

# Gunston Grapevine

Summer 2016

The Quarrelsome Coachman  
page 22

Alewife to Shad

240<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the *Virginia Declaration of Rights*



## ENVISIONING THE FUTURE AT GUNSTON HALL

**S**hortly after turning twenty-one years of age in 1746, George Mason IV returned to the peninsula of land on which he had lived for the first nine years of his life.

Known as Dogue's Neck, the peninsula was defined by a high ridge running east to west and bordered by the Potomac River, Pohick Bay, and Belmont Bay. Mason's grandfather, George Mason II, purchased the Neck in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and his father, George Mason III, was born there in 1690. Subsequently, "our George" was born on the property in 1725 but after his father tragically died in 1735 as a result of a boating accident on the river, George's mother relocated the family back to her parent's holdings in what is now Stafford County.

After this relocation, Dogue's Neck was farmed and maintained, but no member of the Mason family lived there until "our George" returned in 1746. He did so having inherited over 6,000 acres of land on the Neck, and another 14,000 acres of land elsewhere in the colony of Virginia, to begin his life as a young member of the esteemed planter class. With many options and potential locations for making his start in life, and by virtue of his decision to return "home," it is clear that Dogue's Neck held special meaning for George.

Over the next 46 years prior to his death in 1792, George applied vision, energy, passion, creativity, and expertise to the transformation of this distinctive natural place. He initiated sizeable agricultural enterprises, built a wharf providing deep-water access to the river, constructed numerous buildings to support the operation of the plantation, planted gardens and enhanced the natural beauty of the place with one-of-a-kind landscape features, terraced the ridge leading down to the river plain, and perhaps most significantly, built a home for his growing family which he named Gunston Hall in honor of his family's ancestral holdings in England. The entirety of this huge effort, that of strategically, aesthetically, and entrepreneurially creating and sustaining a profitable plantation, as well as creating a place that appropriately served as an expression of his wealth and

status, was contemplated and completed by design, through careful planning, and over a long period of time. The entirety of this effort was also characterized by the same realities and contradictions evident in Mason's public life, specifically those associated with the institution of slavery. As such, the place envisioned and built by Mason encompassed multiple worlds, perspectives, and humanities.

These multiple perspectives continued to characterize Gunston Hall even after Mason's death in 1792. In the years following his death his beloved home experienced great change. The property suffered from exhausted soil, hosted only intermittent occupants, and was ultimately sold out of the Mason family in 1867. Subsequent uses of the property included serving as a school for newly freed African Americans after the American Civil War and use as a private residence for, among others, Louis and Eleanor Hertle.

Having purchased the property in 1912, the Hertles saved the home by preserving its historic fabric and, equally important, by living in and loving the place just as Mason had done many years before. The Hertles also bequeathed the property to the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purpose of establishing a perpetual memorial to the memory and legacy of George Mason and vested management responsibility for the historic site with a Board of Regents comprised of members of The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. After Mr. Hertle's passing in 1949, the provisions of this generous and impactful gift took effect and in the early 1950s Gunston Hall opened to the public as a museum. We have proudly been open to the public ever since.

Through all of this change, three constants remained: the magnificence of the home, the majesty of the place, and the humanity of those associated with the property.

As a result, all of us stand on the shoulders of those who have previously served as stewards of Gunston Hall.

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### **Gunston Hall Mission**

To utilize fully the physical and scholarly resources of Gunston Hall to stimulate continuing public exploration of democratic ideals as first presented by George Mason in the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights.

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We do so by honoring the past, but also by looking forward and by imagining the future of this very special and powerful place.

Recognizing the importance of looking forward, the Board of Regents of Gunston Hall, Inc. recently adopted a new campus master plan for Gunston Hall. This plan charts the next twenty years of the place so thoughtfully and carefully designed by a young, aspirational, and innovative George Mason and is reflective of the same vision, energy, passion, creativity, and expertise first applied by Mason to his home. This plan also represents the same potential available to George in 1746, when he first imagined the possibilities associated with his new home, and which remains achievable today as we imagine the possibilities associated with a “new” Gunston Hall. Just as important, Gunston Hall was characterized by diverse communities during George Mason’s occupancy, including both free and enslaved communities, and this plan seeks to bring these communities and all their associated humanity back to life in ways which will inform, educate, and inspire.



Specifically, this plan is driven by four core goals, which are:

1. To enlarge and enhance the historic core around Gunston Hall and restore this core to its Mason-era appearance.
2. To re-orient the guest experience and targeted audience at Gunston Hall towards youth, students, families, and, importantly, a demographic we are referring to as our “youngest citizens.”
3. To preserve the authenticity and intimacy of the Gunston Hall experience.
4. To improve and enhance the accessibility, efficiency, and functionality of our spaces for the benefit of guests, staff, and volunteers.

This plan was publically debuted on George Mason Day this year and the reaction from our community has been extremely positive. We are excited about what this plan represents and to learn more about this exciting plan, please visit [www.gunstonhall.org](http://www.gunstonhall.org) or contact me at [sstroh@gunstonhall.org](mailto:sstroh@gunstonhall.org).

Finally, our Board of Regents has also recently adopted a new visual identity and brand for Gunston Hall, featured below.

Drawing on the color palette which defines our distinctive place and highlighting the concepts of rights, home, and patriotism, this new visual identity is currently being rolled out, first with signage around the site.



Above, the new front entrance sign on Gunston Road welcomes visitors.

Left, the proposed site plan for the “new” Gunston Hall, clearly showing the Historic District, the Visitor District, the Education/Events District, and the Staff District.

Collectively, the adoption of our new visual identity and campus master plan reflect all of which makes Gunston Hall special and that which most defines Mason’s legacy and continuing relevance. We look forward to your participation in this next chapter of Gunston Hall’s story and thank you for your support.

It is a great day at Gunston Hall!

Scott Muir Stroh III  
Executive Director







Above, First Regent Helen Bragg Cleary is framed by the color guard from the Civil Air Patrol. Above right, 40 new citizens take the Oath of Allegiance. Right: a young visitor tries his hand at lawn bowling. Far right: State Delegate Mark Keam, a naturalized citizen himself, gives keynote remarks.



**George Mason Day  
Celebrating the 240th  
Birthday of the Virginia  
Declaration of Rights**

The Day began with a Special Naturalization Ceremony that welcomed 40 new citizens from 40 different countries. The historic grounds were filled with music, games, activities, food vendors, demonstrations, and costumed interpreters.

Later, a panel discussion led by five university professors brought George Mason's legacy into the present as they discussed "Why George Mason Matters."

Gunston Hall's new branding was introduced to the public as well as a new site plan for Gunston Hall's next 20 years.

And finally, there was cake!

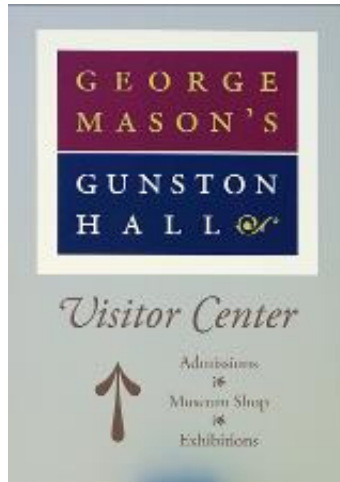


Mount Vernon Brass performs celebratory music (above).



Visitors of all ages use the beautiful day to enjoy Gunston Hall's landscape.





## More George Mason Day 2016

*Top: two little citizens enjoy the reception after the Naturalization Ceremony. Middle: Matt Dodd performs songs and stories of the Revolution during the afternoon. Below: George Mason, portrayed by Doug Cohen, chats with young visitors on the mansion porch.*

*Top: a young visitor discovers the 18th century skill of hoop rolling isn't as easy as it looks. Center: Park Naturalist Sandy Schwartz from Mason Neck State Park shares a photo of some of Mason Neck's furry citizens. Above: Executive Director Scott Stroh unveils Gunston Hall's new brand, colors, and graphics.*






‘THIS DAY WE HAVE HAD A FINE MODERATE RAIN...’  
 GEORGE MASON TO JOHN MASON MAY 20, 1790



*This day and yesterday and the day before that and all week last week and the week before that...Spring at Gunston Hall 2016 brought day-after-day rains, but schools kept coming for field trips and docents kept coming to teach about George Mason and his 18th century world. This is a typical scene as docents Janis Harless, Julia Smiley, Sue Sager, Mary Scott, Ann McWhirt, and Susan Pederson await Signal Hill Elementary School on a rainy Friday, May 13. The school was late, but the docents adapted and delivered their usual excellent tour. Photo by docent Nancy Sage.*

From April 1 through May 31, the Gunston Hall Docents' Association served **2,200** students during **36** days of tours. Rain or shine. But mostly rain. 



*First graders from West Springfield Elementary explore the details in the Gunston Hall diorama in the Visitors' Center Museum during their field trip on May 26.*



### THE MASON FAMILY FISHERIES

By Paul Y. Inashima, Consulting Archeologist

**F**ISH PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE in the plantation economy of the Mason family. Fish caught during the year supplied food for the Mason family as well as for their guests, slaves, indentured servants, and hired help.

Moreover, fish netted during the spring fish runs provided a reliable and important source of income. The offal or waste from fishing, also, supplied a valuable source of fertilizer.

