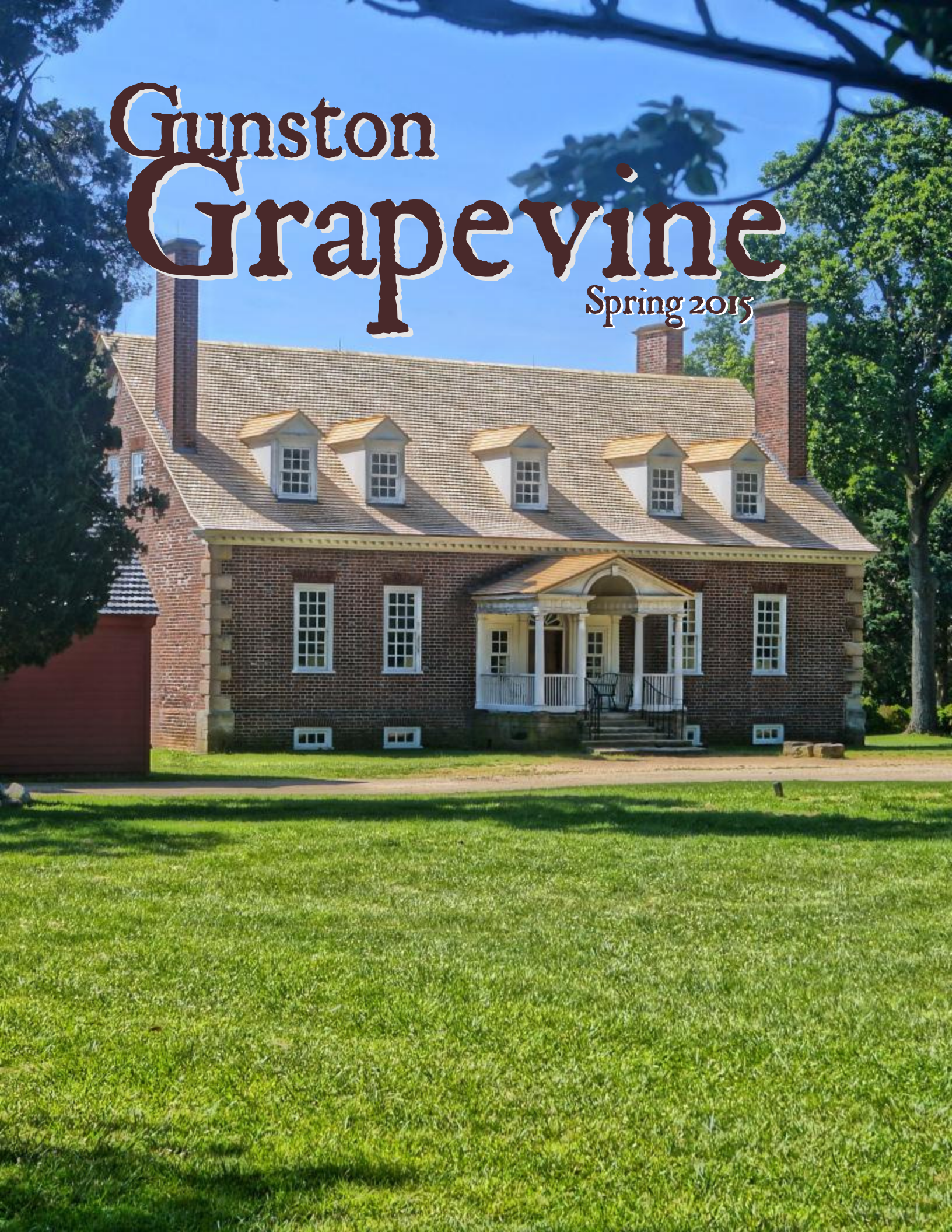

Gunston Grapevine

Spring 2015

Scott Muir Stroh III
Executive Director

From the Director:

Several evenings ago, I was privileged to attend an event during which the Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce presented nine area high school seniors with scholarships supporting their post-high school education.

Before the formal ceremony, attendees had the opportunity to listen to a string trio and view artworks produced by other students, also from area schools. With this backdrop, all those in attendance visited with the scholarship recipients, their parents, siblings, and in some cases their principals and teachers while enjoying music, art, snacks, and fellowship.

Then the formal ceremony began. Each student was introduced, walked onto the stage, received their certificate and check, and then they all spoke briefly about themselves, their goals, their hopes, and their dreams.

It was amazing!

The list of colleges, accomplishments, and awards was extremely impressive. More impressive was the exuberance, passion, and joy which was so clearly evident as each student spoke. One spoke of a particular class having motivated her interest in business, another spoke of visiting one college campus and feeling so at home that she described herself as falling in love with the place, and all the students spoke, in their own way, of their intense desire to learn and to use what they learn to achieve something of meaning and value.

In listening to each student, I was inspired (inspiration I shared with our staff team the next day), but I was also filled with two overwhelming thoughts and emotions. The first of these thoughts and emotions was, wow, someday my own 6- and 9-year old daughters will be thinking about and going to college! I wasn't ready to consider this thought any further and, as a result, the second emotion soon gained dominance.

Specifically, this second thought was an overwhelming sense of stewardship. Let me explain.

