miner.



# George Washington

Augustine married George's mother after his first wife, Jane Butler, died in 1729.

George had five full siblings: Betty, Samuel, John, Charles, Mildred and several half siblings from his father's first marriage: Lawrence, Augustine Jr. and Jane, who died young.



Lawrence  
(above),  
Betty and  
Charles



# George Washington

George's father died when George was 11, leaving most of his property to George's adult half-brothers. He never went to college and the only formal education was in Fredericksburg, where he received instruction on reading, writing, geometry, trigonometry and legal forms.



# George Washington

George's first career was a surveyor for Culpepper County, Virginia, in 1749.



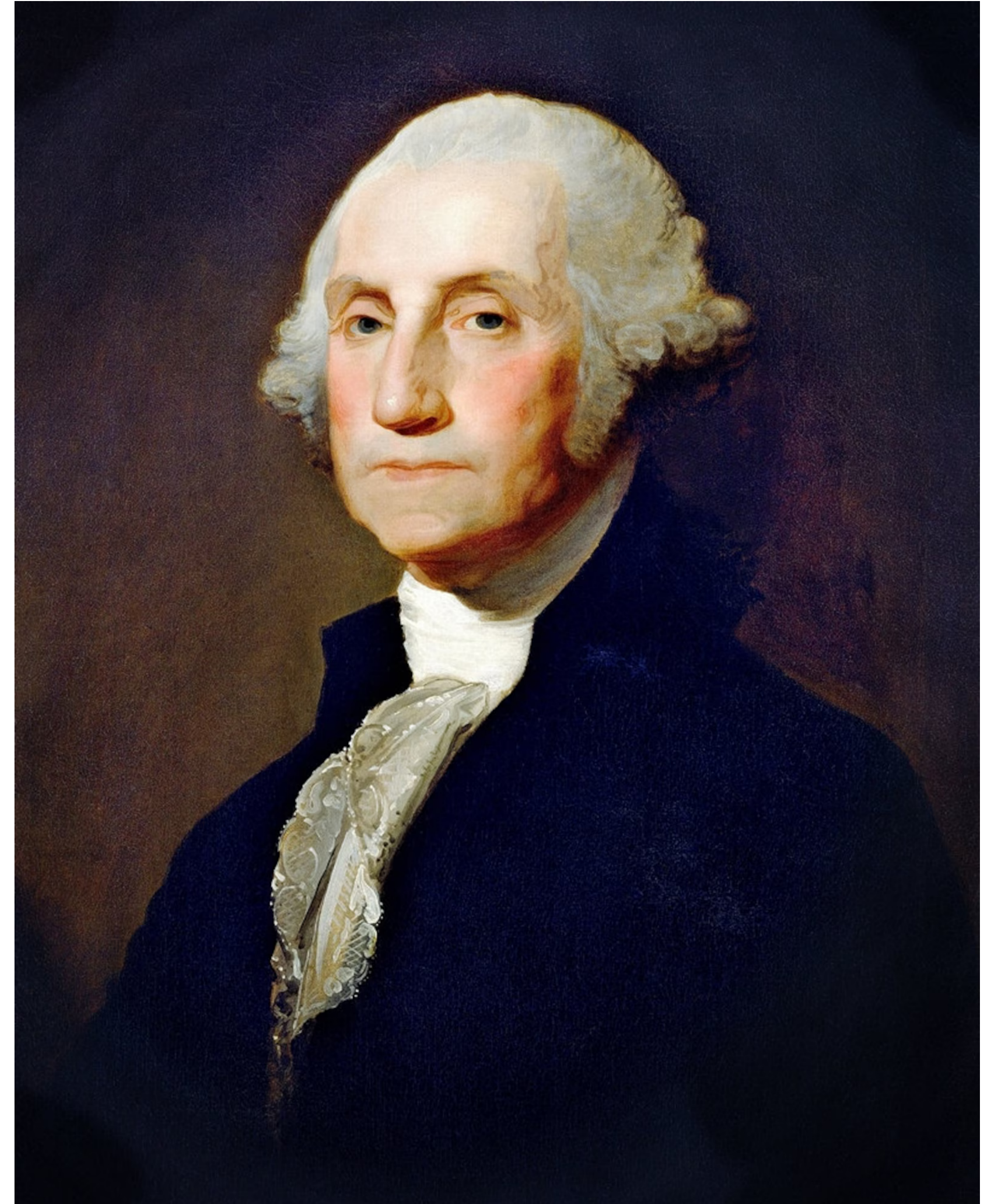
# George Washington

He was appointed Commander in Chief of the Continental Army by the Second Continental Congress in June of 1775, leading the Patriot forces throughout the American Revolutionary War.