As noted by George Washington, the Potomac River abounded in numerous species of edible fish.<sup>1</sup> Among these species were white (*Morone americana*) and yellow (*Perca flavescens*) perch, carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), catfish (*Ictalurus* sp.), sturgeon (*Acipenseridae oxyrinchus*), gar (*Lepisosteus osseus*), American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*), rockfish or striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*), alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) and blueback (*Alosa aestivalis*) herring, sheepshead (*Archosargus probatocephalus*), and hickory (*Alosa mediocris*) and American shad (*Alosa sapidissima*).<sup>2</sup>

Of these species, the anadromous herring, shad, and rockfish were the most common commercially fished species.

Virginia's fish resources

were valued and exploited from the earliest days of settlement.<sup>3</sup> Hence, it is more than possible that fishing of some sort was conducted by the late 17th-century settlers of Dogue (later Mason) Neck and its nearby vicinity.

These early enterprises were inspired by Native American practices and were situated at locations previously utilized by these groups. Moreover, as Native American fish-

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Figure 1: The locations of selected Mason family shad and herring fisheries.

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ing grounds were commonly situated near their hamlets and cleared planting fields, it is not surprising that most of the early homesteads on Dogue Neck were situated near those same fisheries.

The plantations of William Betty (c. 1687), Robert Colson (1687/1688), Edward Smith (1688), James Herryford (1689), and George Mason II (c. 1703/1704) were situated near the latter day fisheries of Gunston Landing, Hallowing Point, Barn Landing, Courts' Point, and Sandy Point.

Although it is possible that George Mason II engaged in commercial fishing off the shores of his Occoquan plantation, the earliest extant record of commercial fishing by the Mason family is the January 1, 1727 lease from Thomas Simpson, Planter, to George Mason III. This three lives lease permitted George Mason III, his wife Anne, and his son George Mason IV to operate a fish house on Simpson's land and to fish off his shore:<sup>4</sup>

Three decades later on Jan. 20, 1756, George Mason IV agreed with Catesby Cocke, the then owner of the former Simpson property, for "the reversion of the said fishery together with all and singular the appurtenances" for the sum of five shillings.<sup>4</sup> A memorandum added to the agreement, however, allowed Mason to continue to fish there for his own needs if he so desired.

The Masons operated their fisheries (Figure 1) using their own slaves, as well as increasingly over the years, employing fishery leases.<sup>5,6</sup> At various

times, ten or more fisheries operated along the Dogue (Mason) Neck shoreline (Table 1).<sup>7</sup> In addition, one fishery to the south and one fishery to the north existed along the Virginia shoreline. Along the Maryland shoreline, three or more fisheries operated. In 1819, Peter Coulter recalled that the Dogue Neck fisheries which had been rented included in a counterclockwise direction along the shoreline of the Neck: Sandy Point, High Point, Sycamore Landing, Mills Landing, Holland Point, Courts' Point, Barn Landing, Gunston, and Ferguson's Landing.<sup>8</sup>

Mason tenants with access to fishing shores such as John Ferguson fished for personal, if not, commercial purposes.<sup>9</sup> The seines (Figure 2) used by George Mason IV towards the end of the 18th century probably ranged between 65 and 80 fathoms in length and 12 feet or more in depth.<sup>10</sup> The seine boat was typically about 18 feet long and was propelled with 4 oars (Figure 2).<sup>11</sup> In later years, the size of the seines and net boats increased dramatically, allowing for the capture of significantly greater quantities of fish.

Most of the Mason fisheries had fish houses for storing salt, fish, and barrels and sheds for processing the fish and for equipment storage; some fisheries had facilities for housing workers.<sup>12</sup>

The amount of income which could have been derived by the Mason family during the eighteenth century from the spring fishing operations is suggested by the income earned by George Washington's single fishery. In 1770, Washington received £10 for the use of his fish house plus 3 shillings (Virginia currency) per thousand herring and 8 shilling 4 pence (Maryland currency) per hundred whitefish (shad).<sup>13</sup> For that season, he earned £102 Virginia currency. In 1773, Washington claimed to have sold herring at his landing for 15 shillings per barrel and in Jamaica at 25 shillings.

Further indications of the profitability of the Mason family fisheries are provided by George Mason V's estate accounts and by contemporary advertisements. After George Mason V's death, \$6,616.03 in rents were collected between 1797 and 1808 according to his executors.<sup>14</sup> In

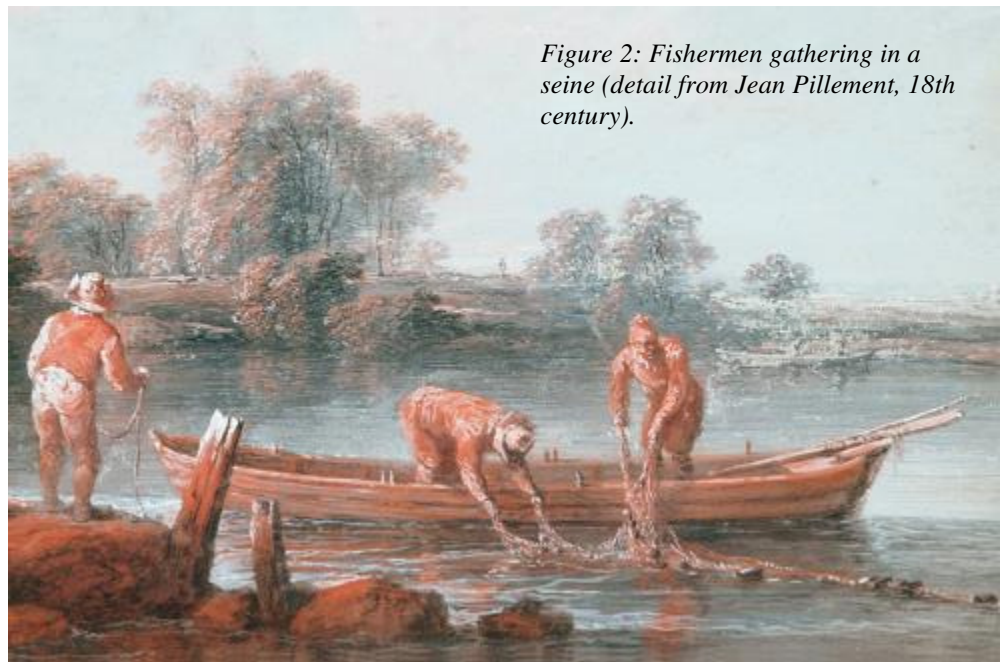


Figure 2: Fishermen gathering in a seine (detail from Jean Pillement, 18th century).

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1824, George Mason VI stated that fisheries on his portion of Dogue Neck had rented for as much as \$1,000 a year and generally for \$400 to \$500 a year.<sup>15</sup>

On the open market, shad was valued more than herring; rockfish, about the same as beef or lamb. For instance in 1787, shad could be purchased for 30 shillings per barrel, and herrings, for 15 shillings.<sup>16</sup> By 1800, rock fish was being sold at 6 to 8 cents a pound; herring, for 3 to 4 dollars a barrel; and shad, for 4-1/2 to 6 dollars a barrel.<sup>17</sup> During the same period, beef sold for 6 to 8 cents per pound, and veal and lamb, for 8 to 10 cents per pound.

George Mason V owned two Queensware fish dishes and two fish kettles indicating that fish were a part of the formal menu at Lexington.<sup>18</sup> Since George Washington was extremely fond of fish, it is likely that it was served during the meals he ate while visiting George Mason IV at Gunston.<sup>19</sup> Thomas Mason's estate inventory taken in October 1800 listed 8 barrels of herrings valued at £4.16.0 and 4 barrels of shad valued at £4.0.0, suggesting that he had kept some of his spring fish catch for use on his plantations.<sup>5</sup>

Fish scales (Figure 3) and bones which have been recovered within the vicinity of Gunston Hall provide additional evidence of its consumption by the Mason family, their slaves, and their tenants.

Herring, caught and stored during the spring fish runs, were a staple of slave diet and were supplemented,

*Figure 3: Fish scales from George Mason III's/IV's 18th-century tenant John Ferguson's home site, 44FX955 (fish spear digitally reconstructed from a tine recovered in 1976; photomicroscopy by the author). Bar scale in centimeters.*

throughout the year with other fish such as catfish, gar, and perch which the slaves were permitted to catch and keep.

### Virginia Fisheries

**Barn Landing Fishery (also, known as Cornfield Landing):** Barn Landing was situated within lands acquired by George Mason II around 1694.<sup>20</sup> This tract was later owned by George Mason III, George Mason IV, George Mason V, and George Mason VI. Between 1797 and 1807, Barn Landing was continuously under rent by a series of fishermen including John Stone, William Lindsay, Violet and Simpson, and Kelemn Barker (Table 2). Its annual rental ranged from £25 to \$175. In 1818, George Mason VI offered a 5 year rental on this landing for a sum above \$300 a year.<sup>21</sup> In that year, a fish house stood at Barn Landing.<sup>22</sup> In 1836, it was described as "an excellent Shad Fishery."<sup>23</sup> Although Barn Landing was sold out of the Mason family in 1844, Eleanor A.C. Mason retained her dower rights to the property until 1866.<sup>24</sup> In 1853, she offered it for rent, describing it as "formerly profitably fished."<sup>25</sup>

**Cockpit Point Fishery:** Cockpit Point was acquired initially by George Mason II sometime after 1691. In his 1715 will, he bequeathed it to John Hudman.<sup>26</sup> George Mason III, subsequently reacquired the property in two parcels from Prior Smallwood (200 acres, April 3/4, 1724) and Lewis Ellzey (200 acres, August 17, 1733).<sup>27</sup> Cockpit Point was known as a shad and herring fishery. It was sold out of the Mason family in 1811.<sup>28</sup>

**Colonel Mason's Fish House & Belmont Bay Fishery:** The Belmont Bay fishery was leased by George Mason III in 1727.<sup>4</sup> Its use continued until 1756 when George Mason IV surrendered the lease to Catesby Cocke, the then owner of the property. The Belmont fishery was considered by some to be the best fishery on the Potomac River.<sup>29</sup>

**Courts' Point Fishery (also, known as Coats' or Coate's Point):** The tract containing the Court's Point Fishery was purchased by George Mason IV around 1770.<sup>30</sup> After his death, this tract passed, in turn, to George Mason V and George Mason VI. In 1824, George Mason VI



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claimed that “about 500 barrels of shads” had been taken at Courts’ Point during a season and that “ten millions of herring” could “confidently” be had.<sup>31</sup> He added that the accommodations included “good comfortable buildings.”