Earlier that week everyone at Gunston Hall had celebrated with great enthusiasm the completion of the installation of a new roof on Gunston Hall. This project began approximately four years ago with the receipt of a significant gift from an anonymous funder and the entire process, from receipt of funding, right on through contracting, construction, and completion was a journey.

It was, however, a critically important journey for, in replacing an almost 90 year old roof, we were fulfilling our responsibility as stewards of a National Historic Landmark. We were also, by virtue of replacing the historically inappropriate slate roof with an authentic wood shingled roof acting upon our commitment to serving as stewards of the authenticity of a distinctive place. Finally, the entire process itself was characterized by our stewardship of the resources entrusted to our care, whether money or the building itself.

So, in completing the roof, I was justifiably proud of our accomplishment, of our team, and of the beautiful, bright, artistic new roof sitting atop our beloved Gunston Hall. I also felt a sense of enhanced security in knowing that a roof ripe with the potential for leaks and other threatening failures was replaced with something watertight—not to mention the addition of lightning protection for the first time ever!

Furthermore, while looking at the freshly minted roof from a variety of angles, I also thought about George Mason and imagined myself standing in spots around the house where perhaps he had stood admiring a new roof on his beloved Gunston Hall in 1759. There was something magical about the craftsmanship, care, artistry, and bright, almost glowing vibrancy and richness of the wood comprising this new protective canopy over the home.

After admiring the roof, we all gathered and extended thanks to each other and in particular to Ruff Roofers, Mesick-Cohen Architects and our inspector, Bill Hale. We also called our colleagues in Richmond and thanked them for their support of the project, and I notified and thanked our Board of Regents for their patient support and dedicated leadership in seeing this project through to completion. It was a happy day and while, as you know, every day is a great day at Gunston Hall, it was a particularly great day at Gunston Hall.

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On the Cover:

The long roofing project now over, Gunston Hall is displayed in newly shingled splendor.

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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But let's return to the scholarship reception and recipients. Throughout the evening, as part of conversation with others in attendance, I was asked how things were at Gunston Hall and when asked, I happily told everyone about our new roof. I told everyone about how great it looked, about how proud we all were of this accomplishment, about how long the process had been and about how it was now all worth it because we had a new roof. And I told everyone, in so many words, about how we had fulfilled one of our stewardship responsibilities as custodians of the house.

All offered their congratulations about the completion of the roof, but then we sat down, the ceremony began, and the students were introduced. Instantly, I was in the presence of genuine and true stewardship in loving and compassionate and impactful action.

The smiles and even a few tears among the parents embodied the stewardship of something which transcends a roof or other brick and mortar features found on a building. The presentation of scholarships, made possible only by the contributions from multiple individuals and businesses throughout the region represented the tremendous stewardship offered by a community to their neighbors, their fellow citizens, and to their youth. The words and actions of the students were all characterized by their passionate commitment to serving as stewards of the opportunities made available to them and as stewards of their own hopes and dreams.

This, my friends, is stewardship at the highest level. When a community supports the success and the fulfillment of dreams held by others in the community, when a community comes together to address and meet the needs of their neighbors, and when a group of people give something of themselves to ensure that others will have an opportunity to not only succeed and achieve, but be happy and joyful, we have achieved something more, something bigger, and something more profound than the construction of a new roof.

A roof over a building, just as a parent's protection over their children, is essential and we can and should be proud of our roof. But now the real work begins. The real work of using this new roof and all our resources at Gunston Hall to promote and achieve what George Mason wrote about in 1776—the achievement of life and liberty and the obtaining of happiness and safety for all people, all the time, everywhere. We have a new roof. Now let us build even more roofs of even greater resilience than our brand new wood shingled beauty at Gunston Hall over all those in our community.

Thank you and we have plenty of hard hats. 

Scott Muir Stroh III
Executive Director, Gunston Hall

Photo courtesy of Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce.

WE HAVE A WINNER!

Freedom Hill Elementary fourth grade student Aparna Gana won the 2015 Christy Hartman Myers Writing Award. She is seen here proudly holding the framed certificate presented to her June 4 before an audience of cheering classmates, teacher, principal, mother, and Aparna's Nanny (since Aparna was 3 months old).

Aparna received a scholarship for the Christy Hartman Myers Writing Workshop to be held at Gunston Hall June 6.

Gunston Grapevine is a quarterly news magazine for, by, and about all members of the Gunston Hall community. Contributions, ideas, questions, and comments are always welcome. Contact the editor Frank Barker at fbarker@gunstonhall.org.

Spring at Gunston Hall

From Bay to Bey: the Odyssey of a Confederate Sailor

George Mason's Great-Grandson Alexander Macomb Mason

By Kevin Culhane & Bill Huntington, Research Volunteers

As a nor'easter howled off the coast of Virginia during the night of October 9, 1861, 19 year old Confederate Navy midshipman, Alexander Macomb Mason, helped lead a dangerous mission against Federal ships lying off Newport News.

Mason, and the volunteers with him rowed their boats as close as possible to the Union ships without being detected and set adrift a line of "torpedoes" or naval mines that were intended to hit and sink the ships of the blockading U.S. Naval Squadron. Unfortunately, the mines failed to ignite and the blockaders escaped harm. It was not for lack of trying. This early attempt at naval mine warfare would be only the first of many adventures for Mason, perhaps the most significant and certainly the most interesting Confederate sailor you never heard of.