# George Washington

George Washington was the first President of the United States of America, serving from 1789 to 1797.



# George Washington

While George was not a professional woodworker, he was deeply involved in the carpentry and woodworking at his beloved Mount Vernon estate. He designed and directed carpenters on the woodworking and grand architectural elements such as wood paneling, mantels and even farm equipment.



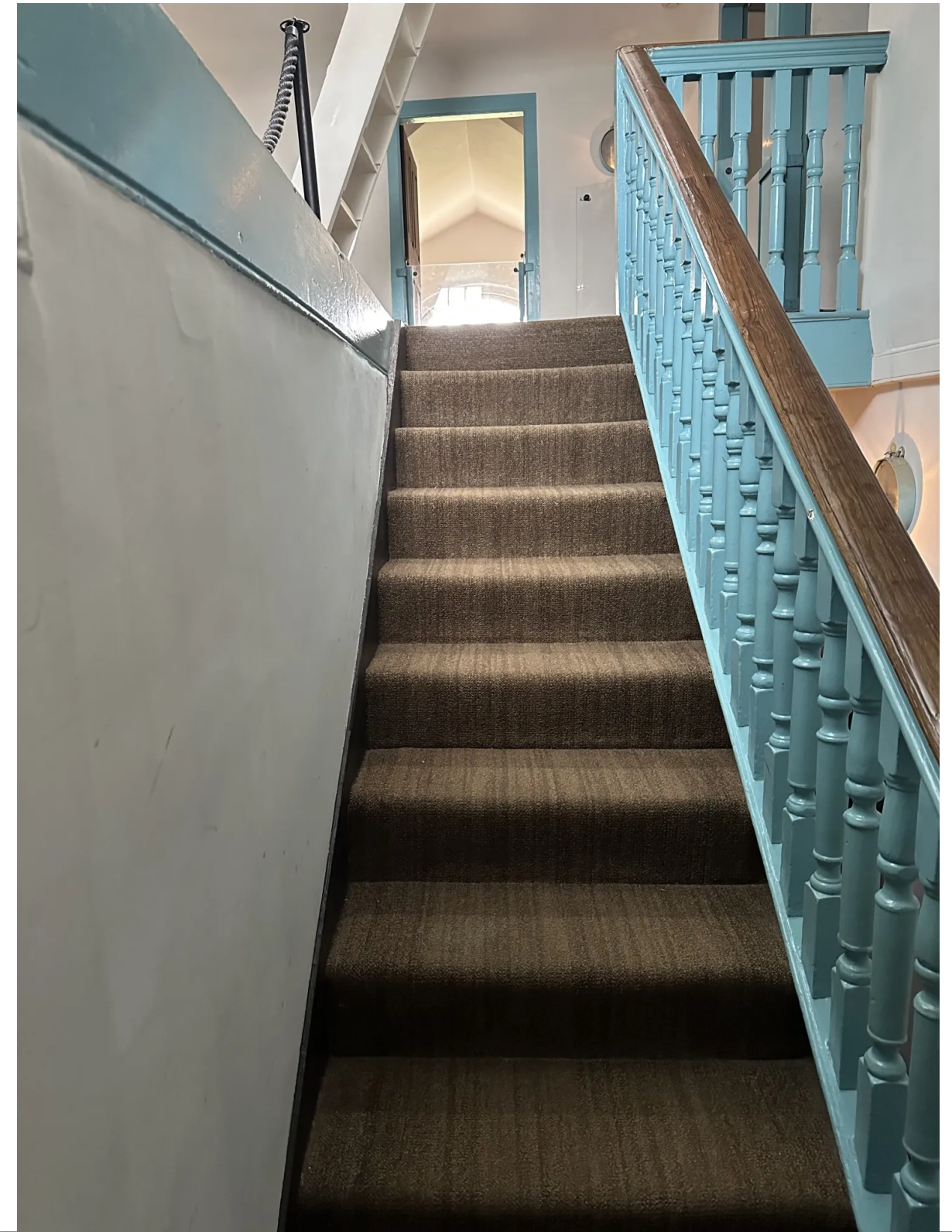
# George Washington

George created ways to make siding mimic stone (sand-painting) for Mount Vernon. His diaries and papers also detailed tasks like shaping timbers, cutting shingles, making furniture for his step daughter, Nellie's, music room known as the “Little Parlor.”