Courts’ Point was sold out of the Mason family in 1838.<sup>32</sup> A year later an advertisement noted that the fishery was “supplied with all the necessary houses, sheds & c. for conducting the business on an extensive

lands containing the fishery were sold out of the Mason family in 1844 although Eleanor A.C. Mason retained her dower rights until 1866.<sup>24</sup>

**Gunston Landing Fishery (also, known as Tick Landing):** In 1824, George Mason VI described “This shore is remarkable for land custom of wagons, & c. and is easily fished: five or six hauls can be made on a tide.”<sup>35</sup> He added that there were “good comfortable buildings” on the landing. In 1836, an advertisement stated that it was a “celebrated Herring Fishery.”<sup>36</sup> Gunston Landing

was sold out of the Mason family in 1844 although Eleanor A.C. Mason retained her dower rights until 1866.<sup>24</sup> She attempted to rent the fishery as late as 1853.<sup>25</sup>

**Hallowing (also, Holland or Hollin) Point Fishery/ Fisheries:** The Hallowing Point and Mills’ Landing fisheries lay within property acquired by George Mason III sometime between 1723 and 1734.<sup>37</sup> This land was inherited, in turn, by George Mason IV, George Mason V, and George Mason VI. At various times, between one and two (upper and lower) fisheries had been worked at

Hallowing Point. In 1814, William Patterson operated a grocery store and ferry here and intended to “contract at [this place] . . . with persons disposed to cure Fish; as he will be able to supply them with any quantity of Shad And Herring.”<sup>38</sup> His ferry ran to the Maryland shore and was called “Mason’s Ferry.” In 1835, Hallowing Point was sold out of the Mason family.<sup>39</sup> Several years after its sale, it was noted in 1839 that “a Seine of 300 fathoms” had been used at the landing and in 1841 that “the fisheries on the shore furnish a good supply of the best manure.”<sup>40</sup>

**High Point Fishery:** The High Point, Sandy Point, Stony Point, and Sycamore Landing fisheries were situated within lands acquired by George Mason II in 1696.<sup>41</sup> This property was, subsequently, owned by George Mason III, George Mason IV, George Mason V, William Eilbeck Mason, and John Mason. In 1820, John Mason proclaimed that “when properly fished, [High Point yields an] abundance of Herring” and “frequently quantities of Shad.”<sup>42</sup> In 1824, John Mason stated that the fishery had “not been used for many years, and is not provided with houses.”<sup>43</sup> In 1840, the High Point Fisheries were said to be “some of the most valuable, productive, and well known fisheries on the river Potomac” and to present “an opportunity for a most profitable investment.”<sup>44</sup> High Point was sold out of the Mason family at public auction on Nov. 26, 1840.<sup>45</sup>

**Hog Island Fishery:** Hog Island was situated several miles south of Alexandria and opposite the mouth of Broad Creek. Thomson Mason purchased the property containing the Hog Island Fishery in 1816.<sup>46</sup> In 1816, Thomson Mason declared that Hog Island was “an excellent HERRING FISHERY” and possessed “a very commodious Fish-House.”<sup>47</sup> The tract which contained this fishery was inherited by Thomson’s daughter, Ann Eilbeck Mason Dawson. Hog Island was sold out of the Mason family in 1848.<sup>46</sup>

**Mills’ (also, known as Moore’s) Landing Fishery:** Mills’ Landing was located near the Great Marsh. Originally known as Moore’s Landing, Mills’ Landing was later renamed after George Mills who rented it out during the early 19th century. In 1805, Mills paid £6 to George Mason V’s estate; in 1808, £12.<sup>14</sup> In 1815, Mills’ Landing was offered for rent for the 1816 and

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*~a pot of baked White Fish,  
& a Pot of soured white  
Fish Roes, we put up for you  
in the Spring have already  
spoiled in my Cellar...*

*George Mason to John Mason in  
Bordeaux, France, July 26, 1790*

scale, and was leased at \$1,000 a season.<sup>33</sup> The advertisement, further, claimed it to be “second but to one” on the river.

**Ferguson’s Landing Fishery:**

The Ferguson Landing and Gunston Landing fisheries lay within lands obtained by George Mason II around 1700.<sup>20</sup> Afterwards, this tract was owned by George Mason III, George Mason IV, George Mason V, and George Mason VI. Ferguson’s Landing was worked by John Ferguson who leased the lands including this shore from 1731 to his death in 1760.<sup>34</sup> Its use continued into the early 19th century (Table 2). The



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1817 spring seasons.<sup>48</sup> It was sold out of the Mason family in 1835.<sup>39</sup>

**Sandy Point Fishery:** Sandy Point was situated at the southwestern corner of Belmont Bay. Between

1797 and 1807, Sandy Point yielded an annual rent of between \$100 and \$305 (Table 2). In 1832, Sandy Point was described as “a very excellent Shad and Herring shore, considered equal to any in the neighborhood, and is fished at small expense.”<sup>49</sup> An unnamed

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Table 1. Acquisition History of the Lands Containing Fishing Landings.			
Fishery	Acquired from	Acquired by	Date
Prince William County, Virginia			
Cockpit Point	Prior Smallwood	George Mason II	1724
Dogue Neck, Fairfax County, Virginia			
Barn Landing	Edward Smith estate	George Mason II	c. 1694
Sycamore Landing	William Sherwood	George Mason II	c. 1696
Stony Point	William Sherwood	George Mason II	c. 1696
High Point	William Sherwood	George Mason II	c. 1696
Sandy Point	William Sherwood	George Mason II	c. 1696
Ferguson’s Landing	William Betty estate	George Mason II	c. 1700
Gunston Landing	William Betty estate	George Mason II	c. 1700
Hallowing Point	Uncertain	George Mason III	btw 1723-1734
Mill’s Landing	Uncertain	George Mason III	btw 1723-1734
Belmont	Thomas Simpson	George Mason III	1727
Courts’ Landing	William Courts	George Mason IV	1770
Fairfax County, Virginia			
Hog Island	Charles W. Vallenger	Thomson Mason	1816
Charles County, Maryland			
Goose Bay	Edward Rookwood	George Mason II	1705
Stump Neck	Thomas Cowper	George Mason III	1725
Rum Point	Maryland Patent	George Mason III	1728
Mattawoman	Robert Brawner	William Mason	1815



Fishery	1797	1798	179	1800	1801	1802	1803	180	1805	1806	1807
Sandy Pt.	PC (\$100)			PC (\$184)		HW (\$305)		HW (\$204)		RG	RG
High Pt.	M&M (?)			PC (\$75)	PC (\$95)	PC (\$311)		B&C (?)			
Stony Pt.				B & H (?)		NM (?)		PC (?)			
Sycamore L.	B (?)	DB (?)		WM (?)		F (?)					
Mill's L.							S & M (\$50)	MFD (\$50)			
Holland Pt.											
Court's Pt.						MR (\$31)		MR (\$63)			
Barn L.	JS (£25)		WL (?)			V&S (\$80) <sup>b</sup>		Bk (\$150)		Bk (\$175)	
Gunston L.						V&S <sup>b</sup>	V&S <sup>b</sup>				
Ferguson's L.										JH (?)	JH (?)

Notes: 1. Bk, K. Barker; B & H, Barton and Huskins; B & C, Daniel Bayley and Daniel Cooksey; DB, Dotson Blake; B, Brawner; PC, Peter Coulter; F, Franks; JH, John Hereford; WL, William Lindsay; MFD, Mills, Fairfax, and Dorsey; RG, Robinson Gray; M & M, McCarty and Mitchell; WM, William Millam; NM, Ninian Moore; MR, Matthew Reardon; JS, John Stone; S & M, J. Stone and G. Mills; HW, Hanson Williams; V & S, Violett and Simpson. 2. Barn Landing and Gunston were included in the same lease.

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fishery which “has not been much fished of late years, but was formerly considered a very good Landing” lay near it. Sandy Point was sold out of the Mason family in 1833.<sup>50</sup>

**Stony Point Fishery:** Stony Point lay midway between High Point and Sycamore Landing. In 1820, John Mason noted that an abundance of herring was caught at Stony Point.<sup>42</sup> Stony Point was sold out of the Mason family at public auction on November 26, 1840.<sup>45</sup> (The celebrated Stony Point Fishery of the late 19th century encompassed the entire shore line between Sycamore Landing and High Point due to the large size of the seine

being used.)