Mason's experiences as a junior officer in the Confederate Navy are chronicled in a series of letters he wrote home. They cover the entire Civil War period and its immediate aftermath. This correspondence provides a unique glimpse into the world in which young Southern naval officers lived and fought. These missives provide insight into their personal interests during wartime and what they experienced and thought about the terrible conflict in which they were engaged. Mason's letters are dominated by three themes, i.e., the state of the War; how things were faring at home; and his relations with members of the fairer sex. Such concerns were probably uppermost in the minds of most of Mason's peers. The experience of such youthful officers is usually overshadowed by the letters and memoirs of their army counterparts or by more senior naval officers. No full appreciation of the Confederate Navy, however, can be had without some understanding of what these junior officers endured.

In the spring of 1861, teenaged Alexander Macomb Mason made the gut-wrenching decision to leave the U.S. Naval Academy and "go South." His decision was a personally fateful one. It would lead to his participation in some of the most significant naval events of the Civil War and end in Egypt where he served as a favored officer of the Khedive.

Mason's decision was not necessarily a foregone conclusion. His family had ties to both the South and North. On his father's side he was related to one of the first families in Virginia, the Masons of Gunston Hall. He was a great grandson of one of the Founding Fathers, George Mason. His Uncle, James Murray Mason, had been a U.S. Senator and the author of the Fugitive Slave Act; he would be at the center of the Trent Affair which would bring the U.S. to the brink of war with Great Britain. His mother, however, was a Macomb. Her family had been pioneers of Detroit and her father, Alexander Macomb, was a hero of the War of 1812 and Commanding General of the Army from 1828 to 1841. Throughout the War, young Mason would ask to be kept informed about the doings of his Northern cousins and when imprisoned at its end, he hoped their influence would help secure his release from his Union captors.

Early Career

No letters exist from Mason describing his first year of service, but official records give us some sense of his activities during this period. After a brief stint in the short-lived Navy of Virginia, he was assigned to the newly formed Confederate Navy aboard the *CSS Patrick Henry* in the Norfolk area. His first duties involved the conversion of the *Patrick Henry* from a passenger steamer to a gun ship with 10 cannon. It was from this ship that Mason volunteered for the naval mine laying mission in October 1861.

The spring of 1862 would prove to be a memorable one for the young Confederate Midshipman. On the March 7, 1862, the *Patrick Henry,* as part of the Confederate Navy's James River Squadron, had taken station near Day's Neck where she could observe any Union ships coming out of Norfolk. In the early afternoon of March 8, the new Confederate ironclad, the CSS *Virginia,* steamed out from her berth and moved toward the unsuspecting wooden-hulled ships of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. The *Patrick Henry*, with Midshipman Mason aboard, soon joined in the battle which raged throughout the rest of the day. On the following day, Mason and his shipmates had a front row seat on board the battle damaged *Patrick Henry* for the epic contest between the Monitor and the Virginia (formerly USS Merrimac). And in May, Mason was part of the crew that manned the naval battery at Drewry's Bluff helping in the defense of Richmond and turning back the Union's Army of the Potomac. By summer's end, Midshipman Mason had "seen the elephant," watched men be mangled and die, had suffered the trauma of combat. One can

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speculate, however, that aside from the horror he must have felt, he must have also sensed he had been a part of something extraordinary, something that had changed the world.

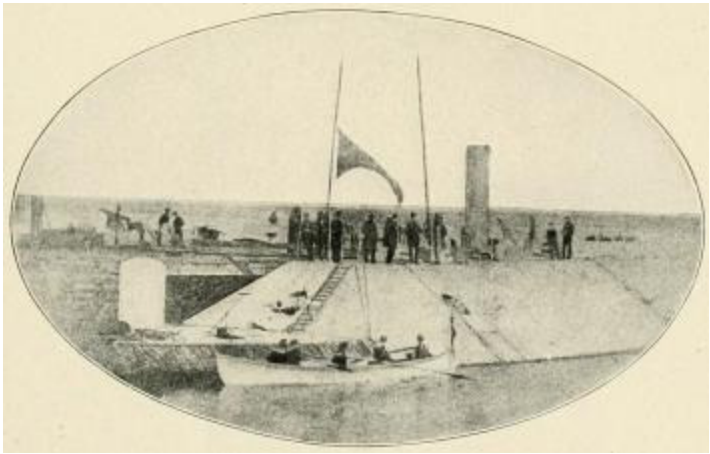
Confederate Columbiad Cannon at Drewry's Bluff overlooking James River. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

Shortly after the battle of Drewry's Bluff, in September of 1862, Mason received orders to report aboard the ironclad *Chicora* in Charleston, South Carolina. This was a plum assignment. The *Chicora* was not a retrofitted merchant ship like the *Patrick Henry*, but a newly constructed ironclad.[1] Additionally, he was in line for promotion. He wrote home on 11 October, "I have been promoted am now a master on board of one of our best vessels." In that same letter he provided his family with this realistic assessment of the Confederate Navy: "Quite a change has taken place in the state of affairs since June, the proud host that was menacing Richmond has been scattered to the winds, and were again doomed to defeat. Had we a navy anything like our army, our cause would be far, far different. We could thus meet our foes with some show of equality on every point. They would not be able to hold our entire seacoast as they do now."[2]