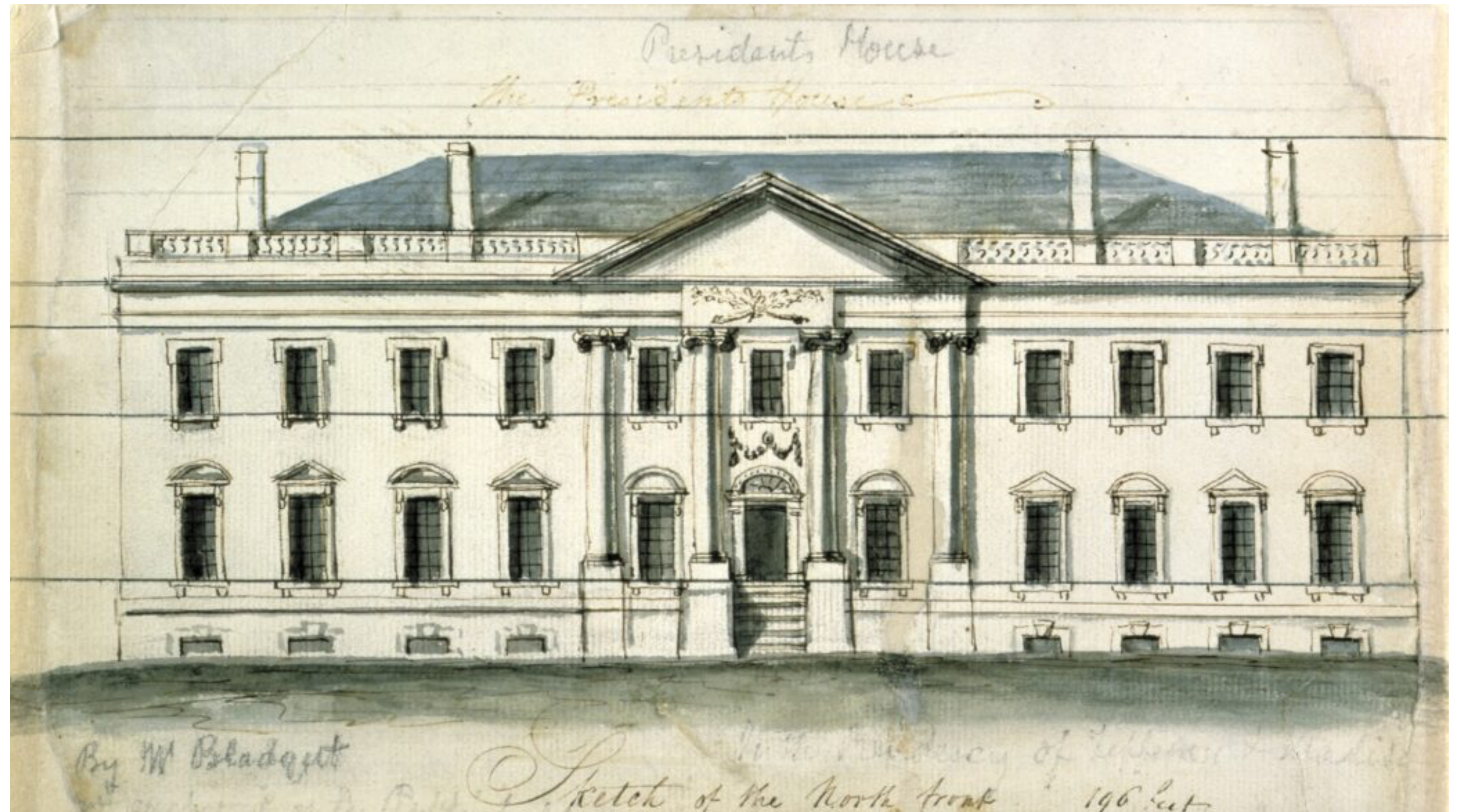
# George Washington

Even though George had dabbled in woodworking, he was more of a project manager and visionary for the woodworking at Mount Vernon.



# George Washington

George was a farmer, gardener, woodworker and business man even after becoming the first President of the United States. While at Mount Vernon, he oversaw the construction of the White House, choosing the interior and exterior designs.



# George Washington

The White House was completed November 1, 1800, three years after his term as President and one year after his death. George Washington was the only President of the United States who did not live in the White House. Instead he lived at the Samuel Osgood House in New York City and later at the President's House in Philadelphia



Samuel Osgood House



President's House

# George Washington



George Washington died on December 14, 1799, at age 67, surrounded by family.