**Sycamore Landing Fishery:** Sycamore Landing lay to the west of the Great Marsh and below the location of George Mason IV’s Dogue Neck dwelling house. Until his death in 1820, William Eilbeck Mason (George Mason V’s second oldest son) operated a fishery at Sycamore Landing.<sup>51</sup> He employed his own slaves as well as some rented from his younger brother Richard Barnes Mason. In 1820, John Mason noted that Sycamore Landing “is particularly remarkable for the great quantity of shad taken at it.”<sup>42</sup>

He added that “it is bordered by an extensive and hard sand beach, well situated for landing and curing fish; and provided with extensive

house-room for the accommodation of the fishermen, and for storing articles appertaining to the business.” In 1824, John Mason, Jr. claimed that “nearly two hundred thousand shad, and an immense quantity of herring, were taken there, with a single seine, in less than one month. It receives a very great share of water custom [business], to which an excellent harbor peculiarly adapts it; and is provided with all the requisite buildings, vats, &c for the most extensive operations . . . on hand a complete fishing equipment, in good repair, fitted to it, consisting of seines, rope, boats and capstans, on a new and excellent construction.”<sup>52</sup>

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In 1825, it was reported that “One of the greatest haul of *rock fish* ever known on the Potomac, was made at the Sycamore landing on Friday last. At one drag of the seine *four hundred and fifty-four* of these fish were taken—and, what is still more extraordinary, their average weight could not have been less than *sixty pounds*. Many of them weighted eighty pounds.”<sup>53</sup> Sycamore Landing was sold out of the Mason family at public auction in 1840.<sup>45</sup>

### Maryland Fisheries

**Goose Bay Fishery or Fisheries:** The Goose Bay Fishery was situated south of Chicamuxen Creek. The lands encompassing Goose Bay were purchased in 1705 from Edward Rookwood by George Mason II.<sup>54</sup> It was described in 1857 as an “extensive and well known HERRING AND SHAD FISHERY” and in 1866 as “one of the best Herring Fisheries on the [Potomac] river.”<sup>55, 56</sup> It was leased out during much of the nineteenth century by the descendants of Thomas Mason (his son Thomas and his grandsons Berry and Thomas), George Mason IV’s youngest son. During the 1830s, it was leased by Thomas L. Speake and Roderick G. Watson.<sup>57</sup> During the early 1850s, it was leased by Messrs. Watson and Gray.<sup>58</sup> In 1859, Upper Goose Bay was rented to T.B. Gray for \$900 a year; Lower Goose Bay, to Mr. Cunningham for \$700.<sup>59</sup> Gray used a seine of 750 fathoms and employed 50 men and 2 boats. Cunningham used a seine of 800 fathoms and employed 50 men and 2 boats. During the Civil War, the fisheries buildings were destroyed.<sup>60</sup> In 1866, Goose Bay was offered for rent at \$300 a year.<sup>61</sup> In 1871, it was fished by William Runner.<sup>62</sup> In

1873, it was operated by Price Gray.<sup>63</sup> In 1875, Goose Bay was worked by M. Cunningham.<sup>64</sup> After the third Thomas Mason’s death in 1906, a court decree awarded ownership to Kora Mason Chase, the daughter of George Mason of Hollin Hall, in 1908.<sup>65</sup> She, in turn, deeded the property to her daughter Helen Chase Mason.<sup>66</sup> Goose Bay was divided into three tracts and was sold out of the Mason family in 1912 and 1914.<sup>67, 68, & 69</sup> Goose Bay was the last Potomac River fishery owned by the Mason family.

**Rum Point Fishery:** The Rum Point Fishery was situated at the mouth of Mattawoman Creek in Charles County. Rum Point was patented by George Mason III on May 28, 1728.<sup>70</sup> It was, subsequently, owned by George Mason IV; by his son William; and lastly, by William’s son, George (later of Hollin Hall).

For the 1813 season, Jacob Merchant had relocated to Rum Point to sell fish for cash and for barter for corn, bacon, and hides.<sup>71</sup> In 1818, it was claimed that “upwards of \$2,000” had been cleared in one season and that “one to two thousand barrels” of fish could be struck.<sup>72</sup> In addition, it was noted that the offal from the fishery could be used as manure to enrich agricultural fields. In 1827, it was noted that numerous improvements had been made to the property within the past four years.<sup>73</sup> These included “a large brick dwelling, salt and store houses, houses for the accommodation of the hands, and sheds for curing fish, with vats and stands sufficient to contain at *one time* three thousand barrels.” The fishing apparatus consisted of “two large Seines, a very superior boat, capstans of the most improved kind, lamps for lighting the shore....” These improvements had cost “upwards of seven thousand dol-

lars.” It was stated that over the previous three years, “upwards of *thirty thousand dollars*” had been cleared from the fishery. The Rum Point Fishery along with the surrounding 100 acre part of Mason’s Enlargement, initially, was sold out of the Mason family on Feb. 19, 1829.<sup>74</sup> Rum Point, subsequently, was repurchased at public auction by George Mason of Hollin Hall on May 22, 1843.<sup>75</sup> It was sold a final time by George Mason on Feb. 13, 1852.<sup>76</sup>

**Stump Neck Fisheries:** The Stump Neck Fisheries were situated along the Potomac River between the mouths of the Mattawoman and Chicamuxin creeks. Stump Neck was acquired by George Mason III on Feb. 13, 1725 from Thomas Cowper.<sup>77</sup> It was, subsequently, inherited by George Mason IV and, after his death, by his son, William. In turn, it was inherited by William’s son, William Stuart Mason. William Stuart Mason traded Stump Neck to his cousin, William Eilbeck Mason, for a portion of Lexington. At various times, between 2 and 6 herring fisheries were said to have been located at Stump Neck.<sup>78</sup> In 1812, one of the landings was rented to Jacob Merchant.<sup>71</sup> He caught and sold fish there. Merchant catered to the water trade and exchanged fish for cash as well as for trade in corn, bacon, and hides. In 1821, George Mason VI described two of the fisheries as “first rate.”<sup>79</sup> Stump Neck was sold out of the Mason family by William Eilbeck Mason’s estate on Dec. 23, 1823.<sup>80</sup>

**Unnamed Mattawoman Fishery:** This unnamed fishery lay along the south side of Mattawoman Creek at the mouth of a small creek. The property containing this fishery was acquired by William Mason, George Mason IV’s son, in 1815.<sup>81</sup> It was given, in turn, to his son

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George Mason, later of Hollin Hall.<sup>82</sup> In 1817, this fishery was described as a “good spring and winter fishery.”<sup>83</sup> The land containing this fishery was sold out of the Mason family in 1826.<sup>84</sup> 🌸

## 18th-Century Fish Receipts

### To Boil Herrings

Clean half a dozen herrings, and throw them into a pan of cold water, stir them about, and change the water once; fet on a stew-pan, with water enough to cover them, some falt, and a little vinegar; when the water boils put in the herrings; when they are enough, lay them on a fish-plate in a warm dish.

Sauce-fennel boiled and chopt fmall, with melted butter.

### *The Ladies Assistant, 1787*

#### To dress a Bass [Rockfish]

Seafon high with falt, pepper and cayenne, one flice falt pork, one of bread, one egg, fweet marjoram, fummer favory and parfley, minced fine and well mixed, one gill wine, four ounces butter; stuff the bass-bake in the oven one hour; thin flices of pork laid on the fish as it goes into the oven; when done pour over dissolved butter; ferve up with stewed oysters, cramberries [sic], boiled onions or potatoes.

### *American Cookery, 1796*

#### To broil Shad

Take a fresh shad, falt and pepper

it well, broil half an hour; make a fmoke with fmall chips while broiling, when done add butter, and wine if agreeable.

### *American Cookery, 1796*

Notes:

- George Washington to Arthur Young, December 12, 1793, letter transcribed in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick.
- Alice Lippson, editor, *The Chesapeake Bay in Maryland --An Atlas of Natural Resources*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. D.B. Warden, 1819, *A Statistical, Political, and Historical Account of the United States of North America*, Longman et al., London, Volume III, p. 190. J.W. Milner, 1875, “Report of the Triana Trip,” *Miscellaneous Documents of the Senate of the United States*, Government Printing Office, Washington. *Bulletin of the United States Fish Commission for 1894, 1895*, Government Printing Office, Washington, Volume XIV, pp. 344-346.
- Philip A. Bruce, 1907, *Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, MacMillan Company, New York, pp. 112-113.
- January 1, 1727 Stafford County lease recited in *Fairfax County Deed Book D1:124* (torn page)-125. On January 20, 1756, George Mason IV surrendered his lease rights to the Belmont Fishery to Catesby Cocke. The Belmont Fishery was considered by some as “the best fishery on Potowmack river,” Andrew Baillie in “For Sale,” *Virginia Gazette*, September 12, 1766, pg. 3. The location of the Mason fish house is noted in two documents. The first is Robert Brooke’s “A Plan of Potomack River, from the Mouth of Sherrendo, Down to Chapawamsick, Surveyed in the Year 1737,” reproduced in James W. Foster, 1938, “Potomac River Maps of 1737 by Robert Brooke and Others,” *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, 18 (4):406-408 (#51 on map, Col. Mason’s Fish House). The second is George Mason IV’s “Field Notes Upon a Survey of Dogues Neck & the Land Bought of Holt’s Heirs in the Fork of Baxter Creek, Made February 1754,” manuscript on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. In Mason’s survey notes, it is referred to as “Mr. Cocks Fish House.”
- George Mason IV was likely familiar with fisheries as both his father, George Mason III, and his father-in-law, William Eilbeck (as indicated by an old seine in his estate inventory, *Charles County Inventories, 1753-1766*, taken November, 7, 1765, p. 454), had engaged in that pursuit. In a 1780 invoice from John De Neufville & Son to George Mason IV, several hundred fathoms of small rope intended for use with corks and leads were listed in container No. 11 (invoice transcribed in Robert Rutland, 1970, *The Papers of George Mason, 1725-1792: Volume II*, p.672). This rope apparently was intended for the repair of fishing seines. Two old seines noted in the estate inventory of George Mason V (*Fairfax County Will Book H-1*, taken January 10, 1797, p. 43) and two new shad seines, one old seine, twelve empty fish barrels, eight barrels of herrings, and four barrels of shad listed in Thomas Mason’s estate inventory (*Prince William County Will Book I*, taken October

28, 1800, p. 125) are indicative. During the spring of 1816 and 1817, William Eilbeck Mason worked the Sycamore Landing Fishery with his own slaves as well as slaves rented from his younger brother, Richard Barnes Mason (Charles County, Maryland estate accounts of William Mason, son of George Mason of Lexington).