In addition to his official duties, Mason found time to involve himself in the social life of Charleston. He wrote, "I find this rather a pleasant place have some very nice acquaintances and continue to make the time pass pleasantly." And then added "I wish to heaven that Lincoln would give up his absurd idea of Subjecting us and come to terms."[3] And he did not neglect the opposite sex, writing "…one of my lady friends here is immensely wealthy [she is] a daughter of the leading merchant of this city, and who has made an immense fortune by running in government supplies. She must be worth nearly a Million of dollars. Were it not for my principles, in such a case, I should be very attentive to her. She is passably good looking, very accomplished and quite witty. After a while I may be tempted trying my hand there."[4]

Late in 1862, Lt. Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard, as the senior military commander in Charleston, planned a raid against the dozen or so ships of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron which operated in the open sea just outside Charleston Harbor.

The objective of this raid was to defeat the Union naval force before it could be reinforced with ironclad ships and to lift the blockade of Charleston. The attacking force would consist of the ironclads *Chicora* and *Palmetto State.* On January 30, 1862, having badly damaged several Union ships and scattered the rest of the blockaders, the Confederate ironclads, after four hours of combat, broke off the engagement and returned to Charleston. Although Mason and his colleagues failed to lift the blockade, one historian concluded, "…the raid of the Charleston gunboats was the only time during the war in which Confederate ironclads successfully engaged the enemy on the open sea."[5]



The ironclad CSS Chicora in Charleston, SC.

Mason described the naval engagement to his mother in the following words, "Long before this you have heard of our attack upon the Blockading fleet. The commanding officer on their side sent a perverted and lying report to Washington, we either sank or [came] very near sinking two of them and severely crippled three more; this they acknowledged to the officers of that British frigate *Cadmus*. They have lied in every conceivable way. It is seldom that our Navy does anything and then the enemy tries to lie out of the damage done him. One of their steamers surrendered to us and finding that her great speed enabled her to get away from us, she crept off rehoisted her flag and commenced firing."

He went on to note, "We are now expecting an attack when it does come it will be terrific, we may repel it, if we do their vaunted ironclads are ruined, and then their power to destroy us is gone forever. I should not be at all surprised if peace were shortly to follow an unsuccessful attack on this place. The war commenced here, and I trust that may be the last blow of it, that is provided we are successful. I am to lead an expedition, in a certain case, if I succeed in gaining my object you will be a proud mother, if I fail your son falls gallantly. I do not like to say much about this as it might fall into the wrong hands. We are quite here determined to push the defense to extremities, the enemy cannot gain possession of the city with his land forces, his ironclads can neither take nor hold it. We will never surrender it, so we shall defy them to take it."[6] Charleston would not be taken by Union forces until almost the end of the war. Mason would be a witness to its fall. He would not get a chance to lead any "expedition," but this would not be the last of his combat experience.

Service in Europe

In the late spring of 1863, Mason received orders to Europe on a special assignment. After running the blockade, he wrote his mother from St. Georges, Bermuda, on

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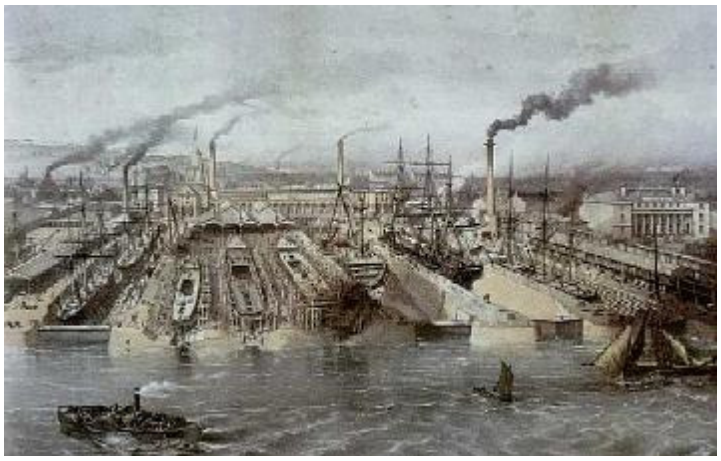
June 10, indicating he was on his way to Europe via Halifax, Nova Scotia. He did not provide her with any details about his new posting. He did, however, swear her to secrecy warning her not to divulge to anyone his current whereabouts or final destination. In a clumsy attempt to hide his true identity in the event the letter fell into the wrong hands he signed the letter "M. M. Alexander."

This assignment would take him first to England and then to France where he was to join other Confederate naval officers. Their mission was to man the famous Laird ironclads under construction for the Confederacy in English shipyards.[7] Mason was an ideal candidate for such a mission. He had already demonstrated personal courage and intelligence, he was single and unattached, and he may have spoken some French. He also probably came with the recommendation of his superior, Commodore John Tucker. His family connections probably didn't hurt either, given that his uncle, James Mason, was Richmond's Special Commissioner to Great Britain and heavily involved in the Confederate effort to acquire warships from the European powers.



Laird rams under construction in a shipyard in England.