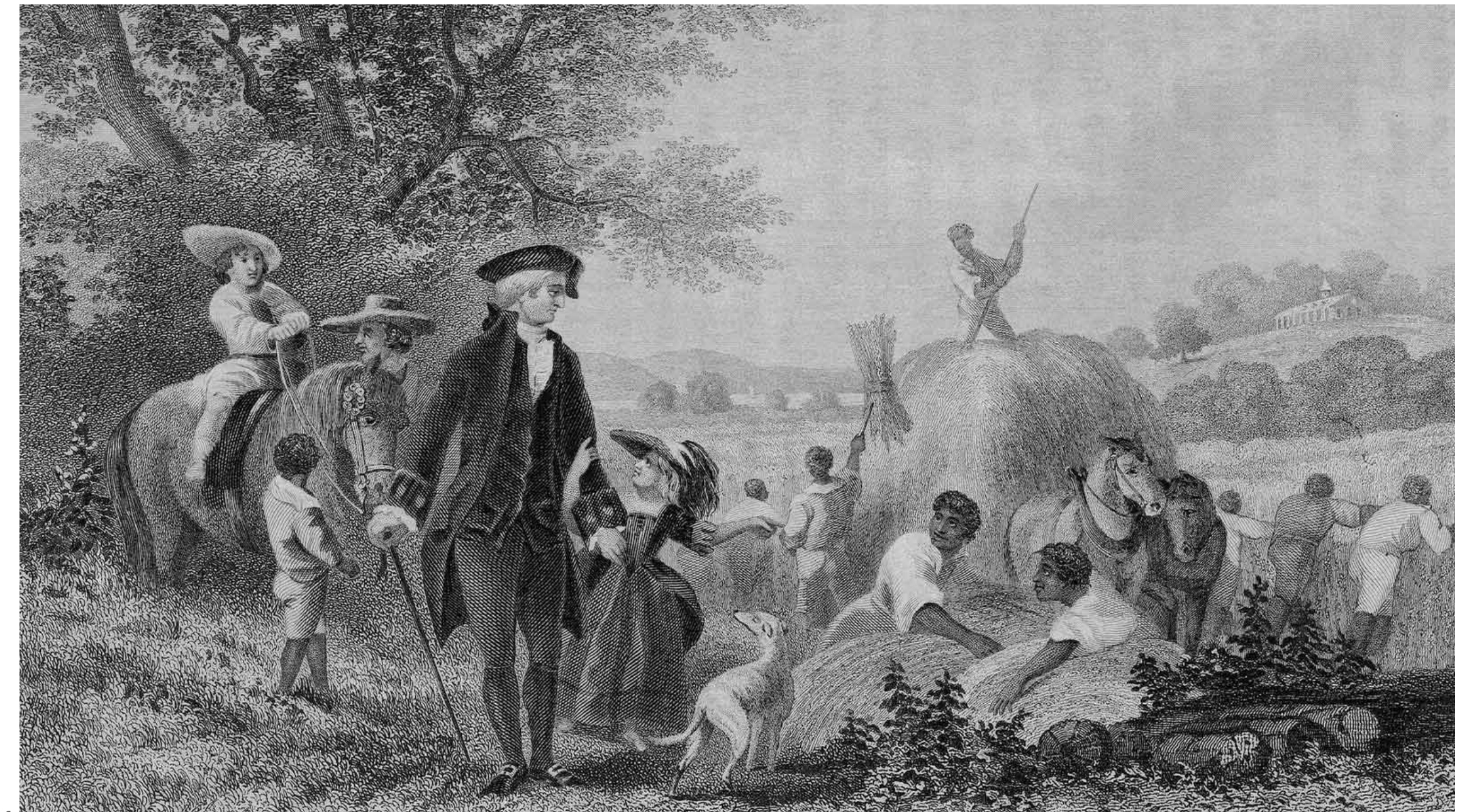
# Mount Vernon

Mount Vernon is the historic plantation home of George and Martha Washington, located on the Potomac River in Virginia.



# Mount Vernon

After marrying, Martha moved her household to Mount Vernon. This included 84 enslaved people considered part of her “dower share” (financial security) of her deceased first husband's estate.



# Mount Vernon

Mount Vernon is close to 11,000 square feet, with 21 rooms, 2 ½ stories and a full cellar. The ceilings of the mansion varied in height. The average height of the first floor ceilings are 10'9", while the ceilings on the third floor measure 7'3".



# Mount Vernon



Mount Vernon has four large, beautiful upper and lower gardens.

# Mount Vernon

Some people believed George Washington built Mount Vernon for his new bride, Martha. The truth is, Mount Vernon was built years before by George and his half brother as a gift for his sister-in-law.



# Mount Vernon

George rented Mount Vernon from his sister-in-law and became owner after her passing.



# Mount Vernon



The four large gardens are where the Washington's had peach, cherry, apple, pear and apricot orchards. There was an extensive vegetable garden as well as a large flower garden with numerous types of flowers

# Mount Vernon

The Washington's property went to Martha's grandchildren after her death and stayed in the family until 1858.