6. The Masons advertised the availability of their fisheries for rent in the local newspapers: e.g., *Maryland Journal*, March 2, 1781, pg. 3; “Fisheries,” *Alexandria Gazette*, March 1, 1814, pg. 4; “To Rent,” *Alexandria Gazette*, March 3, 1818, pg. 3; “Shad Fishery to Be Rented,” *Alexandria Gazette*, March 11, 1824, pg. 1; “Fisheries for Rent,” *Alexandria Gazette*, March 10, 1836, pg. 3; and “TO FISHERMEN,” *Alexandria Gazette*, February 22, 1837, pg. 2. They, also, resorted to other means to attract local fishermen to rent their fishing landings.

7. William Eilbeck Mason noted in an advertisement for the sale of his Lexington estate that his lands included “four valuable Shad & Herring Fisheries,” *Alexandria Gazette*, September 7, 1818, pg. 4. William Stuart Mason on the land he inherited from his father in Charles County, Maryland along the Mattawoman had 5 herring fisheries, February 24, 1816, pg. 4, *Federal Republican*

8. Court depositions taken before L.W. Lewis and Wm. H. Foote at the Henly Nelson House, Fairfax County, October 15, 1819: Peter Coulter, Hanson Williams, and Matthew D. Reardon, despondents.

9. Archeological investigations at tenant John Ferguson’s home above present-day Gunston Cove yielded a tine from a fish spear, a catfish pectoral spine, and fish scales from rockfish, perch, shad, gar, etc. His estate inventory included a canoe which he likely used in fishing (*Fairfax County Will Book B1:263-268*, recorded April 21, 1761).

10. This appears to have been the size of seines used on the Potomac River towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century as suggested by George Washington’s July 15, 1772 order to Bradshaw and Davidson for three seines 12 feet deep by 65, 70, and 80 fathoms long, respectively (*The Writings of George Washington, 1745-1799*, John C. Fitzpatrick, editor). Earlier in the century, the seines were appreciably shorter as implied by an invoice sent of March 15, 1760 by Cary & Company of London to George Washington for two fish seines of 35 fathom length and 20 foot depth (*The Diaries of George Washington*, Volume I: 1748-1765, p. 261fn, Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, editors, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville).

11. “Five Pounds Reward,” *Virginia Gazette*, June 2, 1774, p. 2.

12. On May 15, 1797, L. Washington was paid £20 for building a fish house (George Mason V Executors’ Account Books). Repairs to the fishing landings were made by the Mason carpenters assisted occasionally by “hirelings.” Between 1802 and 1807, \$556.68 was spent on such repairs. In 1818, George Mason VI stated that his “six shad and herring fisheries” each had “fish houses,” (“Gunston for Sale,” October 24, 1818, *Daily National Intelligencer*, p. 3).

13. Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, editors,

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- 1976, *The Diaries of George Washington*, Volume II (1766-70), p. 217-218. Letter from George Washington to Thomas Newton, Jr., January 23, 1773 transcribed in John C. Fitzpatrick, editor, *The Writings of George Washington*, 1745-1799.
14. George Mason V Executor's Account Books.
15. "Gunston for Sale," *Alexandria Gazette*, August 4, 1825, p. 3.
16. "Prices Current, Alexandria," *Virginia Journal*, October 24, 1787, p. 3.
17. *Alexandria Times*, June 9, 1800, p. 3.
18. George Mason V's estate inventory, *Fairfax County Will Book H1:38-52*, taken January 10, 1797 and recorded December 16, 1799 (pp. 40 & 42).
19. George Washington Parke Custis, 1860, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington*, Derby & Jackson, New York, p. 421. Major General Robert Howe to Samuel B. Webb on June 6, 1782, *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb*, collected and edited by Worthington C. Ford, 1893, New York. Volume II: 1778-1782, p. 403.
20. Paul Y. Inashima, 2013, "Legacy: The Bushrod Residue," *Gunston Grapevine* 22(1):8-11.
21. "Barn Landing Fishery," *Alexandria Gazette*, October 5, 1818, p. 2.
22. "Gunston for Sale," *Alexandria Gazette*, October 24, 1818, p. 3.
23. "Fisheries for Rent," March 10, 1836, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3.
24. Henry Thomas, Commissioner to George Mason Graham, 1844, *Fairfax County Deed Book I3:395-397*. Eleanor A.C. Mason and George Mason Graham to William Merrill and William s. Dawson, 1866, *Fairfax County Deed Book G4:247-248*.
25. "FARMS TO BE RENTED," September 2, 1853, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3.
26. George Mason II will, made January 29, 1715, recorded November 14, 1716, *John Mercer's Land Book*, pp. 248-251. Library of Virginia Accession No. 20487. Copy also in *Fairfax County Land Causes, 1812-1832*, p. 133.
27. Prior Smallwood to George Mason III, April 3/4, 1724, *Stafford County Records, 1722-1728*, pp. 92-95. Lewis Ellzey to George Mason III, August 17, 1733, *Prince William County B:103-104*.
28. *Prince William County Land Tax Records for 1811*. The 1811 tax records indicate that the estate of Thomas Mason ceased to be obligated for the tax on Cockpit Point in that year and that Jesse Scott and William Smallwood then became responsible.
29. "For SALE," September 12, 1766, *Virginia Gazette*, p. 3.
30. William Courts to George Mason IV, c. 1770, *Fairfax County Deed Book J1:78ff, J1:82ff* (missing deed book). Cited in *Fairfax County Court Order Book 1770:98*.
31. "Shad Fishery to Be Rented," March 11, 1824, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 1.
32. Thomson F. Mason, trustee, to Richard Thompson, 1838, *Fairfax County Deed Book B3:390-392*.
33. "VALUABLE POTOMAC LAND AND FISHERIES FOR SALE," June 4, 1839, *Daily National Intelligencer*, p. 3.
34. George Mason III lease to John Ferguson, 1731, *Prince William County Deed Book A:162-165*.
35. "Shad Fishery to Be Rented," March 11, 1824, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 1.
36. "Fisheries for Rent," March 10, 1836, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3.
37. The 1723 rent rolls commented that Francis Cofer's 520 patent was "In Dispute with Colonel Mason," *Stafford County Rent Rolls for the Year 1723, Returned by James Carter, July<sup>ye</sup> 18<sup>th</sup>, 1724*. In 1734, George Mason III leased a portion of this tract to Thomas Boosman, suggesting that he had acquired ownership by then, *Prince William County Deed Book B:429*.
38. "No Title," April 9, 1814, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 1. "Ferry Bond," *Fairfax County Deed Book N2:144* [missing deed]; listed in *Fairfax County Court Order Book 1814:95*.
39. Thomson F. Mason, trustee, to Richard Thompson, 1835, *Fairfax County Deed Book B3:390-392*.
40. "Court's Point and Hallowing Point," September 2, 1839, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3. "A FARM FOR RENT," August 16, 1841, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3.
41. William Sherwood to George Mason II, 1696, *Stafford County Will Book Z:250*. Also, Edward Jaqueline to George Mason II, 1701, *Stafford County Will Book Z:250*.
42. "FISHERIES," December 7, 1820, *Daily National Intelligencer*, p. 3.
43. "Fisheries for Rent," January 12, 1824, *Daily National Intelligencer*, p. 1.
44. "Valuable Fisheries and Lands in Virginia, for Sale at Public Auction," November 18, 1840, p. 1.
45. "No Title," November 28, 1840, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 2.
46. Commissioners to Joshua Gunnell, 1848, title history recited in Joshua Gunnell to Benoni Wheat, 1849, *Fairfax County Deed Book N3:308-310*. Charles William Vallenger to Thomson Mason, 1816, *Fairfax County Deed O2:223-224*.
47. "FISHERY," February 19, 1816, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3.
48. "Public Auction," August 25, 1815, *Alexandria Herald*, p. 3. "PUBLIC SALE," September 8, 1815, *Alexandria Herald*, p. 4.
49. "Farms and Fisheries for Sale," August 13, 1832, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3.
50. William S. Mason, Thomson F. Mason, and George Mason VI to George H. Smoot, 1833, *Fairfax Deed Book A3:427-429*.
51. John Mason to William Eilbeck Mason, lease to Sycamore Landing, 1818, *Fairfax County Deed Book R2:405-408*. During the spring seasons of 1816 and 1817, William Mason rented two slaves, Davy and Demus, from his younger brother Richard Barnes Mason to use as "seine haulers" (George Mason VI administrator's accounts for William Mason's estate). For their services, he was charged \$120.
52. "Fisheries for Rent," January 12, 1824, *Daily National Intelligencer*, p. 1.
53. "Extraordinary," April 26, 1825, *Daily National Intelligencer*, p. 3.
54. Edward Rookwood to George Mason II, 1705, transaction recited in, 1763, *Charles County Deed Book L3:301-304*.
55. "FISHING SHORE—GOOSE BAY," January 20, 1857, *Baltimore Sun*, p. 3.
56. "FISHERY FOR RENT," December 12, 1866, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 4.
57. "GOOSE BAY FISHERIES," November 17, 1838, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3.
58. "For Rent," March 2, 1855, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3.
59. "The Potomac Fisheries," April 16, 1859, *Constitution*, p. 2.
60. "FISHERIES FOR LEASE," July 29, 1871, *Sun*, p. 3.
61. "FISHERY FOR RENT," December 17, 1866, *Sun*, p. 4.
62. "POTOMAC FISHING SHORES," March 4, 1871, *Alexandria Gazette*, p. 3.
63. "THE POTOMAC FISHERIES," March 19, 1873, *Daily National Intelligencer*, p. 4.
64. "POTOMAC FISHERIES," April 9, 1875, *Daily National Intelligencer*, p. 4.
65. Solicitors of Berry and Thomas Mason, deceased, to Kora Mason Chase, 1908, *Charles County Deed Book FDM19:624-627*. Kora Chase was the last Mason owner of Lexington.
66. Kora Mason Chase to Helen Mason Chase, 1911, *Charles County Deed Book HCC22:581-582*.
67. Helen Mason Chase to John Crichton, 1912, *Charles County Deed Book HCC25:172-178*.
68. Helen Mason Chase to Ella C. Ather-ton, 1914, *Charles County Deed Book HCC27:165-171*.
69. Helen Mason Chase to William Eads Miller, 1914, *Charles County Deed Book HCC27:300-301*.
70. "Rum Point," Charles County, Maryland Patent Certificate 923, May 5, 1728.
71. "Fishing Landing: Jacob Merchant," *Alexandria Gazette*, March 9, 1813, p. 4.
72. "Land for Sale," *Alexandria Herald*, September 9, 1818, p. 4.
73. "Mattawoman Fishery for Sale," *Alexandria Gazette*, November 6, 1827, p. 1
74. *Charles County Court Land Records*, 1829, IB18:492-493.
75. *Charles County Court Land Records*, 1843, IB25:249-250.
76. *Charles County Court Land Records*, 1852, RHM1:425-427.
77. *Charles County Court Land Records* L2:343-344.
78. "Lands for Sale," *Federal Republican*, February 21, 1816, p. 5. "Fisheries," *Alexandria Gazette*, September 23, 1817, p. 1. "Land for Sale," *Alexandria Gazette*, August 5, 1817, p. 3. "Potomac Land for Sale," *Alexandria Gazette*, December 18, 1823, p. 1.
79. "Valuable Potomac Land for Sale," *Alexandria Gazette*, December 5, 1821, p. 4.
80. *Charles County Court Land Records*, IB17:502-506.
81. Robert Brawner to William Mason, 1815, *Charles County Deed Book IB11:335-337*.
82. William Mason to George Mason, 1817, *Charles County Deed Book IB12:134-137*.
83. "Land for Sale or Exchange," *Alexandria Gazette*, March 3, 1817, p. 4
84. George Mason [of Hollin Hall] to Robert Brawner, 1826, *Charles County Deed Book IB17:166-168*.