There is scant information regarding what Mason did during his year-long sojourn abroad. It is known that he spent most of this time in France. Correspondence in the *Official Records* indicate part of his time was taken up in routine administrative duties.[8]

His personal correspondence is full of family related concerns and general ruminations about the war. In Paris, there were social diversions to occupy his time. In one missive to his mother he notes that "I am considered an 'el'gible partie.'" He further writes, "I think in Paris I was much petted, in fact nearly spoiled."[9] Mason playfully hints to his mother of more than one dalliance with the young ladies he has met in France. What little else is known about Mason's stay in France can be found in the diary of Lt Francis Chew, one of his colleagues. Chew notes that his fellow officers traveled throughout France to include Rouen, Calais, Lyons, Havre, and of course, Paris. They passed the time playing billiards, enjoying the delights of French cuisine, and discussing the course of the War back home, as well as performing official duties as assigned.

It became increasingly apparent the acquisition of the Laird ironclads for the Confederate Navy was in trouble. Under pressure from the U.S, the British government seized the ships in October of 1863. The disappointment of Mason and his fellow officers at this turn of events must have been crushing.

The European adventure was over and the last chapter in Mason's career as a Confederate naval officer was about to begin.

Return to America, Battle of Sailor's Creek, and Prisoner of War

In late summer of 1864, Mason was ordered to return to the Confederacy and was assigned again to Charleston. His return must have been a bittersweet experience. Here he had old friends, including female acquaintances that must have enlivened the social life of a single sailor. There was work to be done as well, especially for an officer who was familiar with "infernal machines"; the harbor was mined and the mines required attention. As Sherman's "bummers" neared the city, Confederate forces evacuated Charleston. On the evening of February 17, 1865, General Beauregard began to withdraw the Army and the Navy began destroying its shore installations and on the 18th scuttled its small fleet. As Sherman's forces reached the outskirts of the city, Mason could see the explosions and smoke plumes rising from the burning hulks of the CSS *Palmetto State, Charleston* and his old ship *Chicora*.

Mason and his shipmates were ordered to Richmond and assigned to what was known as the "Naval Brigade." The sailors and marines assigned to this unit were responsible for manning the shore artillery installations along the James River. In April 1865, the Army of Northern Virginia began its desperate retreat ending in surrender at Appomattox Court house. Those joining in this last gasp of Lee's Army included Mason and the other members of the Naval Brigade, who now found themselves in the unaccustomed role of infantry soldiers.

In this retreat Mason shared in the misery and anxiety of an exhausted army fighting for its life and trying to outrun a more powerful foe bent on its destruction. Constantly moving, with little or no sleep, scant food or no rations at all for days, and constantly harassed by Federal cavalry, Mason and his hungry, footsore colleagues trudged on. There were moments of humor during this march, some of it provided by the sailors of the Naval Brigade. Confederate Army Major Robert Stiles in his classic memoir *Four Years Under Marse Robert* remembered "…in all the discomfort and wretchedness of the retreat, we had been no little amused by the Naval Battalion…the soldiers called them the 'Aye, Ayes', because they responded 'aye, aye' to every order, sometimes repeating the order itself, and adding 'Aye, aye, it is, sir!"[10]

Then, on April 6, the Navy unit was surrounded and cutoff by Sheridan's troopers and infantry at a place ironically known as Sailor's Creek. The fighting which Mason found himself engaged in was sharp, short and brutal. Stiles, whose unit was in line to the right of Mason's, wrote of the conflict that "…quicker than I can tell it the battle degenerated into a butchery and a confused melee of brutal personal conflicts. I saw numbers of men kill each other with bayonets and the butts of muskets, and even bite each others' throats and ears and noses, rolling on the ground like wild beasts."[11] Mason and the sailors turned soldiers acquitted themselves well in this land battle. This little band had to be ordered twice to lay down their arms and continued firing after the rest

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of their Confederate comrades had surrendered. Reportedly, the Federals actually cheered them for their bravery.

Exhausted and hungry and perhaps just glad to be alive and in one piece, Mason was now a prisoner of war. He soon found himself interned in the U.S. military prison at Johnson's Island in Lake Erie not far from Sandusky, Ohio. Mason found his situation a difficult one. On April 27, 1865, he wrote his mother, "When captured I had nothing save what I stood in. I have now been here one week and am anxiously expecting to hear something. This is indeed a wearying and doleful life, far different from any of my previous experiences." Throughout his internment he wrote constantly to his mother begging for money and pleading for clothes. Perhaps more importantly, he begged her to use her contacts and Northern relatives to help secure his release. He expressed great reluctance to taking the Oath of Amnesty and began expressing a desire to live abroad if and when he was ever released. He noted in despair that his fellow officers did not seem to have the same aversion to taking the oath that he had. May 2, he wrote his mother, "If we can no longer carry on the war, and must therefore Kiss the Rod, I have no longer any desire to remain in this country, for I like not the idea of bowing to him that smites me."

By late June 1865, he had overcome his aversion to taking the oath and was finally released. Like so many former Confederate military officers he found himself in an anxious state of limbo. He found himself without pardon or citizenship and the distinct possibility of banishment or worse still hanging over him. Not until the general amnesty of 1868 would former U.S. naval officers who had fought for the Confederacy receive a pardon. Faced with few prospects in their native land, some former officers of the defeated South looked for employment abroad. Mason was among the expatriates who would offer their services to foreign governments.