# Mount Vernon

Mount Vernon fell into severe disrepair in the 1850s, with timbers and ship masts being used to prop up the piazza roof.



# Mount Vernon

This level of disrepair prompted a national fundraising campaign. The Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union purchased the property from George Washington's step grandchildren in 1858.



# Mount Vernon

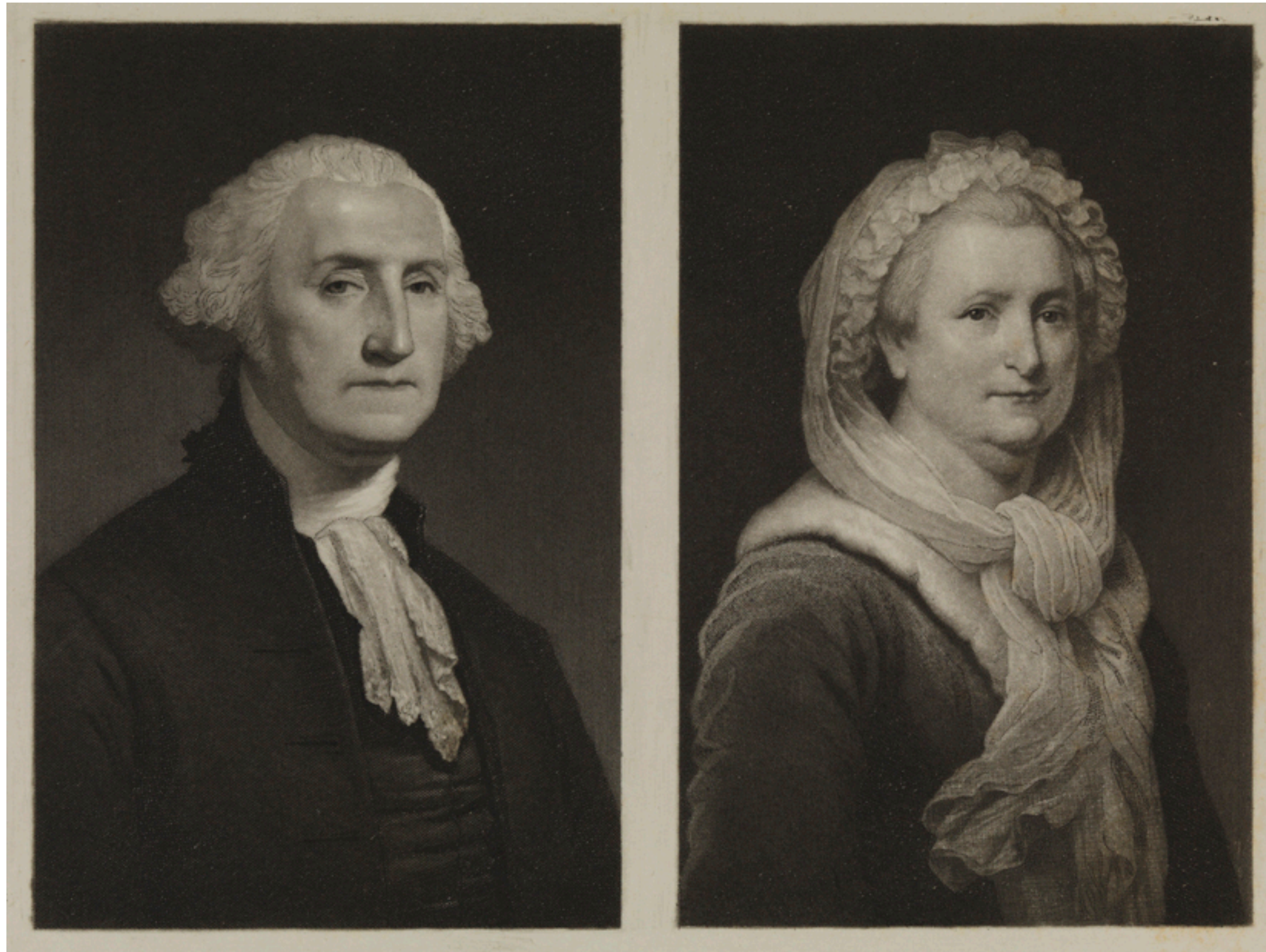
The Association took possession of the mansion and 200 acres. After they took possession of the property, the organization moved forward with restoring the mansion and grounds, which remain owned and operated by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association.



# George and Martha Washington



# George and Martha Washington



# George and Martha Washington



**THE END**