## GUNSTON HALL, THE BIRTH OF L.S.U., W. T. SHERMAN AND GEORGE MASON GRAHAM

*By Bill Huntington & Kevin Culhane,  
Research Volunteers*

**W**ITHIN THE ARCHIVES OF THE LIBRARY AT GUNSTON HALL, lies the tale of yet another intriguing family member of the Mason clan. His early years with the family, being the last Mason relative to own Gunston Hall, and his unlikely legacy in the State of Louisiana, tell a most interesting tale indeed.

### Early Years

George Mason Graham was born on Aug. 21, 1807, in Fairfax County, Virginia, at the “Lexington” property adjacent to Gunston Hall on the Potomac River.

His mother was Elizabeth Mary Ann Barnes Hooe, widow of George Mason, the eldest son of Col. George Mason, the Revolutionary War statesman. His father George Graham, was the eldest son of Richard Graham, one of the founding fathers of Dumfries, Virginia, in Prince William County. His father was also the nephew of Sarah Brent Mason, Col. Mason’s second wife.

G. Mason Graham spent his early years on the



*George Mason Graham, last of the  
Masons to own Gunston Hall*

“Lexington” estate until May 1814, when, at the age of seven, his mother died. He was then sent, along with his younger sister\* to live with the family of his father’s younger brother, John Graham, in Washington, D.C. His school days were passed in various schools in Washington and Georgetown until 1823, when he won an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Graham resigned from West Point in 1826, as a relative would later recall, “due to his poor eye sight which was always defective and troubled him all through his long life.”

After leaving West Point, he entered the University of Virginia (UVA) to study medicine but withdrew for unknown reasons in 1828. After leaving UVA, Graham’s father sent him to Louisiana to look after some property he had acquired in Rapides Parish. His relatives stated that “the people and the country of central Louisiana impressed Graham so profoundly and favorably that he never afterwards was content to live anywhere else.”

He remained in Rapides Parish through 1834, buying and selling a number of properties and establishing himself as a respected “son of the South” and successful farmer. In 1834, he traveled to Washington, D.C., and married Ester Smith, returning later that year, along with his sister, to Louisiana. Disaster struck the family the following year, however, when his young bride died in childbirth, followed by the death of the child shortly afterward. Crushed by this tragedy, Graham sold his plantation (and his slaves), returned to Washington, and for the next seven years, “wanders rather aimlessly about the country.”

In 1842, Graham was persuaded by a friend to enter into a partnership with him for the purchase of a plantation on Bayou Rapids, again in Rapides

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\* Graham’s sister, Mary Ann Jane Graham, later became Sister Mary Bernard of the Convent of the Visitation in Georgetown and a historical figure of some note in her own right.

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Parish. This plantation called “Tyrone” was where he would reside until his death.

In 1846, as tensions with Mexico become more hostile, General Zachary Taylor, from the Mexican border, called for additional troops. Rapides Parish answered the call and within a few days, a company was formed and G. Mason Graham was chosen as captain.

The company became part of the “Andrew Jackson Regiment” and was mustered into service by instructions from the Governor for six months, however, after just three months, they were discharged and mustered out in New Orleans. Captain Graham was anxious to remain at the front and volunteered to serve as a staff officer, participating in the battle of Monterey where he was cited for “conspicuous gallantry.” About a month after the battle, he left the military and returned to his Louisiana plantation, having seen, as he expressed, “enough, and more than enough of war.”

Graham remarried in 1847 to Mary Eliza Wilkinson; they had four children but his young wife died in 1855, again leaving him a widower. Soon after this event, Graham’s sister-in-law Eleanor Ann Clifton Patton Mason, widow of his eldest half-brother, George Mason VI of Gunston Hall, came to Louisiana to take care of the children and household. She remained with the Graham family until her death in 1867. She is buried in the Gunston Hall family cemetery, where a lengthy inscription on a marble slab tells much of her life.

### **An Unlikely Friendship Begins**

In 1853, G. Mason Graham was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the nascent Seminary of Learning. From this seed would grow Louisiana State University. It would also form the basis for an unlikely, but enduring friendship between Graham and William Tecumseh Sherman. Graham would, except for short periods, be involved with this educational endeavor for most of the rest of his life. Because of this he is often referred to as the Father of LSU.

The machinery of government funding in antebellum Louisiana moved slowly and it wasn’t until 1859 that a building to house students and classrooms was completed in Pineville located outside of present day Alexandria, Louisiana. Alexandria at that time was in an isolated, rural part of the state

and home to only 1600 inhabitants. It was an unlikely place to inspire the development of an institution of higher learning. Despite this, its sponsors had hopes that they could build a school that might one day rival VMI or West Point. In that same year of 1859, Graham, who was now President of the Board of Trustees, and his colleagues began their search for a suitable superintendent for their new school. One of the candidates was William T. Sherman.

By 1859, Sherman was broke and desperately seeking a way to restore his financial and social standing. After leaving the Army to make his fortune in the civilian world, he had tried his hand at a number of projects. All of them had ended unsuccessfully. His foray into banking in gold rush California was ended by the Panic of 1857. This venture left him almost bankrupt. For the next several years he floundered from job to job. Failing at law and farming, he relied on his wife’s wealthy and influential family to help sustain his own. They had offered him a job in one of their enterprises; but he loathed being dependent on them.

Hearing there might be a vacancy in the Army’s Paymaster Department that a civilian could fill, Sherman contacted an old West Point classmate who was working in the Office of the Secretary of War and enquired about the opening. His friend, future Union general Don Carlos Buell, replied that the Secretary, being a Virginian, would almost certainly pick someone from the South for the position. Buell, however, informed his friend that he knew of a military school in Louisiana, where they were looking for someone to run the place. Further, Buell indicated he would be glad to write Sherman a letter of recommendation if he was interested in the job. It was this circumstance that would bring the unknown Sherman into a relationship with a scion of the famous Mason clan, George Mason Graham.

Seeing few other options, Sherman jumped at the opportunity and made an immediate application for the position of Superintendent of the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning and Military Academy. His classmate, Buell, turned out to be a very influential advocate for Sherman. He was well acquainted with George Mason Graham. They had served together in the Mexican War and Buell was married to the widow of Graham’s half brother, Rich-

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ard B. Mason. By coincidence, Richard Mason had been Sherman's commanding officer when he was in California. In a further coincidence, Graham's sister, a nun, taught at the Academy of the Visitation in Georgetown, where Sherman's wife had been one of her favorite pupils.