Years of Exile

In 1866, Mason surfaced as an officer in the Chilean Navy. At that time the allied governments of Peru and Chile were engaged in a short lived naval war against Spain (Chincha Islands War 1864-66). Their agents began buying arms and looking for technically proficient military officers in the United States in order to bolster the capabilities of their navies. They soon found the talent they were seeking from among former Confederate naval officers. Mason, with his naval mine experience, was somebody with just the skills they were looking for.

In a letter to the Chilean Minister of Foreign Relations, a Chilean agent working in the U.S. described Mason in the following manner:

"Mason is an officer 24 years old of whom I have heard the highest praise. He is the nephew of the Confederate Ambassador Mason (the same one who gave rise to the Trent claims) and served with distinction on the general staff of Commodore Tucker in the South. He is a professional alumnus of Annapolis and by his training in the same manner as Read [a fellow Confederate naval officer proficient in naval mine warfare], they appear so perfectly educated that I would not hesitate in requesting that you introduce them to the highest society in Santiago."[12]

There is speculation that before arriving in Chile that Mason and some his fellow soldiers of fortune stopped off in Peru and were instrumental in mining Lima's Port, Callao. The Peruvians would claim a great "victory" when their shore batteries at Callao fought the Spanish to a draw. The effectiveness of the Spaniards' bombardment was considerably reduced because they chose to stand off a great distance for fear of hitting mines that had been expertly laid by the North Americans. One American historian has concluded "…Mason and the others are most certainly unknown heroes in Peru's greatest naval 'victory'."

In less than a year, however, young Mason found himself once again in search of employment. Exactly what he did between late 1867 and 1870 remains a mystery. He reappears in 1870, this time in the Middle East. In that year the Khedive of Egypt, Ismail, was looking for technical help to administer his military and to scientifically map out Khedival holdings in Africa.[13] Leery of the imperial designs of England and France, Ismail turned to the United States. Eventually between 50 and 70 former American military officers were recruited, including Mason.

Mason may have proven to be the most competent of the whole group. He would serve longer in Egypt than any of the other Americans and be the only one who would serve both in the military and the civil service. The range of duties he was assigned and successfully conducted bear testimony to his competence. He would serve Egypt as sailor, soldier, explorer, administrator and diplomat.

Mason found this work challenging. In a letter to his mother in 1871 he complained that "…desert life is not agreeable, when on the march. I generally pass from fifteen to eighteen hours in the saddle." Subsisting on bread, dates, and onions, he spent his nights sleeping in the open under the desert stars. In another letter to his mother of the same year he complained of his low pay, his difficulties in training a horse he had gone into debt to buy, but concluded by teasing her about converting to Islam and asking the Khedive to give him two or three wives.

Among his important contributions was his exploration of the headwaters of the Nile to include the discovery of the Semliki River (1877); his administration of several provinces , Equitoria and Massawa, during which time he served with British General Charles "Chinese" Gordon; and, later, helped negotiate the Anglo-Egyptian-Ethiopian Adowa Treaty (1884) in which the Ethiopians agreed to help Anglo-Egyptian forces put down the Mahdist uprising in Sudan.

After leaving the Egyptian Civil Service little is known of Mason's activities. Apparently he spent time in Europe and maintained residence in Egypt. In the fall of 1896 he returned to the United States. In failing health and perhaps sensing the end of his life might be near, he may have felt some compulsion to return home one last time. On March 17, 1897, Alexander Macomb Mason died in Washington, D.C. It is ironic that the scion of two great American families, the Masons and the Macombs, whose exploits in the Civil War and contributions to the exploration of Africa are not insignificant, should remain such an obscure and unknown figure. Alexander Macomb Mason should rank as a pioneer in naval mine warfare as well as cartographer and explorer of Africa. He deserves greater recognition than he has received from historians and students of this particular period.

Endnotes

1. Raimondo Luraghi. *A History of the Confederate Navy* (Naval Institute Press, 1996). P. 209. These ironclads were modeled on the *Virginia*, but were somewhat smaller in overall size.

2. A.M. Mason. Letter to his mother dated 11 October 1862.

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3. _____ Letter to his mother dated 3 January 1863.
4. _____ Letter to his mother dated !8 February 1863.
5. Werlich. P.43.
6. Mason. Letter to his mother dated 18 February 1863.
7. These were two formidable sea going ironclads with metal rams and two iron-plated revolving turrets to carry their rifled guns. They were 235' in length, 42' beam, 1896 tons displacement.
8. Department of the Navy. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, Series II, vol 2* (Government Printing Office, 1921). P.817
9. Mason, letter to his mother dated 15 August 1864
10. Robert Stiles, *Four Years Under Marse Robert* (Neale,1903). P. 329
11. Stiles, p.333
12. Benjamin Vicuna to Minister of Foreign Affairs, No. 7, New York, Decemebr 10, 1866. *Archivo Nacional de Chile. Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. Mision Confidencial en Estaods Unidos de N. America 1865-66*. Vol. 127, as cited in a letter from David Werlich to Philip Erickson dated 21 January 1983.
13. Isamail Pasha (1830-1895) was Khedive of Egypt (1865-1879) under Ottoman rule. He attempted to modernize Egypt's government and extend Egyptian control over much of Northeastern Africa. The Suez Canal was built during his reign (1869). He was forced to abdicate by the Ottoman Sultan in 1879.