Despite these connections and his military experience, Sherman was not a shoo-in for the job. His Northern origins; the fact his wife's family had known abolitionist sympathies; and his brother, John, who was becoming a powerful Republican member of Congress, all worked against his appointment to run a school in the heart of Dixie.

One of the Board members violently opposed Sherman's nomination calling him a "son-in-law of that damned black hearted Republican Tom Ewing of Ohio." Graham, largely based on Buell's recommendation, was convinced, however, that Sherman was the right man for the job and eventually overcame resistance on the part of other Board members to Sherman's selection as superintendent. In his memoir Graham noted, "I did not know Major Sherman, but I did know Major Buell...and when he told me that Sherman was the man for the place, [I knew] that I need not look any further." In a letter accompanying the official notice of his appointment, Graham wrote Sherman "I beg to say that much is expected of you—that a great deal will devolve upon you." But he also noted that the gov-



William Tecumseh Sherman in his early Army years.

By Unknown - The Generals of the American Civil War, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?>

ernor of Louisiana and the school's board had toasted Sherman's success with "great cordiality" and "brimming glasses."

Sherman, upon learning of his appointment, packed his bags and left for Louisiana in the fall of 1859. On his arrival Sherman was a guest of Graham at his Tyrone plantation. They spent the time discussing future plans for the Seminary of Learning and establishing rules and regulations modeled on those of VMI and West Point. Graham is said to have taken an immediate liking to the red-headed former soldier from Ohio. The

feeling was mutual. In his memoirs Sherman described his initial meeting with G. Mason Graham in the following words, "he was a high-toned gentleman, and his whole heart was in the enterprise. He at once put me at ease. We acted together most cordially from that time forth, and it was at his house that all details of the seminary were arranged." One Sherman biographer characterized G. Mason Graham as Sherman's closest Southern friend. They formed a bond that would survive being on opposite sides of the Civil War. Much of their interaction was through written correspondence. It is in these letters that we get a glimpse into the character of each man as well as the agonizing choices each faced as the nation slipped ever closer to civil war.

The school opened on New Year's Day in 1860 with an initial student population of just 19; by the end of the first term 73 cadets would be under Sherman's care. They were a diverse lot: sons of wealthy planters, aristocratic Creoles, Cajuns and poor boys from the pine woods. P.G.T. Beauregard may have had two sons at the Seminary. The day for these cadets began at 7 a.m. with breakfast followed by mathematics from 8 to 11 a.m.; French from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; lunch from 1 to 2 p.m.; Latin from 2 to 4 p.m.; an hour of drill starting at 4:30 p.m.; dinner at dusk; and lights out at 10:00 p.m.

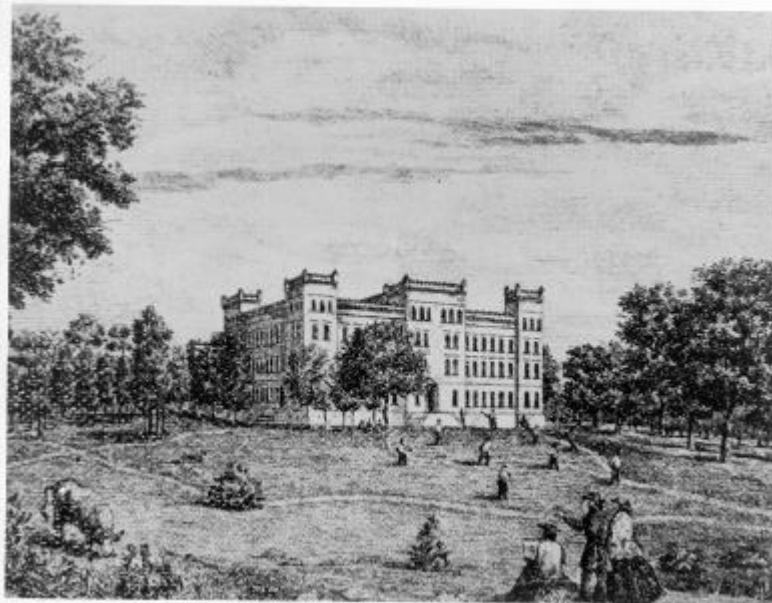
Much of the early correspondence between Graham and Sherman involved administrative and budget issues. It became apparent early on that there was a conflict on the Seminary's Board. This conflict was between those who wanted to emphasize the military aspect of the school and the discipline associated with such an approach and those who wanted a less rigorous, more civilian approach to the school's regimen. Graham and Sherman were among the advocates of the former approach. In this regard, Sherman wrote Graham in early February 1860 that "Mr. Hyams yesterday remarked unguardedly that the military factor of this school would soon be changed. I expressed myself emphatically that personally I was unconcerned, but that it would be fatal. One hundred young men in this building under a Civic Government would tear down the building and make study impossible."

Sherman faced many challenges with his young charges and he kept Graham apprised of his

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frustrations in dealing with their antics. This included a group of cadets who called themselves the “Midnight Marauders” who delighted in torturing one of the faculty members and committing acts of adolescent vandalism. Sherman attempted to use



*The campus of Louisiana State Seminary of Learning & Military Academy that would become Louisiana State University. Lithograph ca. 1859.*

*In 1868, the main Seminary building burned to the ground. Subsequently the school was moved to Baton Rouge and was renamed the Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College.*

these incidents to instill some sense of responsibility and ethical consideration into his students.

However, he was not always able to overcome their loyalty to one another and several cadets found themselves being dismissed. In all these cases Sherman was no martinet and gave the students several opportunities to admit their wrongdoing and make amends. His decisions to dismiss cadets were usually made reluctantly and with some sadness; but also always with an eye to how unpunished wrongdoing on the part of one might affect the morale and behavior of the other students.

The challenges faced by Graham and Sherman even included issues about diet. In July of 1860 Sherman sent Graham a note informing him that “Very many of our cadets have diarrhea owing they say to fritters and molasses for supper. They complained so much of the melted butter that Capt. Jar-

reau agreed to quit fritters and molasses. These and melons and fruit are causes enough. We have ordered toast and tea for supper, and will discourage stale fruit and melons. I hope they will recover this week. Otherwise they may make a very sorry appearance.” Throughout their correspondence Graham responded to Sherman’s frustration over his students and the other demands of his job with unflagging support and good humor.

In the late summer, early fall of 1860 Graham temporarily resigned from the Board of Trustees largely to protest new regulations adopted by the Board over his objections that loosened the military nature of the school and undercut Sherman’s authority as superintendent, especially over the members of the faculty. The correspondence between the two, however, continued; but increasingly the focus of their missives turned from the school to the deteriorating political climate of the nation and the specter of civil war.

Graham, although a wealthy planter and slaveholder, was a Unionist and his views are evident in his letters to Sherman. In a January 1860 letter Graham declared, “Demagogical politicians and partisan editors make all the mischief... I have always believed and never hesi-

tated to express myself so on all occasions, that Southern people of the above classes, many of them northern and eastern born, have had quite as much to do with producing the troubles of this country as anybody else.”

Later in that year he wrote Sherman that he had stated on the steps of the Alexandria post office that “...secession was treason.” Sherman, no abolitionist sympathizer despite his family connections, replied to Graham after a brief visit north that “I find as much diversity of sentiment here in politics as in the South. I shall keep aloof—only assenting that whoever is elected, be it the Divine Himself, must be endured for the time being—nobody will be rash enough to disturb slavery where it exists, and its extension is now only a theoretical not a practical question.”

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As Louisiana moved toward secession, people were forced to take sides regardless of their previous views on secession and slavery. Sherman found himself in the uncomfortable position of being in charge of a state arsenal (the Seminary had been designated by the legislature as a state arsenal) whose weapons would be used in the service of the newly formed Confederacy and training young men who would fight against the Union he was committed to preserving.

When Louisiana formally seceded in late January 1861, he sent his resignation to the governor and wrote to his friend G. Mason Graham, “The storm is upon us—and we must each to our own ship. I hope I may meet you again, but if not accept the assurance of my great affection, respect and admiration, and my earnest prayer that you and yours may long survive to look back with satisfaction to the time when we started the Seminary in a vain belief that we were serving the cause of our common country.”

For his part, Graham wrote Sherman in January 1861, that “Whatever you may think and feel we must go along with our section in the contest which has been forced upon us...” Shortly after the war started he wrote his northern friend that “Those of us who were the last to give up the Union will be the last to give up the principle of the right of a people to make their own government — we will live to maintain it, or die in defense of it — even though our ‘cities, towns, yea people’ may be destroyed.”

The war made Sherman famous and an important public figure. But he did not forget his ties to Louisiana or the school he and Graham had worked so hard to create. In his memoirs published in 1875, Sherman notes that he helped many of the cadets and his former associates during the war itself when they found themselves in Union hands.

This included the former professor of languages, David Boyd. Boyd fought for the Confederacy serving on the staff of General Richard “Dick” Taylor. Sherman arranged his release during a prisoner of war exchange. Boyd later became the president of LSU; he and Sherman remained lifelong friends. After the war, Sherman, referring to the University in his memoirs stated “I have been able to do them many acts of kindness...”

Sherman did not forget his old friend G. Mason Graham either. After the war Sherman offered to help Graham receive an appointment to a government job, perhaps as an ambassador. Graham declined the offer. Graham’s grandson believes it was pride that led his grandfather to turn down a helping hand from Sherman. Sherman in his memoirs noted that “General G. Mason Graham is still living on his plantation, on Bayou Rapides, old and much respected...”