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_____ *Generals in Blue*. Louisiana State University Press, 1999.

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'What's in Betsy's Pocket/What's in John's Haversack'

A New Look at the Hands-on History Touch Museum at Gunston Hall

By Frank N. Barker, Assistant Education Coordinator

This spring, for safety concerns, the mansion cellar was closed for our school tours. Previously, this space has been home to the Touch Museum and the Textile Museum, both integral parts of our school tours.

While the space for these valued hands-on activities is no longer available, the concepts and the artifacts will live on.

For now, the Touch Museum portion has been reconceived and some of it has become portable. This program continues to give our visiting students the opportunity to touch, think, and react to our collection of period and reproduction objects. As the Touch Museum currently houses over 200 items, choosing which items to use and where to use them became a problem.

The "What's in Betsy's Pocket/What's in John's Haversack" concept puts some of the items from the touch museum into a girl's pocket and a boy's haversack. Our young visitors should be easily able to relate to items that people their own age might have carried and used. The contents can and have been changed and added to as we find what works best and what holds the interest of the students. This has become a station for nearly every school tour, particularly our most common fourth grade tours.

Currently, the program has been presented in one of the upstairs bed chambers, and occasionally in the laundry, but as the program is self-contained in a pocket and haversack, the station could be outside when the weather is good or even in the downstairs bedchamber. Items were chosen not only because they are everyday objects that a girl or boy might be carrying to tell the story of the lifestyle at Gunston Hall, but some will help talk about the road to the Virginia Declaration of Rights and independence.

The nine items presently in Betsy's pocket are:

- **A stocking darner**. New stockings are expensive and they are also on the list of the Non-Importation Agreement of 1769. We need to repair, not replace.
- **A thimble and thread winder**. Needed items for darning stockings. Girls were expected to learn, practice, and perfect their needle skills. The thread winder is of mother-of-pearl construction, obviously for a well-situated young lady. Docents could ask if students could use a thread winder in their lives and could point out its ideal use for winding and keeping ear buds for their pods, pads, and phones.
- **A carved fan**. Gentlewomen carried fans, not only for cooling, but for fashion. Supposedly coded messages were sent from young ladies to young gentlemen in a prearranged language of the fan, but there is a lack of contemporary evidence about this actually being used. It would be hard to carry on a secretive conversation in a room full of people if everybody in the room knows the code. This sandalwood fan is imported from Asia through England to the American colonies..
- **Nutmeg and cinnamon**—normally kept locked in Mama's closet—perhaps Betsy is carrying it to the kitchen for cook to flavor a pastry.
- **A silk ribbon**. Used for decoration and hair care, but it's also on the Non-Importation Agreement, making it irreplaceable. Students are often amazed when they are told that men also used ribbons like these to tie back their hair and wigs.
- **Sealing wax and seal**. Used to seal letters to maintain privacy and, depending on the seal used, to per-

John's haversack. Betsy's pocket. Frank's hat.

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haps convey information about the sender's identity. No texts, tweets, or Skype—long distance communication had to be through letters.

In John's haversack we find:

- **Hand cut nails**. Who made the nails? How was he trained? What else might he be making? How important was his job? Where did his iron come from? These questions align well with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) which focus on the different cultures that worked together to establish the colonies, the self-reliance of plantation life, and the use of natural resources.

- **A noggin**. A hand carved scoop that can be used for measuring grain, dipping a refreshing drink from a bucket at the well, or eating soup. This item is carved from wood, which was plentiful, readily available, and renewable.
- **A horn comb.** This horn item had been added at docents' request. This is one of many items used in the 18th century that were made from animal horns. The horns and antlers of domestic and wild animals were used for everything from shoe horns to powder horns. Recycling and reusing at its finest.
- **A bilbo catcher** and **wooden dice**, the 18th century equivalent of video games. Both are made of materials that are readily available and inexpensive except for the labor. (Go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mEjQxeweZo to see a video of a boy who has mastered the bilbo catcher).
- **A neck stock**. Gentlemen wore some sort of tie or scarf as part of their common, everyday wardrobe. Hand sewn using locally made linen or cotton fabric. John must have gotten warm running around the plantation, so he has taken his off and put it in his haversack.
- **Piece of ship's biscuit**. Mainly flour and water, baked hard. Lasts for months. Perfect for expeditions, long sea voyages, and the adventures of a 10-year-old boy. Crushed, these were often used by soldiers, sailors, and travelers to thicken stews and puddings. After many months in storage, the biscuits were often full of weevils. The biscuits were commonly banged on mess tables before eating to get the wildlife out of them. By the Civil War, ship's biscuit had evolved into a square cracker shape and would come to be known as hardtack.
- **A bamboo flute**. Again, handmade from readily available materials. Music had to be performed live; there would be no recorded music for another century.
- **A musket ball**. Homemade ammunition that was used for sport, to hunt for food, and, eventually, defeat the British and win independence.
- **A wig curler**. Gentlemen wore powdered wigs that were set with curlers using a pomade made from animal fat and powdered with a powder made from wheat flour.

Students can consider whether some items would be exclusively used by a boy or a girl, or could some appear in both pocket and haversack. While darning a stocking might appear to be a woman's job, a soldier on the march might wear out his stockings and need to know how to do his own darning at his next encampment so he doesn't get blisters from a holey stocking during his next march.

Some other objects from the Touch Museum are migrating to other parts of the plantation. Objects such as the bed-wrench and boot jack, for example, are in an upstairs bed chamber where they actually could have been used. The toaster is now by the kitchen hearth, putting it where the bread would have been baked then toasted.

Upcoming Events

Summer on the Plantation

GEORGE MASON DAY

SATURDAY, JUNE 13
NOON – 5:00 P.M.
Honoring the Author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights
Join us for a historic event as we celebrate the ratification of the Virginia Declaration of Rights! Enjoy a parade on the grounds, sample food from the hearth kitchen, and converse with historic characters about life in the 18th century. Food vendors will be available and activities for children will be offered throughout the day.
Free admission for all.

FATHERS DAY

SUNDAY, JUNE 21
9:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.
Enjoy a visit to the historic Mansion where tours will highlight the role of George Mason as both Founding Father and widower parent to nine children.
Regular Admission; Fathers and Grandfathers Free.

ARCHITECTURE IN THE AFTERNOON TOURS

FIRST AND THIRD SUNDAYS,
APRIL THROUGH OCTOBER
2:00 P.M.
This 90-minute tour explores the Mansion's exterior and interior. View the master work of carpenter William Buckland and carver William Bernard Sears up close.
Regular admission. Friends free. Tour recommended for adults and young persons over 12 years old.

GUNSTON HALL CONVERSATIONS

SECOND SUNDAYS
APRIL THROUGH OCTOBER
NOON – 4:00 P.M.
George Mason's family, friends and servants discuss politics, play games, and perform domestic skills in 18th-century Virginia. The mini-program varies each session.
Regular Admission. Friends free.

TEACHERS' DAY OUT: AT HOME WITH GEORGE MASON

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2015
9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.
OPEN TO ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND HOME SCHOOL TEACHERS
An invigorating and informative day at Gunston Hall dedicated to the life and ideas of George Mason. Expert elementary, middle and secondary teachers will share their personal strategies for making George Mason come alive in your classroom. The $25 fee covers the program, related materials, and lunch. Registration is required. Call 703-550-9220 or email lvilliva@gunstonhall.org.
(8 RE-CERTIFICATION HOURS)

Mason Sightings

1. Where is this reference to our favorite Founding Father?

A. Christ Church, Alexandria

B. Pohick Church, Lorton

C. Christ Church ,Philadelphia

D. Bruton Parish Church, Williamsburg

E. St. John's Church, Richmond

2. In 1784, George Mason sent this recipe to his friend and neighbor Martin Cockburn at Springfield plantation. What is this recipe for?

A. Sarah Brent Mason's famous root beer

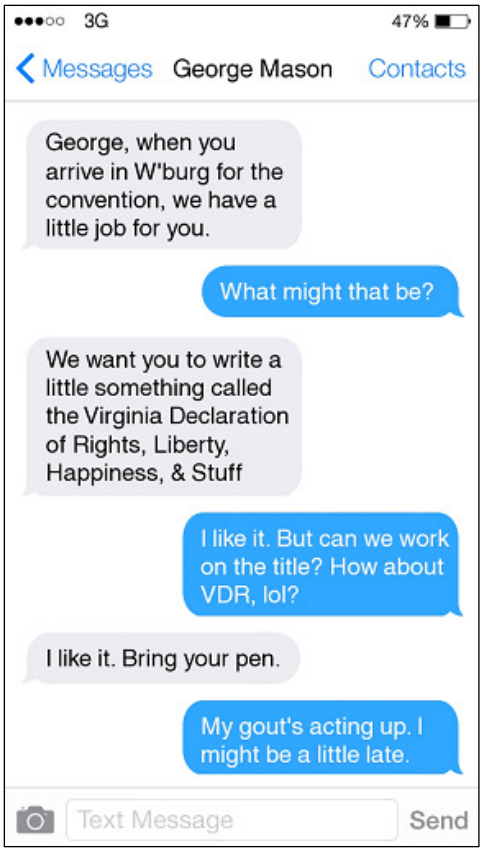
B. A snake-bite remedy

C. A cure for the bloody flux

D. Chai

E. A blue dye for wool

2 handfuls white oak bark (only the clean inner bark)
1 handful flowering ash root (2 handfuls of sweet gum bark may be substituted)
1 handful pear tree root
½ handful bark of dogwood root
1 handful root of crosswort (if unavailable, increase indigo root to 1 handful)
½ handful wild indigo root
1 gallon of water
2 cups new milk
1 small slice of rancid bacon



3. Did George Mason really get this text message before attending the 5th Virginia Convention in 1776?

A. No, he didn't get the message until after he arrived in Williamsburg because he had lost his charger and needed to get a new one at the Williamsburg Target.

B. No, cell service is really spotty at Gunston Hall.

C. Absolutely.

D. No, Alexander Graham Cell hadn't even been born yet.

Answers

1-D—Each pew at Bruton Parish Church is labeled with the names of famous Virginians who worshipped there.

2-C—"Conway's Rect. For the Flux"

3-C—Anything but C.