### **Last Years and the Selling of Gunston Hall**

The war was not kind to Graham. When the Civil War began, according to his grandson, he owned “...about two thousand acres of land on Bayou Rapides...three hundred and fifty negroes, a splendid home and all the appurtenances which go with it ...at the close of the war he was penniless.” The war destroyed most of Graham’s wealth and holdings. In his own memoir he opined that “the result of the war to me, individually, was entire and absolute ruin---overrun by both armies in 1863 and ’64...not one blade of fodder or ear of corn, nor any living thing, left on either of my two plantations...” Thus in 1865, he found himself almost as impoverished as Sherman had been in 1859. Graham immediately set about restoring his family’s fortune and standing in Louisiana. His grandson observed that “...by economy and good management he succeeded in saving his land from being sold for taxes’ as was the case with so many Southern land owners.

It was also during this period that he was involved in selling Gunston Hall. When George Mason VI died in 1834 without a will, his wife Eleanor, mentioned above, received “dower rights” under Virginia law to Gunston Hall. When she died, her will gave the Graham children the rights to the estate, with G. Mason Graham the executor. The Mason descendants filed a law suit in Alexandria Court against the Graham claim. However, the result of the law suit awarded Gunston Hall to the Grahams with the proviso that the widow Eleanor Mason be allowed life tenancy on the estate.

Having legal title through the courts, in addition to having made a satisfactory agreement with the widow Mason, G. Mason Graham attempted, apparently unsuccessfully, to sell Gunston Hall in 1853. The following advertisement appeared at that time in the Alexandria Gazette:

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I will sell my reversionary interest in the Mansion House and One Thousand Acres of the Gunston Hall estate, lying on the Potomac River, at the mouth of Accotink bay, provided the purchaser can obtain a lease on the life estate of Mrs. E. A. C. Mason therein. My price is \$15,000; one-sixth, or \$2,500, in cash, and the remainder in five equal annual installments of \$2,500 each, without interest until after maturity. For further particulars apply to Mrs Mason on the premises, eighteen miles below Alexandria.

G. Mason Graham, near Alexandria, Louisiana

A year after the Civil War ended in 1866, Eleanor A.C. Mason died and Graham finally succeeded in selling Gunston Hall out of the family, ending over 150 years of Mason family occupation on the Neck.

In 1866, Graham was appointed by Governor Wells as the State's Adjutant General. Perhaps his pro-Union stance before the war and his lack of an active role in conducting the war for the Confederacy made him an acceptable candidate for such a position by Louisiana's reconstruction government. In 1867 he married for a third time. It was not a happy pairing and the couple agreed "to an amicable separation."

He suffered a debilitating accident in 1869 as a result of a fall from a horse. It did not, however, keep him from his continued support of the University he loved. He served on its Board of Supervisors until 1885.

In today's political climate it is not likely that LSU cares to emphasize the role of a prominent slave holder in its founding. And, in fact, time and the change it engenders have done much to erase the memory of G. Mason Graham at the school. Officials there tell us that a full length portrait of Mason has disappeared, presumably stolen sometime in the late 1980s. A men's residence hall named for Graham was razed to make room for a newer structure. And a rumored statue on campus apparently never existed.

In the winter of 1891 George Mason Graham passed away after contracting a bad cold or flu. In his obituary it is observed that he was "Honest to a fault; truthful to himself, he had no patience with prevaricators; always prompt to meet his engagements and fulfill his promises; charitable without ostentation; a citizen who took an interest in his country's progress...a kind father and true and valuable friend."

The last Mason relative to claim ownership of Gunston Hall was laid to rest in the Bayou Rapides cemetery in Pineville, Louisiana. 🌺



*Graham Hall, a former residence hall at Louisiana State University. Photo courtesy of LSU.*





## WOULD YOU HIRE THIS MAN?

*By Frank N. Barker, Assistant Education Coordinator*

**G**EORGE WASHINGTON WROTE A LETTER TO GEORGE MASON on March 23, 1789, requesting a recommendation for a coachman who was currently employed by Mason.

At the time, Gen. Washington was President-elect, due to be sworn in as President at the end of April. No doubt a trusted coach driver would be needed for his long carriage ride to his inauguration in New York City.

As the coachman in question (never mentioned by name) was still employed by Mason, Washington had refused to talk personally to the applicant, but let the potential new employee talk to his nephew. The coachman had claimed that he had given notice to Mason the previous fall of his intention to leave, and as he had taught one of Mason's servants to drive, he was no longer needed at Gunston Hall.

Washington is asking if that is true and if Mason could vouch for the man's "sobriety, skill, honesty, and industry." Washington wrote "I shall make no overtures



to him, nor will I employ him (Altho' I want a Coachman) unless it is with your knowledge and consent he leaves you." Mason's reply to Gen. Washington was written quickly; it is also dated March 23. Mason identifies the coachman as a redemptioner from Germany. Mason bought him for the remaining two years of his indenture.

After that indenture expired in Oct. 1787, Mason had no other driver and the German was willing to continue working for him. Mason agreed to pay him £15 wages per year, plus clothing "to serve me as a Coach-Man, wait at Table, & occasionally work in the Garden, take Care of my Stable & Horses, keep the Key of my Corn House, & give out the Corn."

Mason wrote that the agreement continued into another year.

To answer Washington's questions about the coachman's "sobriety, skill, honesty, and industry," Mason tells the General:

- [I shouldn't] have employed him the second Year, if I cou'd have got another Coachman or had any Servant of my own capable of driving.
- He has never taught, or attempted to teach, any of my People to drive except that a little Boy of mine

- has ridden one of the four Horses as Postilion.
- He has not given me any Notice that he intended to leave me, further than sometimes, upon quarreling with the Servants, or being reprimanded for Misbehaviour, Neglect, or Idleness, I have heard in the Family, that he had threatned to leave me.
- I think him an excellent driver, & careful of Horses, if he has anybody to do the Drudgery of the Business for him.
- I believe him honest.
- He is also, if he pleases, a handy Servant in waiting at Table.
- He is
  - exceedingly lazy.
  - incorrigibly addicted to Liquor
  - very turbulent & quarrelsome among the Servants, insufferably so when in Liquor tho' he has never presumed to be insolent to me.
- As to any other Service than as Coachman, I have for some time past, given over the Expectation, finding that it was more trouble to extract any other kind of Service whatever from him, than it was worth.
- tho' when he leaves me, I shall be without a Driver I am not at all desirous of keeping him.
- If therefore you chuse to employ him, I have no Objection to parting with him, as I am sure will be the Case soon, if you do not.

Unfortunately, the exchange of letters stops here and George Washington's diary for this period is missing, so it is not known if the president-elect was driven to his inauguration by a lazy, quarrelsome German driver likely to get a DUI driving to New York. 🌸

### WHAT IS A REDEMPTIONER?

Redemptioners were European immigrants who gained passage to the American colonies by selling themselves into indentured servitude. They arrived after long, often arduous voyages with no guarantee that anyone would pay their way and no prospect of returning to the Old World.

The German redemptioner in this case had sailed to Baltimore where his indenture was purchased by Col. William Fitzhugh, who in turn, sold it to George Mason.

Col. Fitzhugh had told Mason that the coachman was "an exceeding good driver, & careful of horses, but lazy, & quarrelsome among the servants."



## FAN MAIL FROM A FIELD TRIP

Sometimes when students return to their schools after a field trip, they will write to us and tell us what they liked about their tour. Today we feature fan mail from first graders who came to Gunston Hall for one of the last field trips of the 2015-2016 school year. Here, complete with some unique spellings and phrasings, is Gunston Hall from the first grade point of view.

Dear Docent,

Thank you for showing me around Gunston Hall. Thank you for running up the hill it was really really fun. Thank you for all the information and all the facts I had fun at Gunston Hall. From: Ethan

Thank you so much it was so fun run in the hill. And I know that my legs hurt a lot. But it was so fun. Emily

I love the tour and my favorite part was when we saw the house and the wagon step it was very fun. THANK YOU for the tour. Andrea

I love Gunston Hall. My favorite part was in side Gunston Hall it helped me on my SOL test. Thank you, Connor

Gunston Hall stold my heart. Ashly ♥

Thank you for all your time I really like it. The one I really like was the kichen. Becouse I can make stuff. From Girl with a tablet Joseline

Thank you for spending your time with us in the fiel trip. I like the part wen we saw the school. I learned the George mason died in hes house. Thank you, Erica

It was really fun and interesting I really like when we got to go to the kitchen and the school and there dinner table. It was very fancy. Sincerely, Ashley

Thank you for walking me around Gunston Hall it was fun i learn a lot of stuff and it helped me in my test of Virginia history. My favorite part was when we were going up the stairs the slave stairs and it rocked. Thank you for you time. Sincerely, Jackeline

Thank you so much for volentering to be our tour guide. Your so nice to do that. The way you describe every-

thing with expression made me really understand what you ment. My favorite part is when we played. Thanks for everything!! Katie

Thank you so much for showing us around Gunston hall! I know you didn't have to volunteer for this but I really enjoyed it...and actually I didn't tell anyone when we got on the bus but now I'm telling you! I think that that was the best field trip I've ever been on! Because of you! And now if anyone ever asks about Gunston hall to me I will tell them all about it! And I had such a good time that when I grow up I am thinking about working there! Because of you! Amari (the one that knocked the picture over in the kitchen)

Thank you for the field trip. I hope you have bug spray for your next guest, and have a nice day. Eunice

Thank you for teaching us what kids did when they had friends over and what they did when a mouse came in and the upstiars was the best part ever the geust room were they stayed. Sincerely Alexis



GEORGE MASON'S GUNSTON HALL

HOME OF *American Rights*